

# The NFJG TOUR Challenge

The Golf Club at South Hampton

Tournament Story

This past weekend seventy players converged on the Golf Club at South Hampton to strut their stuff as everyone gears up for the upcoming Road Trip to Lake City for the "**Lake City Open**" and the following week's web.com Junior Players Tour "**Titleist Invitational**" event at the St. Johns County Golf Club. It seemed like everywhere you looked on Sunday someone was in green attire. I wonder why that is. Could it be the "**Masters**" is upon us? Yup, for sure and the Masters it seems, kick starts all our competitive juices to get our games in shape. The final kick start is "**THE PLAYERS**" and by then everyone should be in rare form as we begin the NFJG TOUR "Summer Tournament Series" The Summer Tournament Series will have five MAJORS and numerous key single events where we will play at the best of the best courses in North Florida. Like San Jose Country Club, Timuquana Country Club, Glen Kernan, Marsh Landing and others. It's going to be a busy summer, so get in while you can. Watch sign ups closely, as I predict they will all fill up fast! One other GREEN note. I'd also like to point out that the Golf Course at South Hampton was also very GREEN and as always in great playing condition. If you missed us this weekend, go play it, you'll love it

The "**NFJG TOUR Challenge**" had some outstanding play this week and even though each division had some great play I am going to start with our Elite Tour Boys 13-15 Division. The E-Boys has been the hottest of the divisions score wise and this week was no different. The birdies and eagles were definitely flying again. Last week Elliott Wright showed his "A" game and had all his ducks in a row, sort of speak. Mainly he had a good focus and this week not so much, but we all know, or should know, that this game is about being mentally positive and is full of ups and downs. I said it many times and I'll remind everyone again, golf is a circle. Sometimes you're at the top of the circle with everything going right as planned and then the meter turns on the circle. The putting falters, the chipping wains and the approach shots go left and right. All of a sudden the meter is at the bottom of the circle. Then you work on it and get it back into shape and the meter then starts going to the top and circle begins again. Another word could be "Slump". It's used in baseball, basketball, so why not golf. Positive Attitude, however is your key to a quick recovery. We'll address this issue in the near future with some experts, so stay tuned for that.

This week Matheus Park, Lucas Parker and Patrick Tucker, along with Jacob Saarela and Todd Roy all brought an "A" game, at least for nine holes. The first three names would turn at one under par 35 apiece and the other named boys would make the turn within three strokes. Fifteen birdies and one EAGLE would be recorded in this division and Matheus Park would have five of those birdies, as he carried his strong play to the final nine holes of play, bettering his front nine score by one firing a 34 for total 18-hole score of three under 69. Lucas Park ended up five strokes behind his brother, but he would

be the one to score the EAGLE joining a small group in the NFJG TOUR EAGLE Club. Patrick Tucker would make the turn and continue to play solid golf until he reached the 14<sup>th</sup> hole carding three double bogeys from there on in. He would hang on to shoot 77 and take the Silver one stroke ahead of Saarela.

Rj Glod played some great ball, but would take a chance on a par-5 and go for it in two. An unfortunate "9" on the risk-reward par-5 6<sup>th</sup> hole would throw him for a loop. The root of it all, one bad hole and your out-of-there! We all know that in the majority of times, the conventional way of taking on par fives will earn us a birdie or at the worst a par. Lay it up, get the money club in your hand and stick it to the pin. You most likely will have a 10-15 foot putt or closer.

Our Boys 16-18 division had some great competition. Andrew Szuba was definitely at the top of his circle, hitting on all cylinders as he and Patrick Hamlin made the turn under par. Szuba having the best round of his NFJG TOUR career and bettering his best score ever by **10** strokes. Now that is bringing your "A" game. Szuba would start his day with a birdie-birdie start followed up by five pars and another birdie at the ninth. Only two bogeys on his day and another birdie at the 16<sup>th</sup> would give Szuba a two under par 70 and one of the best feelings you can have in golf. That is simply AWESOME stuff!

Patrick Hamlin would also have some of the same. Thirteen pars, two birdies and a few bogeys would give him a seven stroke advantage over his season best, shooting a sweet 73. Nicholas Sanson would also better his best round of the season by six strokes and hung in there to shoot a season best 76 and capture the Silver Medal. He would also card three birdies on the day.

