



'Let the Games Begin' ... Health, Wellness, Inspiration, Competition & Fun!

by Marsha B. Felton

The exciting 2012 Bay Area Senior Games/CA Senior Games Championships are for athletes from age 50 to over 100 yrs. old. These inspiring athletes (primarily 'boomers') are heartened by involvement and accompanying participation from family, friends and their communities. Nearly 3,000 athletes are anticipated to join in the competition and fun ... you can too, as an athlete, volunteer or spectator!

Anne Warner Cribbs heads the 2012 BASG/CSGA Championships, and was President of the Local Organizing Committee for the first-ever 2009 National Senior Games held in the Bay Area. Anne is CEO of BASOC (Bay Area Sports Organizing Committee), an Olympic Gold medal swimmer (Rome, 1960), serves on many boards, including Olympic associations, California Senior Games, San Jose Sports Authority, USA Table Tennis and WISE (Women in Sports and Events.)



An excerpt from Anne's introduction for a recent Bay Area/CA Senior Games e-news: "2012 promises to be an exciting year - it is a qualifying year for senior athletes to be eligible to compete in the 2013 Summer National Senior Games in Cleveland. The 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games will begin July 27 in London England and will inspire us all. When I think about the Olympic Games, I also think that you...as senior athletes...exemplify the true Olympic Spirit ... the commitment to continue to achieve your potential...people of all ages, even those who didn't think they could swim, run or jump anymore, are inspired to a more active, healthy and fulfilling life...that's the TRUE Olympic spirit and the real meaning of the Olympic Movement, a challenge to all of us to be the best we can be. Once more we applaud and commend your continuing commitment to exercise, to being inspired to do your best and achieve your potential."

These athletes play hard, honor the competition, have fun and set an example for all ages with their dedication to health, fitness and persevering attitude!

The Senior Games achieve many positive influences for athletes, (3 profiles below), their families and communities. Regardless of their sport, they epitomize this quotation:

*"Honor the run and CA Senior Games sports. Train Enough, but not too much.
Know that you are the torch bearer for those younger.
You show them not just what you can do, but what they will be able to do.
You show them their future."*

Modified Creed of the Ancient Marathoner & motto for the BASG/CSGA Championships

Robert (Bob) Benson



Sport: Rugby

Age: 63

Height: 5'7"; Weight: 135 lbs.

Occupation: Consultant; Serial Entrepreneur

Challenge & commitment: "To stay in shape and continue with fitness that allows me to play rugby at a competitive Masters level into my 70s and beyond!"

Education: BS Mechanical Engineering, Iowa State University; MBA, Harvard University

Family Status: Wife Jo. Two daughters Chantel (31), Hillary (27) and son Travis (22)

Residence: San Carlos, CA

Bob has always been involved with sports, fitness and the outdoors. Growing up in Iowa, from age 5-college, he played all available sports: tennis, basketball, football, softball and 4-wall handball. Bob was always short and light-weight, and made up for lack of stature by hustle, fitness, quickness and team play.

Bob started playing rugby at 26, when he began his MBA program at Harvard University's Business School (HBS). The qualifications were: 'If you are between 5'4" and 6'10" and weigh 140-300 lbs, you can play rugby.' While Bob barely made the weight cutoff, he signed up and "that changed everything." He became starting scrumhalf (quarterback) for the HBS Rugby team his first year and President his second year.

In 1981, as President of the Palo Alto Ruby Club, he initiated the merger with the SF X-Olympic club to form the PAXO Rugby Club, thus the PAXO Olde Blacks Masters team, which play 8-12 games annually.

Bob also competes in 2-5 games a year for the Harvard Business School Old Boys team; families travel with them internationally. The HBS Old Boys once shared a '3rd half,' an established rugby camaraderie tradition, with Prince Albert in Monaco. The guys that have just knocked each other down on the rugby pitch, drink together, tell stories and sing!

He finds the position of scrumhalf fits his skill-set very well, as does his son Travis, who went on his first HBS Old Boys team Italy tour at 3 mos., started playing rugby at 10. Travis played for the USA U19-U20 Nationals team as scrumhalf.

Bob starts each morning doing 20 minutes (1,200 reps) of crunch sit-ups and a set of pushups while watching the latest recorded international rugby match. Serendipitously, he's discovered that his rugby pass has actually improved with age. He still tackles players that out-weigh him by 150 lbs. His weekly workout regime also includes touch rugby, running 3-4 miles, lifting weights, squash and tennis.



For the past 12 years, Bob has coached the Peninsula Green High School Rugby Club. He passionately believes that rugby contributes to positive character development i.e., discipline, self-reliance, confidence, humility and spirited support for “your band of brothers.”

Rugby is Bob’s “excuse to roll in the mud and play like kids.” Paraphrasing a favorite quote: “*I may grow older, but not necessarily grow up!*”

Bob and the PAXO Olde Blacks, which in 2011 began playing at the Bay Area Senior Games, are one of 6 Rugby teams scheduled to compete at Steuber Rugby Field, Stanford on March 17.

