

No time like the present for a hole-in-one

Cottage Grove's Mel Gowing finds a recent run of success on the golf course

By Zach Silva
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For the last 66 years, Mel Gowing has been golfing. The 87-year-old golfer claims he was at the peak of his game some 50 years ago when he was then, as he is now, golfing in Cottage Grove.

But while his game has changed over the years, "mainly in distance and concentration" he notes – elements that are generally fundamental to the game of golf – Gowing has found new success on the golf course. After never having recorded a hole-in-one, Gowing has now hit two aces in the past five years.

"Just two," he says as he rattles off how many hole-in-one's various members of the Middlefield Golf Club have hit over the years, including four from his wife. But for Gowing, his came, not at his peak but at a time when he is just playing to have fun and get some exercise.

While Gowing isn't the oldest member of the Middlefield Men's Club, he notes that he is certainly up there. No matter where he falls in the age order, he is still out electing to walk the course he plays at up to four times a week instead of taking a ride in a golf cart.

"On the days I walk the course and push the cart, I don't make it through the 6 o'clock news," he says.

On this day, a surprisingly sunny Thursday last week, Gowing is walking the majority of the course as he plays in a scramble with members of the men's club. With his bag on the back of one of the group's golf carts, he walks his way, with a slight hitch in his step that has come with aging, through the course.

Gowing has spent his life playing various golf courses throughout the state. He was a member at a few clubs in Eugene for a time and he once cut out an article from the newspaper when a writer described Tokatee as being made on the eighth day of creation. He has seen the best Oregon has to offer and now stays at Middlefield.

"Middlefield is a good retirement course," he says. Adding, "Just get out here and get the exercise. And I've seen that through the years that as people get up in retirement age, they just go out and have fun. They get tired, you sit on the bench, get out of people's way. Enjoy."

On this particular day, it isn't his best play. "It didn't go as far as it is supposed to go," he says with a laugh after a short drive. His best play happened sometime around the time of the Kennedy administration, but he makes it through despite "his clubs getting tired" towards the end of the 18. Some of those tired moments led to brief stretches of searching for a ball that landed to the left of the fairway and resulted in the joy of searching for a lost ball.

But between those moments, he walks me through the times when he hit his first hole in one. Five years ago, on

GOWING see B2

Playing pickleball in the park



PHOTOS BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

As the weather worked out of the high 30s and into the low 40s, a group of about 10 pickleball players flocked to Coiner Park on Saturday for a rare November game played outside. Setting up portable nets on one half of the tennis courts, the participants played the paddle sport that has elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong. With the cold weather – and inevitable rain – the group has moved indoors for the season. They now regularly meet at Riverside Church at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

New coaches on the block

First-year CGHS basketball coaches Steve Eastburn and Seth Hutchison got their starts earlier this week

By Zach Silva
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With the winter sports season beginning last Monday, the Cottage Grove basketball teams welcomed in a pair of fresh

faces at the head coaching positions. Steve Eastburn will be leading the girls side while Seth Hutchison takes over the boys team.

Eastburn has been coaching as an assistant or head coach since 1996 with stops at South Eugene, Marist and Crow along the way. He will be taking over a team that went 9-1 in league last season and is returning the bulk of their production. The Lions will have their work

cut out for them this season in league that features last year's 4A state champion (Marshfield) and 5A state champion (Marist).

A former basketball manager at Oregon State, assistant at Marist and JV coach at Pleasant Hill, Hutchison will be calling the shots as the head coach for the first time this season. The CGHS class of 2007 graduate is excited to see where this team can go. Last year the Lions finished

16-8, lost in a play-in game and graduated eight seniors – of the 12 players on the roster – including four starters.

Hutchison and Eastburn sat down (well, Eastburn stood) with *The Sentinel* last week about their feelings on the upcoming season. Below are interviews that have been edited for clarity and length.

The season begins for both teams at home against North Bend on November 29.

