

FUN WITH FOOTGOLF

It's a kick with bigger balls

“Wear argyle socks,” the website insisted. Apparently this is a real requirement for those actually competing in the American FootGolf league. Also, this league is a real thing.

Unfortunately, I do not have argyle socks, so I am not eligible to go pro as a FootGolfer.

When the group I was with checked in at RiverRidge Golf Course in Eugene to get a scorecard, we were told that all rules of normal golf apply. I realized then that my somewhat limited golfing experience, consisting mostly of playing miniature golf in late elementary school, may have inadequately prepared me for what I was about to undertake.

Luckily, the sport of FootGolf is simple: You get a certain number of kicks to move a regulation-sized soccer ball into a hole, which is essentially a bucket in the ground. You start at a set marker for each hole, you keep track of how many times you kick the ball and you want to get the ball in the bucket with as few kicks as possible.

I guess there may have been more nuanced rules, but I never figured them out — and the friends I played with were kind enough not to mention them.

Since all of us play soccer fairly regularly, not being able to wear cleats on the course was the first obstacle to overcome. You can kick in tennis shoes, sure, but it's harder because the shoe is wider and looser, and you can't hit it quite right. You also don't have the same (or, rather, any) grip on the ground when you plant your foot to kick, which makes longer kicks tricky.

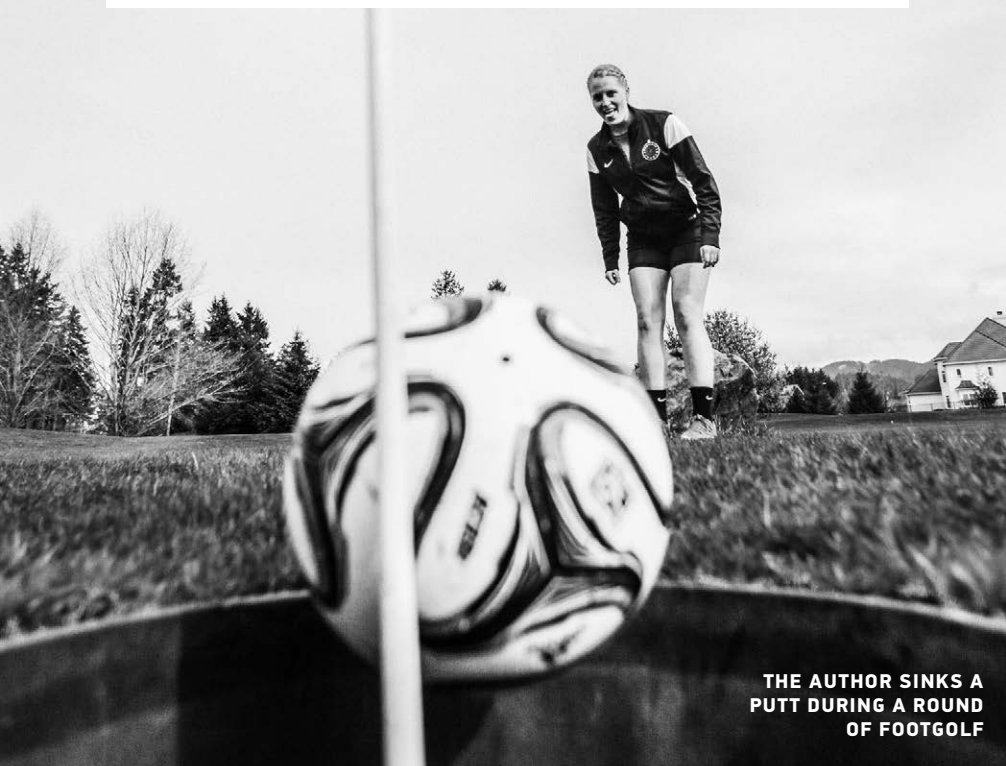
Amazingly, only one of us slipped and fell on their butt. Even more amazingly, it wasn't me.

We wove in and out of actual golfers' paths on the nine-hole course, nodding hello and making sure they didn't hit us with golf balls, slowly figuring out the correct (probably) order in which to play.

After the first couple of holes, which were spent mostly trying to avoid the water hazard, we found a fairly comfortable rhythm: arrange ball, kick it as far as possible the first time, meander after it and kick it in the correct direction once or twice more, then start to worry about aiming at the hole.

More frequently than not, all our balls ended up at about the same place; I'm not sure if that means we were all equally good or equally poor, but at least we were all at roughly the same skill level. At any rate, we finished all fairly close to each other, which means I can pretend that the only reason I didn't win was because of one frustrating hole where I ended up dribbling in a circle.

I still have no idea how to play golf. — *Lauriene Madrigal*



THE AUTHOR SINKS A PUTT DURING A ROUND OF FOOTGOLF

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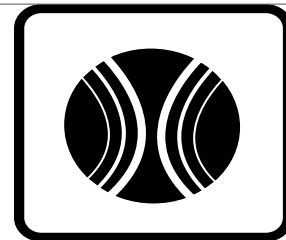
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