Gerard Bessat

Sport: Soccer

Age: 65

Occupation: Retired; formerly IT with Bank in Toulouse, France; Visa International in San Mateo & Foster City

Challenge: “As an athlete, to accept the natural aging transition which affects speed and physical strength, such as refraining from attempting ‘scissor kicks!’“

Education: Graduate degree in aeronautical and aerospace engineering from I.S.A.E, Institut Supérieur de l’Aéronautique et de l’Espace in France; Masters in Computer Science from University of Arizona

Marital Status: Married. Wife Jeri. Two daughters, Claire (35) and Emily (32)

Residence: Sonoma; still playing soccer year round & developing knowledge of wine industry “including lots of wine tasting”

Growing up in France, Gerard played youth soccer, then played organized rugby and tennis into his 20’s. He switched to competitive soccer later and has remained totally engaged in various team competitions.



While on a NASA scholarship for his Masters degree at U. of Arizona, he met his future wife Jeri. Both ended up living in France. “Vagaries of life” brought them back to the U.S., this time with Gerard’s work to the Bay Area in 1984.

Gerard has played in the Peninsula Soccer League, with an open-division team and an over-35 team, then with an over-50 Silicon Valley Soccer League team. A couple of years ago, he encouraged his daughter Emily, then in her late 20’s, to join a co-ed league. She’d always liked soccer, though she had not played since A.Y.S.O. when she was 5. Emily responded that she was interested, but “only if you would play on my team.” While most of the players were younger than Gerard, they shared fun, irreplaceable father-daughter team games.

With a group of players from San Mateo (45-75), Gerard has played/toured many countries. They organize friendly games, and always ask to play 'veterans.' He has found, confirmed by other foreign-born players, that there are few, if any, organized leagues abroad for players over 50, which of course "results in very challenging games against younger players!" While the U.S. has lots of over-50, 60 and 65 leagues, Gerard considers that there maybe "less drive than in the U.S. to 'stay young at all costs' in other countries, and therefore make the sacrifices necessary to stay in shape, as well as probably fewer resources to organize competitive leagues."

Gerard moved to Sonoma in July 2011 and joined 'Real (pronounced Re-al) Marin' over-50 Marin Soccer League team. He also plays 4-5 tournaments a year with friends, including Las Vegas, Wanderpokal Tournament and the Veteran's Cup, affiliated with FIFA through the U.S. Adult Soccer Association. He has competed in Senior Games from 2006-2011. While "not concerned with sports glory," his teams have proudly won several trophies over the years.

Gerard and Real Marin are scheduled to play at IM South Fields, Stanford on March 10 & 11.



Leslie Platshon



Sport: Water Polo

Age: 58

Occupation: Physician Assistant/Mom

Challenge: Keep the "aging process" under control by training 6 days/week. Keep on paving the way for older women's water polo for years to come. Become a 2-sport athlete at the Sr. Games...I would love to get on a basketball team!

Education: BS Microbiology, University of Maryland; Allied Health/Physician Assistant, Baylor College of Medicine

Family Status: Husband Mark. Sons Aaron (28), Kevin (26), Scott (20), daughter Sarah (24)

City of Residence: Menlo Park



Leslie grew up as a pre-title 9 tomboy and always wanted to be part of a team. She founded the Menlo Mavens six years ago, after watching her three sons play water polo for about 15 years in high school and college. She was a regular Masters swimmer, comfortable and experienced in the water. Her sons were very supportive and instrumental in helping her start the program. Mom and sons all connected on a whole new level, they taught her moves (Leslie says: "not that I can do them well!") and team strategy. Each of her sons has coached the team extensively and in the pool. A highlight of her birthday last year was getting to play with them.

Leslie has started doing some coaching; her sons are her mentors in that regard as well. The Mavens have evolved into more than Leslie had ever dreamed. She loves the competition and the physical challenges of water polo, plus, she expressed: "the camaraderie and friendships with women of all ages has made this group a second family to me." The Menlo Mavens have competed at the Sr. Games for the past 4 years, placing 1st or 2nd.

The Menlo Mavens will be competing at Stanford's Avery Aquatic Center on March 10 and 11.

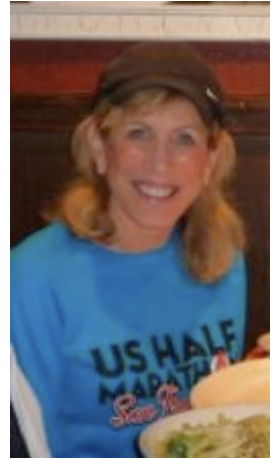


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Written by [Marsha B. Felton](#), consultant for the 2012 Bay Area Senior Games/ CA Senior Games Championships. This article, here with corrections, appears in *ActiveOver50* Winter Issue.

"What an assignment ... including the delight to interview 3 of our admirable Senior Games athletes, whose infectious enthusiasm, competitive spirit, joy, and passion about fitness characterizes the lifestyles that the Bay Area Senior Games/CA Senior Games Championships are all about!"

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Dates: [March 9 - April 10, 2012](#)
Locations: Primarily Stanford University campus and other Bay Area venues
27 sports; hundreds of events; individual and team competitions; inaugural Encore Cup events
Opening Weekend: March 9 Solar Torch Relay; Athlete Pasta Fest
March 10-11 Athlete check-in and exhibitor area at Stanford's Pac-10 Plaza
Athlete online registration closes February 29; Volunteers online registration closes March 7
For detailed information: www.bayareaseiniorgames.org Welcome (free) spectators
Sponsorships: mfelton@bayareaseiniorgames.org