



Mark Baron at the Delray Beach Open by VITACOST.com — the only tournament in the world featuring an ATP Champions Tour event and an ATP Tour event in the same week at the same venue.

# Serving the tennis community

*How fitness aficionado Mark Baron turned the Delray Beach Open into a world-class event*

By Melissa Perlman  
**Special to The Palm Beach Post**

Mark Baron is 72 years old, the visionary behind the Delray Beach Open by VITACOST.com ATP tennis tournament — an event that’s celebrating its 30th anniversary — and patriarch of a what many refer to as a South Florida tennis dynasty.

Yet he is also the husband — of 51 years — to Sharon, a grandfather to seven, and when it comes to the constant internal battle to stick to a fitness routine, he appears to be just like the rest of us.

Baron, a former high school football player and overall jock who graduated from Boone High in Orlando at 218 pounds with a 32-inch waist and 18-inch neck, has spent his entire adult life doing everything he can to keep a healthy and lean figure.

Today, he is 159 pounds, works out five days a week, eats a balanced yet low-calorie diet, and feels great — save for some joint pains every so often.

## **DISCIPLINED ABOUT HIS FITNESS**

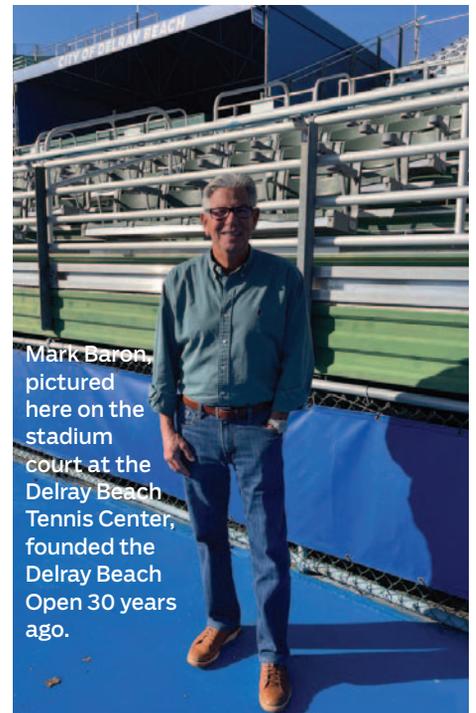
Two days a week, for one hour and 45 minutes, he works out his entire body in his home gym. Pushups, calisthenics, free weights, and more. Three days a week, he bikes with his wife for more than an hour. Baron admits he puts the gears on his bike to the hardest level so that he can ride at the same speed as Sharon but get a more challenging workout.

Baron never wavers.

He admits to dreading the two-day-a-week workout sessions but gets through them by setting out his clothes the night before so he has no chance to change his mind. He forces himself to not focus on what’s left to do but just doing the next thing.

“If I stop, I won’t get started again,” he says.

And for Baron, not getting started again is just not an option. With three adult sons, the last thing he will ever let happen is to have his sons get stronger than him.



Mark Baron, pictured here on the stadium court at the Delray Beach Tennis Center, founded the Delray Beach Open 30 years ago.



Baron (far right) on vacation in Portugal with (from left) friends Michael and Heidi Katz and his wife Sharon.

“I never want one of them grabbing my luggage for me. When that happens, I’m done,” he jokes.

#### INTRODUCED TO TENNIS THROUGH HIS SONS

Baron’s sons, even more than himself, were impressive youth athletes. Two of them, Ivan and Adam, were junior tennis champions. The former played professional tennis on the ATP tour.

That’s how the elder Baron first got into the sport.

Thirty-plus years ago, before Baron founded an ATP Tour tournament and before he ran Challenger events in Pembroke Pines for two years, he was involved in junior tennis for 10 years in South Florida. He specifically ran the junior state championships as a volunteer. That was when Baron truly fell in love with the sport – but only as a fan.

“I love this sport. The physicality, the non-stop nature and how good you have to be to win,” he said.

So, does he play?

