



Junior golf growing at Indian Creek

Golf course's program is getting more kids to participate in the sport

By **BEN MITCHELL**
News staff writer

After starting its inaugural season last year, Indian Creek's PGA (Professional Golfers' Association of America) Junior League Golf program is now really getting into the swing of things.

Mark Gradin, director of player development at Indian Creek Golf Course, says the ranks of the program have about doubled in size compared to last year's tally of 16 young golfers, which Gradin believes is a sign of the sport's growing popularity among today's youth.

"When you see how young some of these players are on the PGA Tour, it's inspired these young kids to take up golf," he said.

The Brookside Drive golf course's program is part of the national level PGA JLG program that has grown rapidly since it first began in 2011, offered to golfers ages 13 and younger. As opposed to the traditional stroke play most are used to seeing at the professional level, the PGA JLG uses a "less stressful scramble format," according to the league's website. In a scramble, golfers are often paired into teams of two or four; tee off on the same hole, decide which shot they like best, and then all hit again from the selected shot. At Indian Creek, the older kids compete in 9-hole matches; golfers nine years old and under compete in 4-hole matches.

Gradin said similar increases in youth golf programs have been experienced at The Dalles Country Club, and the two golf clubs now "have enough players on both teams that we can compete in our own league."

This season's Indian Creek Junior League has been going

since the middle of June, with regular matches against The Dalles scheduled to go through July. Like Little League baseball and softball, the junior golf program will pick All-Star teams, who will then play against Portland teams in tournaments throughout the month of August.

Gradin mentioned that he even has a couple of five-year-olds on the team who are "phenomenal for their age... the way they hit the ball and chip and putt. I've been working with them since they were four."

...Which is usually about the youngest age kids start learning to play the game, Gradin says. That is, unless you're Tiger Woods (he started before age 2). In addition to the younger kids, Gradin said there is a separate six-person 16U team as well, to give some extra practice to the primarily soon-to-be-sophomores who competed on the Hood River Valley High School golf team as freshmen this spring.

In addition to the league, Gradin says he has also seen the number of those taking junior lessons go up as well. He said the course makes an effort to promote golf in local elementary and middle schools through another program called SNAG (Starting New At Golf), where students get to come out to the course and learn some of the fundamentals of the sport. The program has been ongoing for the past three years.

"We're trying to make the course accessible to as many kids as we can," Gradin said.

For more information on other junior golf opportunities, go to the Indian Creek Golf Course website at indiancreekgolf.com or call 541-386-7770.



KIDS have been enjoying Indian Creek Golf Course's PGA Junior League Golf program. Above, a young golfer gets ready to off at one of the course's holes. At right, more young golfers, Wyatt Bahn (left) and Sequoia Cohen, pose for a photo in their golfing attire.

Submitted photos

Beach Bash!



Photos by Ben Mitchell

THE HOOD RIVER WATERFRONT was packed this weekend with people looking to beat the heat and enjoy the Beach Bash event put on by the Columbia Gorge Windsurfing Association. The four-day event kicked off with a Pray for Wind party on Thursday at Stonehedge Gardens, music at Waterfront Park's amphitheatre on Friday, Saturday's all-day beach party, and ended on Sunday with a barbecue, swap meet, and music. Above are images from Saturday's beach party, which featured live music, food and beer, low-price windsurf and stand up paddleboard (SUP) demos, free windsurf lessons and SUP clinics, and many other activities. Starting from the top row, going left to right: A young girl checks out the SUPs for rent at the Event Site, while the band Kitchen Table (composed of, from left to right, Greg Stiegl, Sean Sauve, Ryan Kolberg, and Anderson Gould), shreds. Bottom row: Wyatt Miller, of Starboard, gives a crash course to some windsurfing neophytes in preparation for the "Never Ever Windsurfed Before Race;" kids young and old alike enjoyed a game of Archery Tag put on by Global Sessions; Kip Miller mans the grill for Hood River Fire and EMS, who were serving food at the event.



Submitted photo

HEAT ON FIRE

The Hood River Heat softball team finished up their high school season last week with an impressive 6-2-1 record. Coach Erick Keller said the summer team served as a way for current high school players to get some extra at-bats outside of the regular season and give him a chance to work with the incoming freshman in anticipation of next year's season. The younger players on the roster will continue on as a 14U team. This photo was taken after winning a tournament late last month. Pictured here, starting from the back row, going from left to right: Shae Baker (coach), Hannah McNerney, Mackenzie Booth, Marisol Mendiola, Janessa Castaneda, Kyla Guertin, Bailey LeBreton, Emily Curtis, Katie Perkins, Michelle Hughes (coach). Far back row: Eric Keller (coach). Front row: Emma Laney, Lizzy Weekly, Hailey Hughes, Grace Miller, Emily Mason, Emily Ellifritz. Front row laying down: Haylee Baker.

SPORTS BRIEFS

HR 10U softball heading to state tourney

The Hood River Valley Little League 9/10 Softball All-Stars are heading to the state tournament after defeating the Warm Springs Nation in the District 5 Championships this past weekend in The Dalles. The teams braved triple-digit temperatures to defeat Warm Springs, 11-8, on Saturday, and then 12-2 on Sunday in the championship game. The wins earn the team a berth at the softball state tourney in Portland, which starts July 18. The district tourney for Little League baseball continues this week in The Dalles, with championship games occurring at the end of the week.

Motorized trail use on HRC trails currently prohibited

As of June 26, the Oregon Department of Forestry has raised the Industrial Fire Protection to Level III. This invalidated the waiver that was keeping Northwest Area OHV trails open to motorized use on forestlands owned by Hood River County. Motorized trail use on all Hood River County trails is now prohibited until the county sees "significant rains." Those with questions can call Henry Buckalew, trails program coordinator for Hood River County, at 541-387-7089.

Mt. Hood NF issues fire restrictions

Due to continued dry and hot weather conditions on the Mt. Hood National Forest, officials have issued public use fire restrictions effective July 1. Dispersed campfires, OHV use (La Dee Flats exempted), and smoking outside enclosed buildings or vehicles will be prohibited in Mt. Hood NF. Campfires will only be allowed in approved designated developed recreation sites. Visit <http://1.usa.gov/1U1RgVY> to view the full list of approved campgrounds where campfires will still be allowed. Under the public use fire restrictions the following acts are prohibited on the Mt. Hood NF: Building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire, campfire or charcoal fire, except in provided metal campfire rings or grills in designated developed recreation sites. Portable cooking stoves and lanterns using liquefied or bottled fuel are permissible in dispersed areas; smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed campground or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter, which is barren and cleared of all flammable material; operating a generator, except in designated developed recreation sites. The Mt. Hood NF will also go to an Industrial Fire Precaution Level (IFPL) 2 effective July 1. Restrictions on firewood cutting, timber operations, and other industrial operations will be required to follow IFPL 2 requirements. Included in these requirements is a prohibition on chainsaw use after 1 p.m. and the need to maintain a fire watch of at least one hour following the use of a chainsaw. For more info, visit <http://1.usa.gov/1LEx2z7>.