

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Military Veteran Amputee and Heart Attack Survivor compete in Florida Senior Games Cycling Time Trials

CLEARWATER – Florida Senior Games cyclists took a trip to the beach Thursday for the 5K and 10K Time Trials, riding a course along the Fort DeSoto Park North Beach.

However, the scenery along North Beach, named the top beach in the United States by Dr. Beach and Trip Advisory in recent years, was not the focus of the riders who prepare themselves to endure physical pain during training and while competing in races.



For two riders pulling up to the starting line at the 25th Anniversary Florida Senior Games, the pain of the Time Trials race was nothing compared what led up to their performances Wednesday in the 3.1 and 6.2 mile ride on the bike.

Clearwater's Shawn Mello (*at left*) rode both races with a specially-fitted prosthetic right leg to clip into the pedal of his bike. Mello, a former Army Green Beret, lost his leg at the knee in a boating training operation in Key West in 2003.

Mello, who turned 50 in September, is competing in his first Florida Senior Games. Once fitted with a prosthesis, he attempted to continue to stay fit by running, but experienced discomfort to his knee.

He spent time doing triathlons before being introduced to competitive cycling through a Military Adaptive Sports Program. He designed, along with his prosthetist, the prosthesis to clip into his bike pedal and finished with a time of 7:47 in the 50-54 age group 5K and 17:15 in the 10K Time Trials. He will ride in the 20K and 40K Road Race on Saturday as well.

"The course runs through my neighborhood," he said about the races to be held at Crest Lake Park in Clearwater. "All I have to do is get on my bike and ride down to the starting line."

Two days after qualifying for the 2016 Florida Senior Games at the Gainesville Senior Games on September 23, Marvin Sonne was out on a 70-mile training ride, when he felt discomfort in his chest after reaching the top of a hill in his hometown of Mt. Dora. He stopped and mentioned it to his riding partner. With only 13 miles left, they decided to finish the ride.

When he got home he told his wife, Cindy, the pain through his chest, neck and arms was much more severe. He was having a heart attack and rushed to the hospital to learn he had 95% blockage to his arteries and a stent was inserted.



Today, 76 days later, Sonne (*at left*) was at the beach riding in the Florida Senior Games 5K and 10K Time Trials, finishing with times of 8:09 and 17:15, respectively.

“My doctor told me heart attack patients can go through a stress test between four and six weeks afterwards,” Sonne said. “After four weeks I took the test and was told there was no reason that I couldn’t get back on the bike.”

Like Mello, Sonne will return on Saturday to ride the 20K and 40K Road Races at Crest Lake Park.

In the Lawn Bowls competition, held at the Clearwater Lawn Bowls and Shuffleboard Complex, Arthur Allen and David Murray, both of Clearwater, repeated as Open Pairs champions winning three games in the 16-team field. In the three-game competition format, rolling four bowls in 12 frames, the athletes rolled the 3-4 pound bowls approximately 120 feet a total of 144 times.

Allen and Murray pulled out the win in the third and final game of the competition, against Roy and Shelley McCartney, of Clearwater, scoring the final point in the 12th and final end to preserve the win.

In the final frame, the McCartney’s were sitting with three bowls counting when Murray countered with his last bowl to score the an 11-8 win.

Following the medal presentation, the 83-year old Allen proclaimed the and Murray would be back in 2017 for a “Threepeat.”

On the last of six days of Tennis, Judith and Pat Siracusa, of Clearwater won a pair of matches to win the gold medal in the 70-74 age group. The Siracusa’s advanced through the 10-team bracket winning four matches in two days, all in straight sets. In the championship match they defeated the 2015 gold medal winners in the age group, Patsy Rucker and Tom Burgess, of Summerfield.

The 2016 Tennis competition featured 236 athletes competing over the course of six days. It was the most participants in Florida Senior Games Tennis since 2005.

The 25th Anniversary Florida Senior Games, featuring more than 2,600 athletes competing in 24 sports over nine days, continue on Friday with Horseshoes at Ed C. Wright Park, the first day of Billiards, and the Nine-Ball event, at Stroker’s Sports Bar and Grill and the first of three days of Pickleball with Men’s and Women’s Singles at The Long Center and the North Greenwood Recreation Center.

All events of the 2016 Florida Senior Games have no admission charge and the public is encouraged to attend.

Schedule for Friday, December 9

Pickleball, The Long Center and North Greenwood Recreation Center, Clearwater, 8:00 a.m.

Horseshoes, Ed C. Wright Park, Clearwater, 9:00 a.m.

Billiards (Nine-Ball), Stroker’s Sports Bar and Grill, Clearwater, 10:00 a.m.