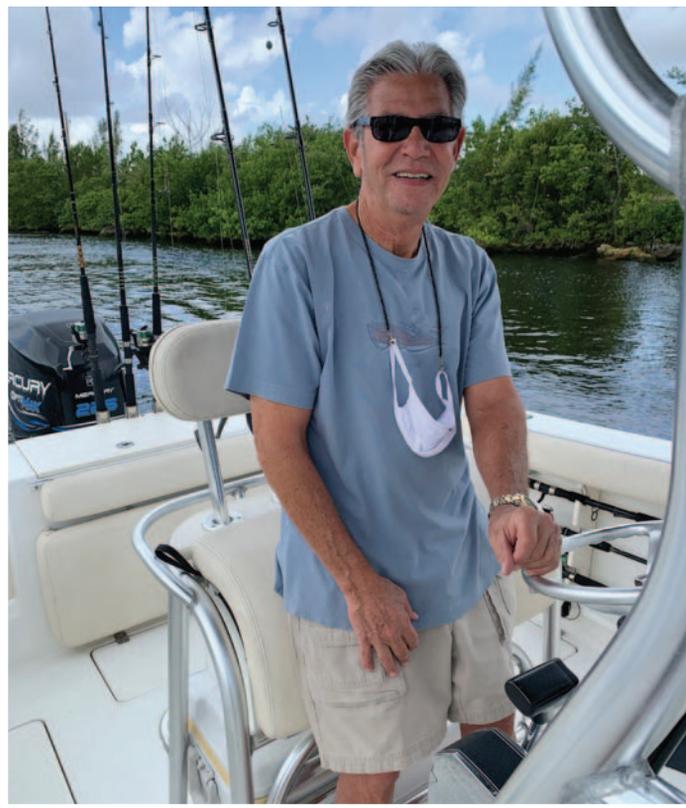
“Nah, I love all aspects of the sport, but I never wanted to play. I’m too much of a perfectionist ... and I learned early on that I would never be good enough to enjoy playing the game.”

Since then, Baron has turned his passion for the game, and his creation, the Delray Beach Open, into one of just 10 ATP Tour events in the United States.

#### DELRAY BEACH OPEN

The Delray Beach Open by VITACOST.com is the only tournament in the world featuring an ATP Champions Tour event and an ATP Tour event in the same week at the same venue. This year’s tournament will be held in Feb. 11-20, 2022 at the Delray Beach Stadium & Tennis Center.

The ATP Champions Tour brings together many of the greatest tennis players in history for competitive and entertaining tournaments around the world. Players are either formerly ranked No. 1 in the world in singles, a Grand Slam singles champion or finalist, or a singles player on a winning



Dedicated to both his fitness and putting on a world-class tennis event, Baron loves spending time on South Florida’s waterways.

Davis Cup team. Players must be retired from ATP Tour competition.

For Baron, an official “senior” himself, the appeal of the Champions Tour is obvious.

“Living here in Palm Beach and Broward counties, if you look at the demographics, the Champions Tour is the perfect event. The players who come out bring fun and camaraderie into the game and our fans enjoy the heck out of it, as do we.”

Past Champions Tour players have included John McEnroe, Ivan Lendl, Patrick Rafter, Bob and Mike Bryan, Tommy Haas, Luke and Murphy Jensen and more. This year’s field has not yet been announced.

The Delray Beach stop on the global ATP Tour annually plays in front of over 60,000 fans and a television audience in more than 50 countries. On-site it’s 10 days of themed parties, live music and art, the wine and champagne lounge, The Craft bar, on-court seating and courtside tables with bottle service and so much more at the ATP “Award of Excellence” winning arena.

Baron’s message: “If you have never been to the Delray Beach Open by VITACOST.com, you should come. I have been to tournaments all over the world and I enjoy every single thing about the tournament. For me, the tennis is extra. I love the food, the choices, the music, the people.”

Tickets for the 30th Delray Beach Open by VITACOST.com are now available. To purchase tickets, visit [www.YellowTennisBall.com](http://www.YellowTennisBall.com)

#### MARK BARON’S TIPS FOR SENIOR HEALTH

- Do anything. Anything is better than nothing.
- Go for walks. Enjoy being outside.
- You just have to start – and you’ll be so proud of yourself when you’re finished!
- Start small and avoid doing too much too fast in order to avoid injury and quitting.