



Upcoming concerts in the area/3C



Easy baked chicken for weekdays/4C



Gardens that help protect butterflies /9C



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

With the dam as a backdrop, Jordan Peterson of Kennewick tosses an approach shot on the third hole at the McNary Dam Disc Golf Course.

# THROWING PLASTIC RATTLING CHAINS

## Disc golfers flock to McNary Dam course

By TAMMY MALGESINI  
East Oregonian

After traveling 1,100 miles from his home in Farmington, New Mexico, one of the first things Sean Duggins did when he stopped in Eastern Oregon was a Google search for disc golf courses.

Readily admitting he's a disc golf addict, Duggins broke up the long drive by rattling the chains at three different courses along the way.

"Disc golf is a passion for me," he said. "I go all over the place with my job and I try to support the leagues at the places I'm at."

Duggins was pleased to find the McNary Dam Disc Golf Course not too far away. The course, he said, offers a challenge for experienced players, but also is very user-friendly for beginners.

"It's a little gem out there," Duggins said. "The course itself plays well and it's on a nice piece of

land."

Located on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property at McNary Lock and Dam, a nine-hole course was created several years ago. A recent expansion added nine more holes.

The front nine features manicured grass with trees in a park-like setting. The dam and Columbia River provides a picturesque backdrop. Most of the newer holes offer additional challenges with scrub brush, elevation changes and some wide-open fairways.

A member of both the Tri-Cities and Columbia River disc golf clubs, Matt Richmond helped establish the Umatilla Disc Golf Club last August. Serving as club president, the Umatilla man is excited about the course expansion and what comes with it.

"It's more of an attractive course and registered on popular phone applications that people utilize to find courses," he said. "It's sort of



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Jackson Bass, far right, prepares to take an approach shot on the 11th hole during a recent doubles tournament at the McNary Dam Disc Golf Course.

like build it and they will come."

During a recent Umatilla Club Dubs Tournament — which is similar to a best-ball golf scramble — participants hailed from across

the region, including Hermiston, Umatilla, Boardman, Kennewick and Spokane.

Former Richland resident Donny Ballew was playing the course for the first time since the new holes were added. The expansion, the Spokane man said, turned a beginner's course into a force to be reckoned with.

"I'm really happy with what Umatilla is doing here," he said. "I love the mix between short placement drives and the holes that allow you to really open your arm up and crank a 400-foot drive out there."

The club, Richmond said, also tries to establish a friendly relationship with other users of the dam area. During a recent club meeting, he encouraged fellow members to help educate course users on proper etiquette and sharing the space.

"It's a multi-purpose park," Richmond said. "We yield to everyone on the course — people on the sidewalks, sitting at picnic tables or walking through."

Richmond said a big plus with disc golf is that it's free to play at most courses. Other than investing in discs and accessories, he said it's a fairly affordable activity to participate in. In addition, he enjoys being outside in the scenery and the social

### Disc golf courses

**McNary Dam course**  
Spillway Park  
Umatilla, OR 97882

**Community Park course**  
1200 SW 44th St.  
Pendleton, OR 97801

**Fort Walla Walla course**  
1898 Dalles Military Rd.  
Walla Walla, WA 99362

**Jenda Jones Memorial course\***  
200 SW Academy Way  
College Place, WA 99324

\* Private course for students of Rogers School and Walla Walla Valley Academy. Available on the weekends for public use.



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Matt Richmond, president of the Umatilla Disc Golf Club, discusses club business and rules for a recent doubles tournament at the McNary Dam Disc Golf Course.

aspect of meeting new people.

Ballew and Duggins agreed. Ballew has friends he throws with every day and then he catches up with others at tournaments. Duggins said the sport helps him connect with people when he's working away from home for months at a time. And even though it's a competitive game, Ballew said there's camaraderie among players.

"Win or lose, we all root for each other and share one bond — we love throwing plastic discs at metal chains," he said.