

Tennis Anyone?



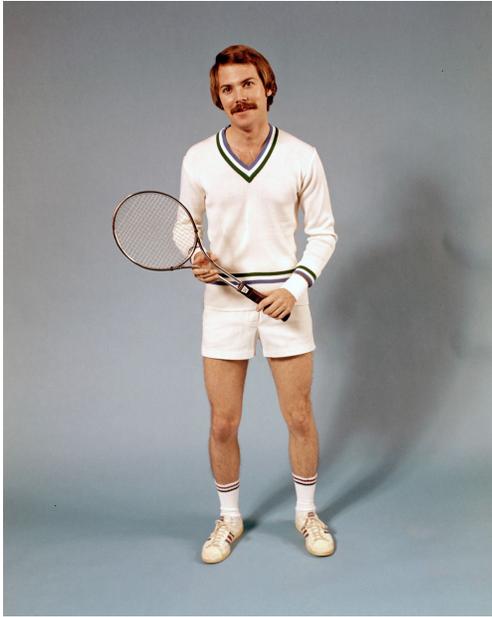
Yes, Mr. McEnroe, I am serious. This 66 year old, retired grandpa of six is going to start playing tennis with a bunch of other like-minded, 70's era, self described "tennis masters."

Sure, it might be the whisky, but why not?

What do we have to lose? What could go wrong? Tennis was fun then, why not play again? We're not **that** old and **we're very proficient at pickle ball!** Certainly, after we warm up, **the old muscle memory will kick back in**, right? We'll only play doubles, **we can still cover the double's court**, right?

Back during the tennis boom of the 1970s we all loved to play tennis. As tennis icon Chris Evert said in her bio, "The tennis boom in the 70's, that's when it all started happening."

Perhaps playing tennis in our senior years will make it all start happening again!



In the '70's, we boomer's watched gods of tennis like McEnroe and Evert take the world by storm. Players were rock stars, partied at Studio 54, and ushered in a new era of tennis chic. Tennis was no longer the exclusive sport of the country club set. By 1979, there were around fifteen million tennis players in the US compared to three million in 1968.

I was one of them.

Like many of my generation, I bought the Wilson T-2000 tennis racquet (the one Jimmy Connors used), a pair of too-short shorts, a cool tennis shirt, some knee-length white socks and headed to the public courts. I discovered that I loved the game, and for a broke, sand-lot, self-taught player I was pretty good. As I recall, my serve was similar to that of Roscoe Tanner's.



I also realized right away that tennis was one of the only sports (back then) where women and men could play on the same court as equals. In the case of mixed doubles, even on the same team. And the women's tennis outfits were pleasing to my eye.

A hip sport that I was reasonably good at, that was also a place for a shy, teenage, nerd like me to meet attractively attired, athletic girls?



A match made in heaven.

From 1974 until 1978 I played all the time. I loved being on the court, and asking a girl to play tennis was my #1 pick-up line. As I recall, most declined my invitation.

In the autumn of '78, the real world intervened, and my tennis glory days came to an abrupt end. I sold my racquet to the thrift store. My short shorts, cool tennis shirt, and knee-high socks were already long gone. My tennis activity became confined to watching Wimbledon and the French and US Opens. When I tore my right rotator cuff in 2015 (my Tanner-like serve done) I assumed my tennis days over.

In 2021, I retired from my day job and was introduced to Pickleball. (<https://all-im-say-in.com/2022/12/15/pickleball-not-for-the-meek/>). I loved it. It wasn't tennis, but it was, I thought, as close as I was ever going to get to playing tennis again. So be it.

Then one of our pickleball group (Pete) introduced the idea of trying to play tennis again. A group of us agreed to give it a shot. Pete created a "group chat" called *Tennis Masters* and it was game on. We were playing Tuesday, 5:00pm. at the public courts.

So I went out and bought a Head Titanium Racquet, circa 1985, for \$20 at a re-sell shop. Scrounged up some used tennis balls. Put on my pickleball attire of baggy gym shorts, ankle socks, pickleball shoes and a faded, worn-since-1992 t-shirt then off to the courts.

Six of us showed up. The tennis court appeared to be the size of a football field. As we warmed up, one player promptly hit his first ball at a sharp 90 degree angle onto the adjacent court, narrowly missing a young girl's head. Another swung and missed on the first dozen balls hit to him. The best pickleballer in our group tossed up a tennis serve, whiffed, and fell down. I hit a ball out of the court, over the fence, onto the street, where it ended up in traffic.

Playing tennis in your 60's and 70's is different from playing tennis in the '60's and 70's.

But, man, we had fun. It was great to relive our "glory days" of the 1970s. Back then, "*we stood arrow straight, unencumbered by the weight of all those hustlers and their schemes. We stood proud, we stood tall, high above it all, we still believed in our dreams.*" And we could still hit an overhead, charge the net, hit a two-handed backhand and play a five set match.

I enjoyed my return to tennis so much I've decided to make the summer of '24 a '70s summer. In addition to playing tennis I'm going to find a red headband to wear while taking rides in my buddy's Corvette. I'm going to unearth my '70's albums and listen to them on a turntable. I'm planning on rewatching *Jaws*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Smokey & the Bandit* and *Saturday Night Fever*.

I'm going to find and drink a Billy beer while I play Space Invaders. I'll adopt a pet rock, find a pair of bell-bottom disco jeans to wear, and start jogging in tight running shorts. I might customize my van and add a CB radio. It will be a sight to see.

There may be no future looking to the past, but returning to it from time to time can be a blast. Back in the '70's, for us boomers, all of our life was still in front of us. Isn't that still true?

We'll be playing next Thursday. It's happening. Care to join us?

That's all I'm sayin'

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