

Disc golf

Continued from B1

For the uninitiated, disc golf is a growing sport that's been around for decades. Its antecedents date back nearly a century, but the first tournaments and golf course came about in the 1970s. It's played a heck of a lot like regular golf, albeit without clubs, carts or crazy pants.

There are no cold beverages awaiting you back at the clubhouse, but there are also no greens fees.

Of course, there's not as much to maintain at a disc golf course, many of which use the natural forest and meadow settings — no irrigation or lawn required. There are baskets, or pins, in lieu of actual holes. All you need to play disc golf is some discs and an ability to huck them a couple or a few hundred yards per hole to make par.

Central Oregon is home to

disc golf courses from Madras to Bend. And according to Carey Dod, a longtime player and the former president of Central Oregon Disc Golf Club, disc golf is still thriving here.

Our round at Hyzer Pines started well, given how rusty I was. I even parred one or two holes. Our skills were such that we did not bother to keep score. Bogeys and double bogeys were the order of the day. Before long, I was barking mad at how the trees in the forest seemed to serve as magnets for my discs: "I couldn't have hit that tree if I was aiming at it!" I said more than once as I entertained fantasies of buzz-sawing half the trees between the tees and holes (looking at you, 15th hole).

Dod, however, notes that trees definitely ramp up the playability of a course.

"Flat, wide-open shots with the target directly in front of you become tiresome and boring quickly," he told this reporter. "Elevation, obstacles such as trees, targets that force you to think about how you'll play the hole, that type of thing make for fun and interesting play."

Also important, he said, is the overall flow of a course. Holes that cross other fairways, for example, would be problematic. And walkouts between holes should be short and sensible, so it's easy to find the next tee box if you've never played a course before, he said.

The best courses, Dod added, offer something for players of all skill levels. "Something that kind of meets you in the middle: has a few holes that challenge a beginner, and has a few holes that challenge even a pro," he said. "A 100% beginner-friendly course won't be fun or of much interest to a pro-caliber player, and vice-versa."

Dod also said that safety should be a consideration in

course design: Sound, solid tee pads help prevent twisted ankles, and fairways should be spaced far enough apart so that all groups and players can play safely without the fear of getting hit by an errantly thrown disc.

