



National Senior Games Association

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Personal Best Athlete Profile

John Morgan, Jr., 90

Salt Lake City, Utah

Unexpected Gains

John Morgan, Jr. is first and foremost an entrepreneurial businessman. The role model was his father, who invited him to join as a partner in resource development ventures after John earned his degrees at the University of Utah and completed Army service in World War II. Their speculation in oil, gas and mining leases had its bumps in the road, but eventually proved to be successful. After his father passed, John continued to look for new challenges.

In the mid '80s John and his wife visited the sleepy town of St. George in southwest Utah and had a vision to develop a resort and retirement community there. Little did he know that this venture would bring rewards more precious than financial profit. After establishing a golf resort and hotel, John decided they needed to do something special to attract attention to their dream. Why not host a senior sporting event to highlight St. George as an active senior community?

What resulted is now known as the [Huntsman World Senior Games](#), an annual multisport competition that draws 10,000 senior athletes from nearly 50 countries. It is also Utah's sanctioned state qualifying event for the National Senior Games. John had a hand in bringing the two organizations together for the benefit of both. St. George has also been transformed, and at one time was recognized as the fastest growing community in America. While 150,000 now live in and around St. George, it retains its small town friendliness and charm, a factor that keeps athletes returning every year.

John's vision, perseverance and ability to draw support for a great idea, combined with his commitment to promote active, healthy lifestyles for seniors, are qualities shared by many pioneers of the Senior Games Movement and prompted us to share his story as a prime example of Personal Best attitude.

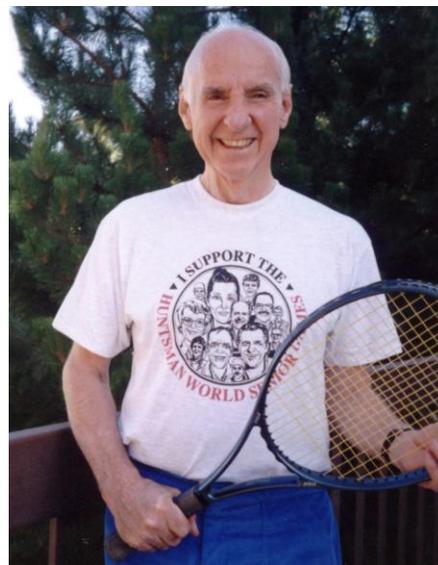
John has wielded his tennis racquet in all but one of the 25 Huntsman games and continues to serve on its board of trustees and as President at the age of 90. And he's looking for more.

How did the Huntsman World Senior Games get started?

It started with a golf course really. I thought St. George had a lot of potential as a resort, recreation and retirement community. There were about 4,000 living there at the time and nobody had ever thought of it that way. I met with a bunch of farmers who owned some land and they liked the idea and agreed to sell and so we got a golf course built. Then we built a Hilton Hotel, town homes and some sport facilities for swimming and tennis and so on.

But I knew we needed something to really introduce people to St. George, and the idea of having some kind of senior sport activity would be a good way to attract people to come and maybe buy a home. That's how we got into it. My wife Daisy and I put the idea out for a senior Olympic type event, and it was Daisy who suggested it wouldn't cost any more to invite people from all over the whole world.

We really didn't know who would show up, and it has had its ups and downs, but things worked out and it just kept growing to be what it is now.



It always starts with an idea or a vision. But it takes more than one person and the resources necessary to make it happen, and in this case you were successful with attracting the support.

There were many people who believed in the idea and greatly contributed. So many. Of course you need money to do something like this, and I was fortunate to meet Jon Huntsman and that he saw the potential and came in to support. Jon is the type of guy who supports something that is needed and he and his family have been with our games all through these years. I really think he was never looking out for Jon Huntsman but was looking out for all of these participants coming in and for what it represents.

So this started as a business venture and quickly became different from any other?

From my point of view it really started with thinking of a way to increase the value of some property for a resort development. But honestly it became more about having something really worthwhile that represents health, friendship and peace...that's been the highlight of what we were about. It just came naturally. There's been so much enjoyment. There's the health benefits of having these games. And It's amazing the friendships that have been developed over the years. There are so many long term athletes that have become buddies forever.

It kinda brought my wife and me closer together too. She wasn't an athlete before but got involved doing the race walk for many years before she passed.

Tennis is your senior sport. Have you played it all of your life?

I thought I was a pretty fast runner in junior high and high school and then found out I wasn't the fastest (laughs). But I've always tried to be in good shape. And it gains importance the older you get. And tennis is a great way to go.

I've played tennis off and on for a long time. I've been interested in it ever since I listened to matches on the radio with players like Don Budge. I've never won any tournaments but I've enjoyed the exercise and the camaraderie that comes with playing. It's a great sport and I wish I was better at it, but I totally enjoy playing and watching it. I've made every year of the Huntsman games except one year when I had triple bypass heart surgery. It's been ten years since that and I'm glad I've survived and could continue to participate.

My main incentive is naturally to be in good shape and be active. I'm still sitting here at my desk at 90 years old and I'm going after things that have possibilities financially. I get excited about the challenge, you know sometimes things work out and sometimes they don't.

So you're admittedly not an elite athlete. What is your motivation to compete?

I always want to win a medal, and I haven't won that many. But it's a good incentive. But it's all the other things I've mentioned too. I'm going to play doubles in the 90 plus group with a guy from Florida I've gotten to know, and I wouldn't have met him any other way. To meet new people and to see old friends is exciting and rewarding. These games are a great way to do it. There's nothing like it. It's a unique experience.

There's also the health and exercise benefits. What would you say to those who are not doing anything to be active?

Exercising is the greatest thing you can do. You can't beat it if you want to live a good life, a healthy life and a long life. There are more seniors around now so I think there's such a great need for people to be sold on the idea that exercising - and doing sports like what we're doing - is how you can feel good and be in shape and live longer. I'm sold on it!

It's not good to postpone it. But no matter what age you are, you can start doing something and be better.

We always ask people who inspire others about their inspirations. Who has been yours?

My wife Daisy. She's Number One and always had the right sense about what to do. Our friend John Wunderli is an attorney who donated his services to draw up our nonprofit papers, and he asked us "What should we put down here for what you stand for?" I had already thought we would be about friendship and health, but when I asked Daisy she said "Well, you look around the world and you see all this conflict, so why don't we promote peace among us?" That made it a huge undertaking to stand for. She was always at the center of putting it all together. Oh, yes, later we added fun as another goal. And it has been fun.

It's awful humbling to think about it, to tell you the truth. It's inspiring to me to walk down Main Street and meet some of these accomplished folks who think it's really something to meet someone who was part of getting it started. I'm humbled, pleased and proud to have been a part of it. But I don't like to take the credit. I'm just grateful for the people who helped get it going and for the leadership we have with the games now. I think it has even more potential. We're just getting started!

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