

# Father-and-son combination makes 'big racquet'

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

GREECE — On paper, this racquetball duo didn't command much respect when it made its debut as a tournament doubles team four months ago.

Yet one hour after taking the court, the "Tony and Joe Show" had its opponents gasping for breath.

"We surprised some people. They thought we were not going to be that good," Father Anthony P. Mugavero recalled with a chuckle. "They knew I was a priest and my father was beyond 70 (years old)."

Father Mugavero, 44, and his father Joseph, 79, split their match's first two games before finally succumbing in the third and final contest. So even though the two men have only taken up the sport in the past decade, the Mugaveros are not to be taken lightly on the racquetball circuit.

Joseph, a Greece resident and parishioner at Our Mother of Sorrows Church, began playing racquetball when he was 69. He has advanced several steps past the beginner level and now plays at the high-C rank against much younger competitors.

"I don't think I've played with anybody my age," remarked Joseph, a former construction engineer with the State of New York.

Father Mugavero, who currently serves as pastor of St. Bridget's Church in Rochester, caught the racquetball bug after his father joined a local club in the mid-1980s and bought him a membership there as well. The priest has steadily improved his game and now holds his own against B-level players, just a couple of rungs shy of the top local competition.

Father Mugavero, a former standout



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer  
Father Anthony Mugavero (top) and his father, Joseph, occasionally team up as racquetball partners.

wrestler at Greece Arcadia High School and the University of Rochester, has welcomed the return to athletic competition after several years of relative inactivity.

"I'm so glad, because I feel a lot better. In the priesthood, it's very easy to be involved in ministry where your physical body is not being taken care of very well," Father Mugavero said.

He added that Bishop Matthew H. Clark, an avid jogger, strongly encourages diocesan priests to partake in some form of exercise.

Joseph Mugavero's health has benefited from racquetball as well. He reports of improvement in his feet and legs, and his hand-eye coordination is also on the upswing.

Joseph has experienced additional positive results in the stamina department, keeping a pace that would befit a high-school athlete. Rather than be content with a normal racquetball match, he enthusiastically plays up to nine games of the popular indoor sport in one day.

"I can't wait!" he exclaimed. "I'm not happy with just three games."

According to Father Mugavero, his dad's staying power has been an inspiration to members of the Horizon Racquet Club in Greece, where father and son belonged until the facility closed down this past May.

"The comment is always, 'If I could be even half that agile or athletic at even a younger age, I'd be happy,'" Father Mugavero acknowledged.

The Mugaveros are looking forward to hooking on with another racquetball club by this fall so they can take on new rivals — and also play an occasional match against each other.

"I think he takes it easy on me," a smiling Joseph said of his son.

"Baloney," Father Mugavero retorted. "When he serves, he means business."

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The Reverend Thomas H. Green, a native of Rochester, New York and a priest of the Society of Jesus, is spiritual director of San Jose Seminary in Manila, Philippines and Professor of Philosophy and Theology at the Ateneo de Manila University. A noted author on prayer and spirituality, he is currently writing his eighth book while on Sabbatical. His published works include *Drinking From a Dry Well*, *When the Well Runs Dry*, *Opening to God*, *Darkness in the Marketplace*, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, *A Vacation with God*, and *Come Down Zacchaeus*. Many of his works also are available on audio cassette.

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