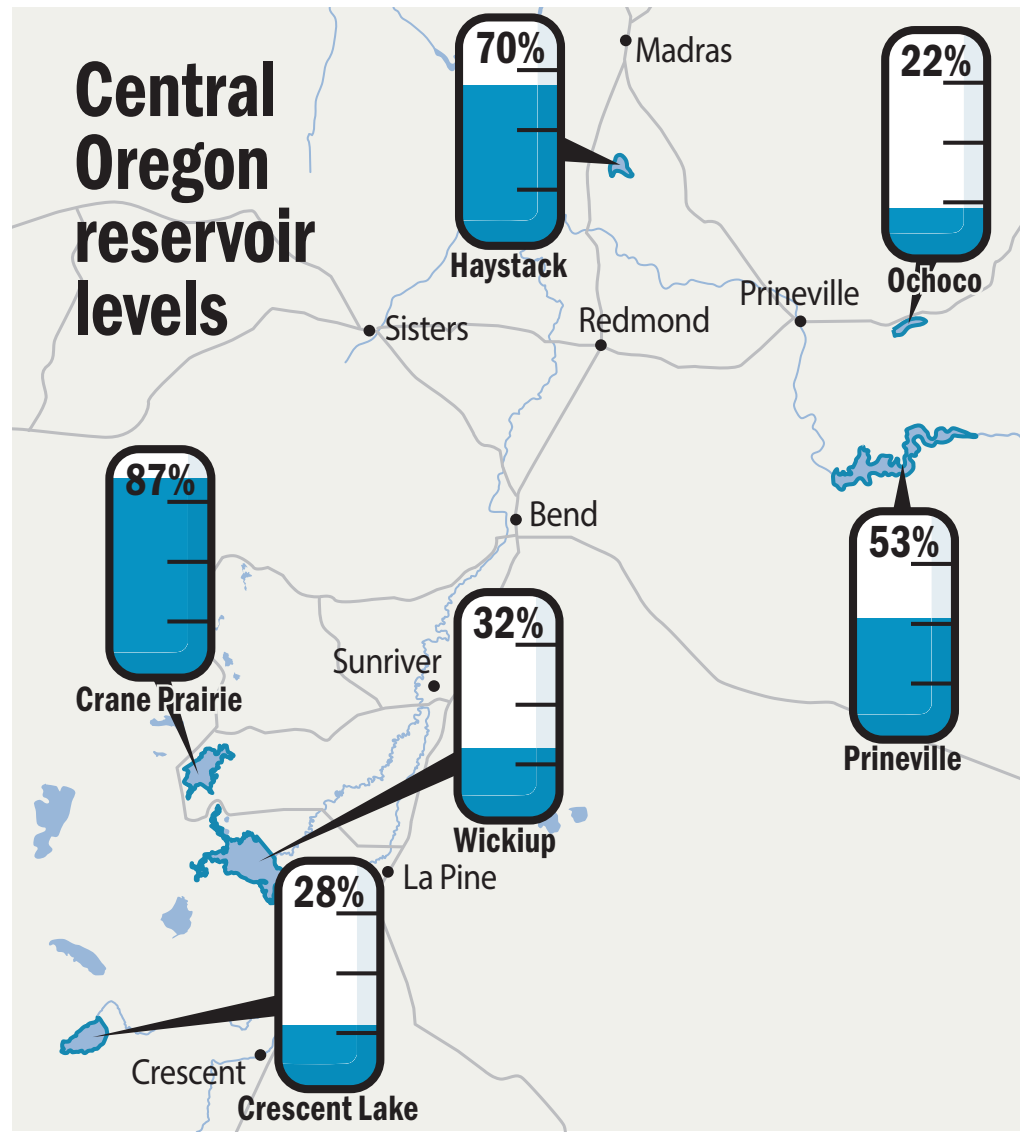
Though some players carry

an array of discs for different situations they may find themselves in, most beginners can get by with just a few: a fairway driver, a mid-range disc and a putter, Dod said.

"Each of these throws quite differently but are known to be beginner friendly," Dod said.

Some disc outlets sell beginner packs that include all three of these types of discs. Area retailers of discs include Mountain Supply of Oregon, Big 5 Sporting Goods and Blazin Saddles in Sisters.

David Jasper: 541-383-0349, djasper@bendbulletin.com



Source: Bureau of Reclamation

Clarinda Simpson/Bulletin graphic

TOP PICK OF THE WEEK

Ponderosa Park

BY DAVID JASPER

The Bulletin Ponderosa Park is a little slice of good times located just north of Wilson Avenue and 15th Street on Bend's east side.

The 1.1-mile Coyner Trail runs through Ponderosa Park, connecting Ponderosa Park with Juniper Park, located to the northwest, and Larkspur Park, located just southeast of Ponderosa Park.

Larkspur, of course, is home to the newly opened Larkspur Community Center, with all its shiny amenities. But don't sleep on Ponderosa Park: It has green spaces, covered picnic tables, a dog park, playground, pickleball (bring your own net) and basketball courts, soccer and baseball fields, and not one but two skateparks.

The older skatepark at its north end was built in the late 1990s. Its design is a little dated and its concrete surface somewhat chipped, but it still serves its purpose, especially for the scooter and BMX communities. It was followed by a more up-to-date, street-oriented skatepark, which opened in 2014 at the south end of the park. Pro-tip: Local skaters affectionately refer to the skatepark as "Pondy."

Ponderosa Park is open from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. and is at 225 SE 15th St., in Bend.

Contact: bendparksandrec.org/park/ponderosa-park.

David Jasper: 541-383-0349, djasper@bendbulletin.com



David Jasper/The Bulletin

The newer iteration of Ponderosa Skatepark, which opened in 2014, is located near the corner of Wilson Avenue and 15th Street in Bend.

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