

Villager Wins World Horseshoe Championship

Ron Hopman enjoys playing horseshoes and boasts about his world titles.

By **ALEXANDRIA MANSFIELD**
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It feels good to be a world champion. And Ron Hopman would know.

Hopman, of the Village Santo Domingo, has won two world championships for his horseshoe pitching. The first time he won was in 1992 in the World Men's Class. The second time he won was just two years ago, for the 2018 Elders Class.

This wasn't a lifelong passion for Hopman, though. He didn't begin playing until he saw a sign for horseshoe players in 1989, in Illinois.

"We did it when we were kids, but we hadn't done it for a long time," Hopman said about getting back into the game. "We went up there and they told us what we had to do, and we started playing. And then we just didn't stop."

Now, he travels all over the country playing horseshoes and has met people from plenty of other countries, including South Africa, Japan and Canada.

"People come from all over the world to play," he said. "It's just a great game."

Dave Wietrzak, president of

The Villages Horseshoe Club, said the league hosts many championship and tournament winners.

Horseshoes is a great game for Villagers because it promotes good exercise, said Wietrzak, of the Village Hacienda.

Hopman serves as a member of the board of trustees for the club and Wietrzak said his "efforts help make this club a success."

When he played in the world championship tournament the first time, Hopman said he needed to play five games a day for three days, and the best of the 15 games would win.

"I won 14 of the 15 games," he said. "I was second the next year, and then second or third for a bunch of years."

And then two years ago, Hopman won again.

"It's also great to be a world champion," he said.

In addition to the social aspects of the game, Hopman

said it's just an enjoyable activity, and he plays six days a week.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. "It's enjoyable, and you meet wonderful people."

Hopman said the high level of competition in some of The Villages horseshoe leagues helps keep him on his toes.

However, it's the fellowship of playing this game that is one of its biggest appeals, he said.

"It's the camaraderie with all the guys and ladies," he said. "We play in different tournaments all over, and we make friends everywhere we go."

Despite playing the game just for the joy it brings him, Hopman said he's also still got his eyes on another world championship.

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Ron Hopman, of the Village Santo Domingo, is a two-time world champion horseshoes pitcher.