

A Challenge Serves Riggs Richardson, a Westwood Warrior Senior

For most high school athletes, their senior year is about their final year in their lifelong sport. For Riggs Richardson, this year was different. He joined the tennis team for the first time, stepping onto a court where he had no prior experience but plenty of athletic background.

“What made me want to try is my cousin,” Richardson said. “He has been on the team for all four years and he says practices were really fun, and that interested me.”

Riggs said he is used to jumping around sports, but tennis was a sport he never expected to enjoy.

“I ended up being better than I expected when I showed up to the first practice,” Richardson said. “That made me want to join the team even more.”

A multi-sport athlete, Richardson has played volleyball, football, baseball, golf, and pickleball, which provided him with the skills that translate well into tennis.

Richardson’s first practices, however, weren’t without challenges.

“Honestly, the hardest part of learning a new sports this late was probably just the rulings,” Richardson said. “It’s kind of hard to understand what you’re allowed to do, especially in doubles... I still get lost sometimes.”

Teammate Mark Wright saw Richardson’s struggles firsthand but was impressed by his quick adaptation.

“Obviously it’s hard for everyone,” Wright said. “When he first got to playing tennis, Riggs picked it up super quickly and is definitely good for being a first-timer.”

Coach John Gorman echoed this sentiment.

“Half our team this year had no prior experience,” Gorman said. “I knew Riggs through coaching him in golf, so it was a pleasure having him on our team. The more experienced players train for hours a day, so even they struggle against highly experienced opponents.”

Despite new players’ having a common struggle, he praised Riggs’ attitude.

“Riggs is doing well,” Gorman said. “He’s a high-character guy, and his effort matches that.”

Over the season, Richardson has shown noticeable improvement. He has mastered his serve, gained confidence in doubles play, and increasingly enjoys the sport.

"I can actually serve the ball in the court now," Richardson said. "I'm actually enjoying it a lot more."

Richardson has competed in one official match this season, winning his singles in a third-set tiebreak and learning from a doubles loss. Informal matches against teammates have given him additional opportunities to grow.

Wright also praised Richardson's resilience and character.

"I respect how fun of a person he is to be around playing tennis," Wright said. "It's also fun to watch. Whether he wins or when he's getting down on himself, he'll still bounce back and do better."

Richardson mentioned that tennis is more than just a sport. It's a connection to family and a chance to continue playing beyond high school.

"Playing tennis my senior year means I can just play with my family now," Richardson said. "It can be a fun family activity and something I can do in the future and be pretty good at."

As the season continues, Richardson's journey serves as a reminder that it's never too late to take on a new challenge and embrace the learning curve. He loves and will continue to discover the joy of growth on the court and how it allows him to grow in connection with his family.