

DR. MARK BIANCHI



Like most small business owners, Dr. Mark Bianchi struggles to find a balance between work and home life.

The Edmond veterinarian said it never seems to get easier, but Bianchi has found an outlet to ease the pressure.

“Exercise is my preferred drug to relieve the stress and help balance out life and its challenges,” Bianchi said.

The 57-year-old teaches and plays racquetball, and has recently picked up pickleball -- a rapidly growing sport that has become popular among Baby Boomers.

Bianchi has been playing racquetball since high school. It was pitched to him as a way to train for baseball during the off season for its hand-eye coordination. After shifting his focus to football in college, Bianchi picked the racquet back up in vet school and has been playing ever since.

He has won three silver medals in singles and three gold medals in doubles at prior National Senior Games, as well as numerous medals in the Oklahoma Senior Games. Bianchi returned to the National games this summer in Albuquerque where he won gold medals in men’s doubles with Kipp Atwell from Louisiana and mixed doubles with Maureen Price from Michigan. He received the silver medal in singles.

And for the first time, Bianchi competed in singles and doubles pickleball events at the National Senior Games.

In addition to relieving stress, Bianchi said sports are an important way for him to maintain his health as he ages, which was one of the reasons he started playing pickleball in the fall.

It's less physically demanding than tennis, racquetball and cricket, but still gets the heart rate pumping, he said.

"I like to say that it's like ping pong on steroids," Bianchi said.

After only a few months, Bianchi said pickleball was a joy to play. He said he always has a smile on his face after a pickleball rally, which is good news for his physical health, his stress levels and his family -- his wife, four corgis, 17 horses and a barn cat -- who are waiting on him when he gets home.

"Awards are one way of keeping you motivated, but in the end it's maintaining the body and mind," Bianchi said. "That is the big motivation for a quality life."

Oklahoma Senior Games competitions occur annually in September and October. This year, competitions will be held in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Shawnee, Norman, Yukon and Warr Acres.

Events include three-on-three basketball, track and field, golf, swimming, water walking, 5K and 10K runs, 5K power walk, 5K race walk, bowling, tennis, table tennis, golf croquet, shuffleboard, cycling, cornhole, badminton, archery, pickleball, racquetball, softball and triathlon. Participants age 50 and older will compete in categories by age and gender.

Oklahoma Senior Games qualifies athletes for National Senior Games competition held every two years. About 300 athletes who qualify in 2020 will represent Oklahoma in the National Senior Games competition November 5-18, 2021 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

For more information visit www.okseniorgames.com or call (405) 821-1500.