

Copy of an article in the Otago Daily Times

Most of us would be glad to be capable of playing tennis at 85.

But few would be capable of playing at the level of Jean Stevens.

No-one her age on the planet, in fact, can claim to be better than her right now.

The Dunedin woman has just returned from Croatia with two world titles.



Jean Stevens shows off her two 85-and-over tennis world championship medals at the St Clair Tennis Club yesterday. Photo: Gerard O'Brien

She won gold in both the singles and mixed doubles in the 85-and-over grade at the super senior tennis world championships.

They were her first world titles. She has been going to the event since 2001, in Perth.

"It was pretty good, yes," she said.

"The family were pretty happy about that."

After winning a first round tiebreak, she won the rest of her singles matches in straight sets.

That culminated in a 6-4, 6-2 win over France's Odile Noix-Chateau in the final.

In the mixed doubles - which she finished second in two years ago - she teamed with Australian Claude Wenzel to win all three games.

She said the key to success was dealing with drop shots.

"When you get to that age, a lot of them are pretty good at drop shots, so you have to learn to play them."

Stevens has played tennis her whole life.

When she was growing up on the Taieri plain, all the schools had tennis courts.

She would go along to the Saturday competitions and that was how it started.

It is something she loves and continues to play three or four times a week.

Keeping going was key to that.

"I think if you're lucky with your health," she said of the secret to her longevity in the sport.

"Some people get injured, or get cancer, or something else.

"But if you're fit enough and keep going.

"Once you stop its hard to come back again - so I've played all my life."

She was not sure if she would go to next year's championships in Spain, although she was not planning on hanging up her racquet just yet.

"I'll keep playing as long as I'm able."