

GOLF

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ed white stripes on his clubs so he could see them and after he passed away seven years ago, Berta stayed active on the greens and as a member of the Ladies' Club. Last year, Berta moved from Cottage Grove to Eugene where she stays active ("I hike and bike with a bunch of young gals in their 50s. Well, they're young to me. They're old ladies to you, I'm 82.") and makes sure to come down to golf in Cottage Grove each week.

"What keeps me is this group of ladies," said Berta. "You know and it's a challenging little course, I love the course and we played invitationals at some of the clubs up in Eugene and elsewhere. And just you hear they're clique-ish. You play

with the same group. And we draw numbers so we play with different people. It's just a fun group of ladies."

On a cloudy and cold morning, Linda Levings served as my tour guide for the day. Levings is perfect for this role as she is a Cottage Grove native that got the club started along with Mary Triska and she loves to talk.

"(The club) gets me out of the house. I can't talk to walls," she said with a pause. "Well, I guess I could."

Due to a number of leg surgeries that were the result of having Hodgkin's lymphoma cancer in her leg, the 63-year-old Levings spends the day driving the course in her golf cart and joining the various groups as they putt. Shouting encouragement, giving friends a hard-time and reminding a group of the hole where she hit a hole-in-one, she

is engrained not only as part of this group but in Cottage Grove golf. The former Cottage Grove High School girls golf coach knows seemingly every golfer that passes – either members of the Ladies' Club or other golfers who are on the course – and can provide a brief history that often seems to start with the common refrain of "I went to school with them."

As she drives through the course and points to notable spots or explains that this area used to be a farm in the 1950s, we stop to watch a group of four tee off.

"You can tell it's the first day because a lot of these ladies aren't playing well," said Levings as we watch another ball go a different direction than intended.

"Pretty good for an old lady," says the oldest member of the Ladies Club, 86-year-old Raye Jackson as she walks by the cart with a smile. "Well I got a new knee in January and the doctor said how many yards I was go-

ing to improve and I'm going to go get my money back." Despite any refunds, Jackson ended up with the best score on the day.

As Levings and I make our way to another hole, she explains different responsibilities she has had with the group over the year.

"Handicap rules director, director. You name it, I've done it," she said. Levings is also currently the rules expert of the group ("I've done a lot of things with the rules, I don't know it's just been what I've always enjoyed") and in charge of keeping track of the handicap of each golfer. A job that has become much easier now that instead of plugging scores into a formula can now be found by entering those numbers into a computer that does the work for her.

"Most of (the groups handicaps) are right in the between 24 to 34. That's pretty much the range of these ladies out here... I'm the lowest handicap. I was pretty much a 14 and so they've had... fun with the club champi-

onship because I haven't been able to play," she said.

While she hasn't been able to play of late, Levings is eyeing a return to the course later this year. When she is able to join the group that she started over

two decades ago, she will be in the city she has always known, right along with the same group of women that she has played with, enjoying the game that she loves.



A golfer eyes the green at Middlefield Golf Course.



A pair of golfers watch as one of the members of their group tees off.

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