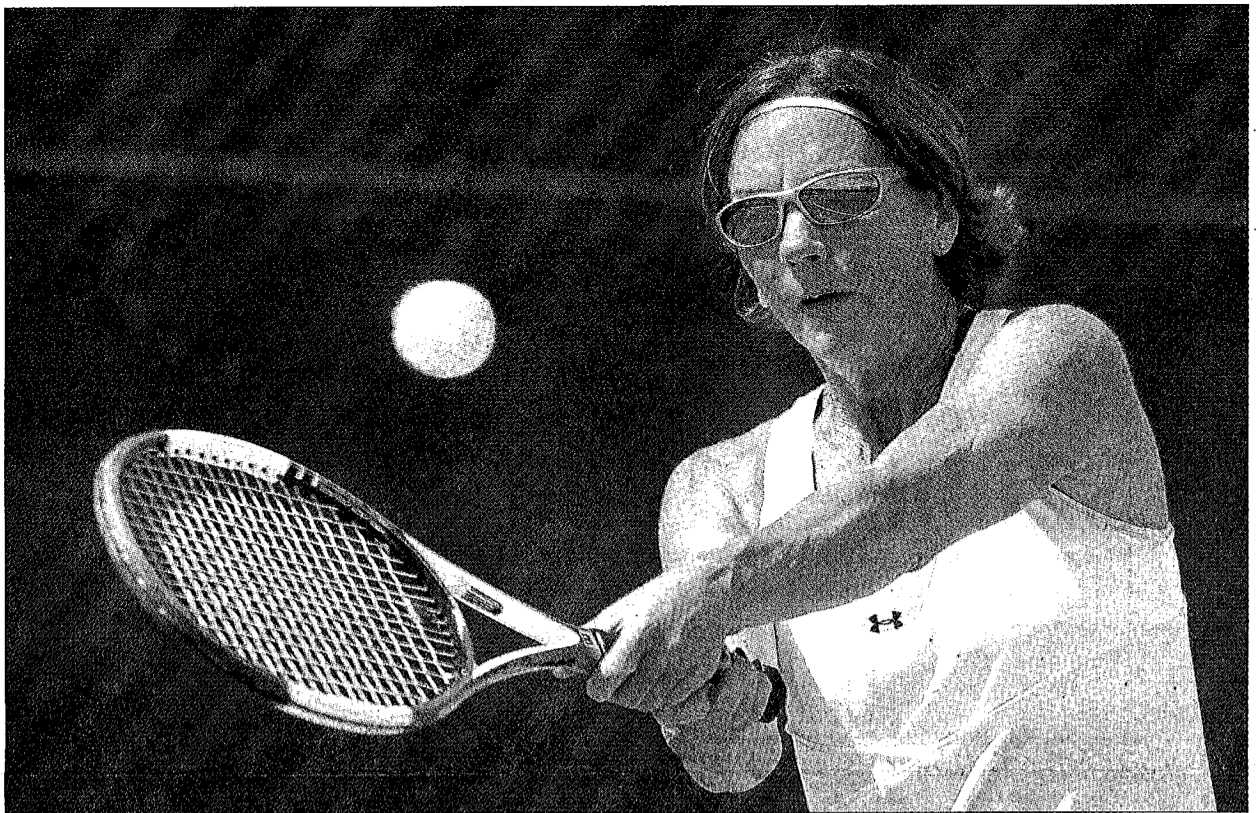


Patti Helper of Loveland returns a shot to Jessica McMillan of Fort Collins during the 3.0 singles finals of the ninth annual Debbie Boose Memorial Tennis Tournament on Sunday at North Lake Park. Helper, won, 6-2, 4-6, 1-0

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Net success

Participation soared as tourney cleared obstacles

By ADAM DUNIVAN
SPORTS WRITER

A week of severe weather, a down economy ... nothing can slow down this tennis tournament.

The ninth annual Debbie Boose Memorial Tournament wrapped up competition Sunday, with smiles all around as

the weather that caused bits of hassle throughout the week appropriately stayed away from the North Lake Park courts.

Thanks in large part to players like Loveland's Patti Helper, the Boose received a huge boost this weekend, too, as participation numbers were way up this year.

"I would love to do this every year if I stay healthy. I'm a little sore, so we'll see how that goes," said Helper, this being her first time in the brackets. "It's such a friendly thing, and people are so great. Especially the ones who organize it."

Helper, who said she hasn't played but for just a couple of years, saw a pamphlet for the week's events while at the Fort Collins Country Club recently. Not having a bunch of tournament experience, she decided to sign up because "I just like being outside."

Needless to say, winning the 3.0 women's singles portion — she beat Jessica McMillan of Fort Collins, 6-2, 4-6, 1-0 — exceeded her expectations.

"I'm real new at it, so I'm just trying to improve. I didn't know where I'd fit in and wanted to see what it was like," Helper said. "I don't ever play that hard ... ever. But it was nice to play somebody like that."

There were many different levels of competition, but a

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BOOSE: Parent/child divisions add to family feel of tournament

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couple of changes brought a whole other element to the challenge in 2009. The organizers opted to present new brackets consisting of parents and their children this year, with father/son and mother/daughter teams getting to play each other in what seemed to be a well-received addition.

Those parent/child teams are nothing new, but having their own bracket to compete in was something special.

"This has been a family event anyway with everything we have, so we thought we'd involve the family element in the tennis we have, too," said Jon Messick, the tournament coordinator. "Some of them, it's been the first time they've played with each other and they've really enjoyed it. I think that's going to continue."

Bob and Joe Diaz, also Loveland residents, would have competed in some form of doubles anyway. After, Bob has had that opportunity with another son, and he has coached Joe for years. Sunday,

they won the 18-under bracket by defeating Kent and Cort Roberts, 6-1, 6-3.

"One of my dreams when raising my three sons is to play in a tournament with them when they got old enough, and (Joe) is the last one. This was the first time I'd won a tournament with them," Bob Diaz said. "We were really happy to see that father/son thing."

Added Joe: "It's been great to play with him and show him what he's been able to teach me. It's great to see the others, too, to see how their father has taught their son how to play and be able to play together in a tournament."

Messick said a junior tournament may be in the mix for the future, just another good sign of the event's continued popularity.

The tournament benefits Pathways Hospice, and marketing director Kim Mueller said the week's proceeds should come close to or exceed \$30,000.

"We're thrilled with the way things went again. What we've done this year with the family

brackets, the Quick Start (an introduction for kids to tennis) ... really added another dimension," Mueller said.

While Helper and the Diaz boys were first-time winners, they weren't the only locals to take home another beautiful piece of art — the prize awarded to the finalists. Winners included David Newgord (3.0 men's singles), David Riffel (4.5 men's singles), Richard Kekar and Ralph Murphy (3.0 men's doubles), Jared Petersen and Craig Smith (4.0 men's doubles), Darlene Erickson and Jeannette Popp (3.0 women's doubles), Bethany Anderson (4.0 women's doubles), Val Hecker and Petersen (4.0 mixed doubles) and Shannon and Elizabeth Galligan (mother/daughter 18-under).

This year's art was a reprint of a water color called "Rocky Mountain High" from Dick Schilling that was auctioned off on Friday — another \$725 that went toward the hospice.

"It's nice to get a painting instead of a little trophy," Helper said as she looked at it.