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Tennis players, from left, Bassar Richardson, Bernie Hildreth, Patrick Astredo, Thomas Traylor, Sam Creer and George Branch collect the third-place trophy at Holiday Bowl Tournament. Players who competed but are not pictured are Richard Bonino, Melvin Navarro and Ruben Madrid.

**Tennis team competes for fun and fitness**

By LAURA KLOTH  
*myMetro.net*

Metro employees who may have an aversion to treadmills or stationary bikes, will be happy to learn that Metro's tennis team is still going strong - and is recruiting members.

Tennis Captain and ITS Engineer Thomas Traylor invites new players to hit the courts and test their swing and you don't even have to play like Roger Federer to participate.

"The beauty of the sport is that anyone can learn how to play, and you don't have to be that great at it," Traylor said, noting that tennis is a great way to trick your body into a good workout.

"Everyone's welcome, and a lot of times people get kind of afraid to get in there because of that image of being in a tournament - playing against good people. You know, getting beat up and stuff like that. It's really not geared towards that. It's really geared for participation," he said.

Traylor started the team about seven years ago, and while members have come and gone, the core roster of players remains intact.

In October, the team grabbed the third place trophy out of five teams competing at the annual 28<sup>th</sup> Holiday Bowl tournament where Metro's Patrick Astredo, George Branch, Sam Creer, Melvin Navarro, Bassar

Richardson, Bernie Hildreth, Richard Bonino and Ruben Madrid competed against players from Boeing, Jet Propulsion Laboratories, Northrop-Grumman and Southern California Edison.

The team is now training to compete in the Bunny Bowl tournament in April.

Astredo, director of Metro's Fleet Management and Support Services Department, lives in Cerritos and practices twice a week in Long Beach.

"We get out and hang out with each other and get a little relaxation and physical exercise in," and, though he's not "super competitive," he "revs up to win" before every tournament.

Richardson, a Metro contract administrator, practices in Culver City and for the past two-and-a-half years, has "loved every minute of it."

Tennis helps you maintain balance, and because of the repetitive jumping, squatting and shifting, it helps build muscle, he notes. "It's the next best thing to swimming," Richardson said.

Traylor started playing tennis with a friend after college, and began playing competitively in tournaments in Oakland and San Diego.

Later, he played in several U.S. Tennis Association events and traveled to Mexico. He stopped playing for many years, and again, turned to his beloved sport when it became a great stress reducer.

Tennis, he said, "really became an outlet for me" and helped him get through a difficult period after he became a caretaker for a sick parent.

"This swinging a racquet and navigating around court isn't limited to younger players," he said. "Age isn't a factor. You have people that play tennis for years. I mean there's some tennis players in their 60s and 70s who will out beat most young people because it's a mental game as well."

Other team members come from Fullerton, Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Orange County, and practice where they can, when they can.