

Youth movement

Junior golf opportunities abound in 2021

BY SCOTT BARTON • For The Bulletin

As Central Oregon's population continues to grow, so does interest in outdoor activities. Residents are continually finding more ways to enjoy all there is to see and do outside.

Of particular note is an ever-increasing interest in golf, especially by children under the age of 18.

Brasada Ranch is just one of the area's many facilities to notice the surge in youth enthusiasm.

"With so many kids attending school from home, we've added an after-school golf program," said Zach Swoffer, Brasada's director of golf operations.

The program includes an introductory class on basic fundamentals of golf for resort guests and members, Swoffer noted.

Only a few miles away at Pronghorn, director of golf Jerell Grow has noticed a significant increase in youth interest as well. "The Academy at Pronghorn has clinics, lessons, and schools that fit any schedule and ability," Grow said. "Jeff Ritter and Erika Stoner (who run the academy) are here to help juniors in 2021."

The golf industry has also witnessed an influx of



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Bend High's Brody MacLeod hits his way out of trouble and onto the sixth green while playing in the La Pine Invitational at Crosswater last month. Junior golf opportunities are on the rise in Central Oregon.

new teaching platforms and frameworks specifically designed to get juniors involved and excited about the game of golf. Many of Central Oregon's facilities have quickly adopted these programs and are seeing results.

This year Widgi Creek Golf Club in Bend is implementing Operation 36, a player-development program geared toward helping juniors understand every aspect

of the game, from etiquette to short game and scoring.

"The program uses divisions and points to motivate productive practice, with the goal to shoot 36 for nine holes from yardages beginning at as little as 225 yards from the hole," said Taylor Giacomini, head professional at Widgi Creek.

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