Hutchison's return to Cottage Grove

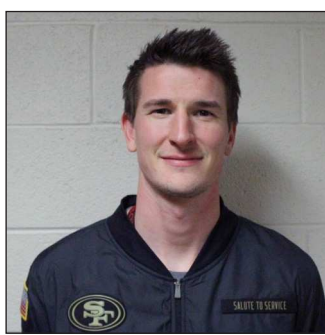
CG Sentinel: What are the emotions entering the new season?

Seth Hutchison: I'm excited. I'm super excited for this opportunity. I'm ready to be a mentor for these kids and try to teach positive characteristics like I've talked to you about before you know, on and off the court. Teach them how to be young men. And I'm really excited to just to dive into it. Start to create the culture that I want to create and instill in these kids so I'm excited.

CGS: What head coaches have especially influenced you and how you see the game?

SH: There's a lot. There's a lot that I've worked one-on-one with. Going back to my days here at Cottage Grove, learned a lot of the x's and o's from Bart Pollard at Marist. This last stint at Pleasant Hill I learned how to just create a positive culture with the kids. Create that relationship with the kids. And I've kind of drawn from both of them.

And then all the guys at the higher level, the college coaches. (Duke's) Mike Krzyzewski and all of them. They really know how to teach the game and it's funny when you listen and read about them, they're saying the same stuff that



Seth Hutchison

I'm going to say but you know, they just do it simple. Just drawing from all different kind of different people. Different philosophies and trying to create my own philosophy and what I like. See what works, what doesn't work, what you like from this person, what you don't like from this person. Kind of creating your own. It's kind of like teaching, you know? It's the same kind of way. When I was doing my student teaching you pull from them, you leave what you don't like. You pull from them and leave what you don't like. Kind of create your own way, your own path.

CGS: What will it be like coaching against your former coach in Pollard?

SH: Oh it's going to be really crazy.
HUTCHISON see B3

Eastburn continues coaching career

Cottage Grove Sentinel: What is the mood heading into the season?

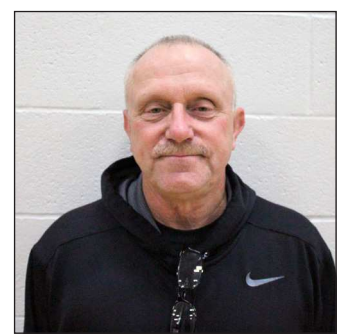
Steve Eastburn: I think excitement. Whenever there's change there is a new outlook so they're excited. So we'll see how long that lasts, you know, being teenagers. But hopefully it just builds and builds and builds. They got a lot of talent here. A lot of talent. A lot of returning talent and they have experience now so I'm really lucky to step into this position now because it's already been formed.

CGS: Is there pressure to perform well with the talent of this team?

SE: No. So the expectations are the same: to be the same as last year or even exceed that. But as far as pressure, there's never any pressure because it's always about the experience. You don't really control a lot of that so you just make it a great experience for the kids and what happens, happens.

CGS: How do you prepare for a new team?

SE: We had summer basketball so I was lucky enough to step in at the end of the school year so we were able to do summer basketball and evaluate the kids. Kind of got them initiated in some



Steve Eastburn

of the stuff I do and how I do it so we're not starting from square one, we're actually, we've got a little bit of a head-start. Not a lot but they've now been around me and I've been around them so we know personalities and you know like to evaluate their skill level and so now put it all together in the next three weeks before we play our first game and nothing out of the ordinary really. Nothing out of the ordinary, come in, work on defense, skills. Skills are going to be huge. Defense and tons of fundamental skills.

CGS: Is that the foundation of the teams you coach?

SE: Absolutely. If you don't have fundamental skills, you can't do anything else. So defense you don't need the bas-

EASTBURN see B2

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the members of the Royal Blue Unicorns volleyball team. The group of 5th and 6th graders, coached by Jennifer Burns and Tonya Ferguson, won the South Valley Athletics volleyball championship last weekend.



The Royal Blue Unicorns celebrate their first place finish.

PHOTO C/O SMILEY GLENN