



LEFT: *The GOBs at play at one of the 76 playing dates they have planned for this year with foursomes set by skill level, ABOVE FROM LEFT: Jim McGuire, David Kimani, Grassroots participant Kwame Agyeman, Roy Anderson*

keep seniors on courts four to five times a week from April through October.

Originally 60 to 70 years old, GOBs members now range in age from mid-sixties, seventies, eighties and even into their nineties.

“We have 14 guys who are in their 90s and a bunch are over 85,” said longtime GOBs member and one of the chief organizers Dick Pater-niti of Middlesex Club. He’s 91 years old himself though you’d never guess it.

“In this age of staying active and keeping fit, and engag-ing one’s mind through stimulating conversations, the group provides a compelling venue,” said current GOBs president Jim McGuire.

But make no mistake, these guys are no slouches. Nearly all are as keen to compete now as they ever were.

Many dominated their club teams and tournaments back in the day. Some, like 85-year-old Roy Anderson of the Tokeneke Club who has competed in New England and National age group tournaments for the past 30 years, played in college. (Roy is also an 11x APTA men’s age-group national paddle champion.) Others still play in leagues and USTA tournaments (like Roy). That’s why GOBs organizers are careful to group the 14 to 24 players who typically show for each play date by ability and split their season-long tournament in which players schedule their own matches into “A” and “B” levels.

“(GOBs) is considered the desired landing spot for any

GOBs of Good

Ever wonder about the spark that keeps the lights on in the later years ...that time when you live your life not your age lest the decades conspire to derail you? Well, if you’re a GOB, you’ve got the book of matches and you know the drill: competitive fun and athleticism get the fire started, camaraderie feeds it, giving back keeps the flame high.

The GOBs are the 150 Good Old Boys who make up a senior men’s tennis playing group from 18 clubs throughout Fairfield County including Wee Burn, Tokeneke, Woodway, Middlesex and the Country Club of Darien. It started in 1983 when Alex Reddin, founder of the Fairfield County Tennis League, a top player at the Milbrook Club in Greenwich and recently retired at the time, was having difficulty finding guys of similar age and skill to play with during the work week. He figured, why not round up seniors at various clubs, organize play dates and ask the clubs to take turns hosting them? He pitched the idea and it took. GOBs continues to



highly-skilled senior age tennis member from the group's 18 partnering clubs," said Woodway member Jim Kelly, a 12-year member of GOBs. And while competition is keen, "fist-cuffs are rare," he added, laughing.

"All the GOBs members are senior athletes with varying skill levels and ages," said Wee Burn GOBs captain Gene Markowski, a 1964 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point who started playing tennis as a cadet there. "The GOBs format provides an opportunity to play tennis through pre-arranged games with foursomes of similar talent. It allows me to focus on developing my game in a relaxed setting," he added.

"It's a special group of senior guys interested in staying active and acting young while having fun," said Peter Carnes, also from Tokeneke and a member since 2010 who describes the group as "intelligent, dedicated to excellence and supportive."

In addition to the playing times and some off-court gatherings members take turns organizing for each other, they are also civic-minded and committed to making a difference. Representing a significant pool of successful executives and professionals from a range of careers, many GOBs members have volunteered their time and expertise off the court in leadership positions of town committees and not-for-profit boards. In addition to individual volunteerism, GOBs members share a similar responsibility to social

BACK ROW (FROM LEFT): *Jim McGuire, Peter Carnes, Grassroots participant Kwame Agyeman who will be playing Aug. 17th at Tokeneke and attending UCONN in the fall, David Kimani, Jim Kelly and Roy Anderson with seven of the more than 250 kids Grassroots serves each year*

consciousness, donating financial resources to causes that promote tennis.

Now celebrating its 40th Anniversary, GOBs is taking its longstanding commitment to giving back up a notch with Grassroots Tennis & Education, a Norwalk/Stamford non-profit devoted to helping youth build strength of character and a foundation for success through tennis and academic support.

In honor of Grassroots Founder and longtime GOBs member Art Goldblatt who passed away last fall, GOBs is hosting its first ever charity event when 12 teams consisting of a Grassroots player and a GOBs player go head to head in a round robin this August 17th at the Tokeneke Club.

"The event will help raise funds for Grassroots through sponsorships and expose their deserving youngsters, while in their formative years, to caring seniors from the GOBs who wish to give back and serve in mentor capacities," said Roy, who is also chair of the Grassroots Advisory Board.

"The GOBs organization will (also) make a financial dona-

"It's a special group of senior guys interested in staying active and acting young while having fun"



tion to Grassroots in support of this cause," added McGuire. "Grassroots is thrilled to be part of the GOBs event on August 17th. Members of the GOBs have been tremendous supporters of Grassroots initiatives of making tennis available for underserved youth," said Grassroots Senior Director of Tennis David Kimani. "Our youngsters will enjoy playing and learning from these men as they continue the process of developing new skills and learning more about playing doubles," he continued. Though initially the Good Old Boys name was offered up in jest, it has met the test of time: Good it is. Good it does. ♥

Four of the 30 Darien GOBs members. FROM LEFT: *Gene Markowski (Wee Burn), Bill Ross (Middlesex), Jim Kelly (Woodway), John Schmidt (Tokeneke)*

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