

**Robert G. Taylor**  
**USAPA Ambassador, Anna Maria Island, Florida**



Bob Taylor has spent most of his life with one kind of a racquet or another in his hand. It was 65 years ago, at the age of 13 that he started playing Badminton in Stratford, Ontario. He played the game for 30 years. While attending the University of Western Ontario, Bob served as the captain of the University's Badminton Team for four years. During this same period Bob also enjoyed playing squash and tennis. While residing in Washington DC, he took on the competitive sport of racquetball until he retired in 1994.

Like many of us, Bob decided to spend his retirement days in Florida and relocated to historic Anna Maria Island, an island of just three small cities physically connected to the mainland of Florida by wooden bridge in 1921 and with a current population of 8,446. It was here that in 2007 the Anna Maria Island Community Center (AMICC) was being rebuilt and two pickleball courts were included in the plans; play would begin around October 1, 2007.

Bob was anxious to learn another new (paddle) sport and has since been playing 4 to 6 times a week, truly enjoying the game. In early 2008, back problems, including back surgery stopped his play, but for the last six months he has been in charge of pickleball activities at AMICC, including promotional efforts to recruit new players. During this time, Bob learned about USAPA from another member and became the Local Ambassador because he believes “...*many older people would find Pickleball a great fun activity to enjoy in their later years and I have the time to promote it.*”

In late September the Anna Maria Island Bridge, one of the main bridges to the Island, was scheduled to be closed for several weeks for repair. The weekends between September 29 and November 13 were scheduled for lots of fun and festivities through a project called *Bridging the Gap*. Members of the business community, non-profit agencies and many individuals worked and planned ways to attract visitors to the island. Bob and his AMICC group scheduled six weekly pickleball exhibitions at their Community Center. While Bob will tell you that turnout to the demos has been modest, pickleball was mentioned in several local papers including the Amelia Island Sun, the Bradenton Herald and even on the ABC Action News Website. From the Amelia Island Sun (Vol. 9 No. 3 - October 8, 2008) “*Anna Maria Island was rocking with Bridging the Gap activities last weekend as we reverted to attracting people to our Island by offering fun..... heard good things about the Pickleball demonstration and we note that it's a great sport for older people who want to compete and get some exercise.*”



The number of players at AMICC continues to grow. Over the last year about 60 different players have returned multiple times to play. Pickleball is played for two hours six times a week, with about 25 members arriving to play at least once during the week. Attendance tends to peak between January and March when seasonal 'snow birds' return to the island. Bob's efforts in the next few months will include finding time for technique and strategy clinics to help members improve their play. And using the two local papers, the promotional efforts will continue to be spent trying to get year round players to increase off season attendance.



The smile on Bob's face tells you how very proud he is of the AMICC Pickleball players. They recently brought home the **GOLD** to Anna Maria Island. Bob and his partner Jim Teasdale took the Gold Medal in the 75-79 Men's Doubles at the Tampa Bay Senior Games on October 8<sup>th</sup>. Bob and his partner Penny Williams placed second in the 75-79 Mixed Doubles. Penny and her doubles partner Toni Teasdale represented Anna Maria Island well, playing into the finals for third place, but losing 9-7 in the third game. Congratulations!

*From left to right; Bob Taylor, Penny Williams, Toni Teasdale and Jim Teasdale.*