



HEALTH OPTIONS

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John Allen DeSaegher, 82, left, and Bobby Narmore, 81, have kept fit over the years by playing racquetball three to four times a week. They are seen here at the Martinez Physical Fitness Center at Schofield Barracks in Wahiawa.

JOHN ALLEN DESAEGHER

>> **Age:** 82
>> **Residence:** Ewa Beach
>> **Favorite racquetball memory:** Once played in a doubles match at Fort DeRussy against professional basketball great Wilt Chamberlain. "Chamberlain's long arms eventually won the game, but I was thrilled to play a world-class athlete," DeSaegher said.

BOBBY NARMORE

>> **Age:** 81
>> **Residence:** Waianae
>> **Interesting facts:** Taught his four children and three grandchildren to play racquetball. He has also played in several national racquetball championships alongside his grandson Ryan Narmore.

SENIORS STILL HOLDING COURT

By Deborah Manog
Special to the Star-Advertiser

On a racquetball court at the Martinez Physical Fitness Center at Schofield Barracks, John Allen DeSaegher and Bobby Narmore squared off against a pair of players decades younger than the octogenarians.

One of their opponents served the ball with a swift, brute swing of her racket, and the ball ricocheted off the court's far wall as the 81-year-old Narmore hobbled toward it.

For a game characterized by balls that zip across the court at 60 mph, Narmore has to be a strategist. With a deftly positioned swing of his own, Narmore, a man with a head of powder-

white hair and a thick silver mustache, sent the ball bouncing off the far wall and rolling across the floor before either of his opponents could respond.

That's a point for Narmore and DeSaegher.

"We can't play harder but we can play smarter — that's our motto," said the 82-year-old DeSaegher. "It's fun to play younger players who aren't as experienced and look at us as a couple of old farts. Then if we beat them, they're really embarrassed."

But racquetball has helped Narmore and DeSaegher defeat more than unsuspecting opponents. The pair credit the sport with giving their bodies a sound cardiovascular workout that keeps their reflexes sharp. Although both

men have always been athletic, racquetball has been the sport they've played their entire life.

"When I was 70 I said, 'I hope I'll still be playing racquetball at 80,' then when I turned 80 I said, 'I hope I'll still be playing next year,'" DeSaegher said. "Now that I'm 82, I hope I'll be playing racquetball when I'm 83 — that's in about three months."

The two friends were brought together by their love of the sport. Both were serving in the U.S. military — DeSaegher in the Army and Narmore in the Air Force — when they met at an outdoor court in Waikiki while stationed in Hawaii in the 1960s.

"We just happened to meet

Please see **RACQUETBALL, D2**



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Both Bobby Narmore, left, and John Allen DeSaegher have played racquetball their entire lives.

RACQUETBALL: Routine helps seniors stay fit, active

Continued from D1

there 50 years ago at Fort DeRussy, where a bunch of the guys would just come down and start playing racquetball," DeSaegher said.

Their friendship was cut short when the Army transferred DeSaegher to California. They didn't stay in touch but they kept playing racquetball.

Five years ago DeSaegher and his wife, Norma, a Kauai native, moved back to Oahu from San Diego. Eager to remain active, DeSaegher returned to Schofield Barracks and was surprised to find

Narmore waiting for a game at the Army installation's racquetball courts.

Since then they've played racquetball together three times a week.

DeSaegher, a retired Army colonel, and Narmore, a retired Air Force chief master sergeant, view each other as a support system in their mutual desire to lead a fit lifestyle for as long as possible.

For DeSaegher, playing racquetball has remained a vital part of his life, despite two hip replacements, triple bypass heart surgery, a pacemaker, lower back dete-

rioration and emphysema. Besides racquetball, DeSaegher also swims three times a week, weight-trains six days a week and walks 3 miles every day.

Narmore plays racquetball four times a week and takes his little terrier, named Monster, for twice-daily walks around his Waianae neighborhood. For him, racquetball has kept him moving and healthy for most of his life.

"At our age it's real easy to get lazy and just sit at home," Narmore said. "That's why I try to make sure I keep coming back here to play even when I'd rather be watching TV."

Narmore had no major health problems until a few months ago, when he started to experience paral-

ysis in his hands. Lacking the ability to grip a racket forced him to stop playing for several weeks in March.

Narmore said he often beat his friend before his hand problems. Now DeSaegher regularly beats Narmore and proudly boasts the results to his wife when he returns home to Ewa Beach.

But even though both men love the competition, they say beating each other isn't as important as maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

"If we get exercise and get a good workout, then we are winners, that's our attitude," DeSaegher said.

His racquetball partner — always a competitor — agreed.

"It's better," Narmore said, "when you win."