*On a special note: Congratulations goes out to Johnny Tucker who played in his first ever AJGA Junior Tournament this past weekend at the Ocala Golf Club. Tucker registered for the AJGA Preview Series event, was accepted and shot a first round 76 and a second round -3 par 69 to take home top honors and earn 8 AJGA Stars. No doubt the Tucker name will be remembered by the AJGA Committees for some time to come. This is one of those reasons why we (my staff and I) work so hard to fill our events, so players can earn AJGA Stars and qualify for upper level junior golf. The AJGA Preview Tournaments are open registration and only players with AJGA Stars will get into regular season events.*

Our Girls 13-18 division once again had an outstanding showing with 16 players in the field. Olivia Whitten coming off a so-so showing at the "**Spring Break Classic**" would not take her disappointing play lightly, but a strong mind and a little practice (until dark every night) would give her the added skill she needed to add yet another highlight to her "*In the Spotlight*" article by posting her career best round on the NFJG TOUR shooting a two over par 74. Whitten would card three birdies on the day. The Silver medalist Beatrice Dietz would also have her best round of the season with an 85 and Apryl Parker tying Dietz at 85, but losing in a scorecard playoff would also nip her best round by a few strokes to take home the Bronze.

Our Rising Tour Boys had 15 players in the field this week, including home field advantage members Hayden Zitzewitz and last week's Champion Dylan Larsen. Our top three players, Zitzewitz, Larsen and Tyler Broadus would each have three birdies on the day off-setting unwanted double bogeys. Two time Champion Broadus would struggle on the front side, but would make up ground with an even par 36 on the back to put pressure on the leaders, but four back at the turn combined with steady play by both Zitzewitz and Larsen would not be enough. In the end Zitzewitz would take a three stroke lead into the 17<sup>th</sup> hole. Barring a disaster, it was enough to bring him home for his first NFJG TOUR Championship. He

would post a score of 77. Larsen posting a 78 would take Silver and Broadus with a score of 79 would take the Bronze.

The Boys 10-12 Division would have 14 birdies on the day and the tournament winner would have none. Daniel Mazur would demonstrate that consistent play, avoiding big numbers and maintaining course management can lead to victory. Three strokes back of the leader Will McGriff at the turn, Mazur would navigate the course well. An errant shot on the par-4 16<sup>th</sup> would end up in the hazard. Having to drop and now hitting three Mazur would recover with a two putt bogey. This and some unfortunate circumstances by other players would be the difference between Gold and Silver.

Will McGriff was even par after 10 holes of play, he made the turn at 37 and birdied the 10<sup>th</sup> to go even. A double at the 11<sup>th</sup> would seem to be the start of score trouble, but a birdie at the 13<sup>th</sup> would put him back into the lead. Unfortunately, it would be the 14<sup>th</sup> that turned out to be the start of score trouble as he triple bogeyed the hole followed by a double at the 16<sup>th</sup> and a bogey-bogey finish. Still some solid play though.

Danny Erickson, Oh Danny Boy! Playing some fair golf would turn at 41 and still in it to win it! Par-par-birdie-par-birdie-par-par would put this two time champion in the lead, but on the 17<sup>th</sup> with a playable ball inside the hazard line an unfortunate removal of a pine cone from behind the ball by his caddie would cost the leader a two stroke penalty and a chance at victory. Unfortunate, but this is a good point to address. Please remember, as a caddie your actions can and will lead to player penalty strokes as you are part of his team.

Marcos Park, would be another Park brother in the mix. With three bogeys to start his round Park eventually carded one of those 14 birdies to turn at 39 just two strokes behind the leader. Add 11 pars and you will most likely end up in pretty good shape and that he did, as he finished the round tied at 78 with Daniel Mazur. Danny Erickson would finish at 80 and would have to settle for the Bronze.

Meanwhile, Mazur and Park would battle it out in Sudden Death. Three holes would be played and each boy putting for birdie. Park would lip-out his birdie and the duo would move on to the second hole. Par by Mazur and Park again would lip-out a birdie putt for the second time in a row. On to the par-3 third hole. With two excellent shots to the green Park would end up 15 feet, while Mazur would stiff it to 5 feet. First to putt would be Park, the ball dead in the heart with precision touch would catch another edge and lip out for the third lip-out in a row. Mazur would drain his birdie to take home his third victory of the season.

Our Foundation Girls is growing and welcome Candace Jackson from Keystone Heights, Florida. This week we had four in the field with Tylar Ann Whiting continuing her winning ways. One lone birdie would be plucked from the cup, but there were a bunch of pars for this up and coming group of players.

Whiting would shoot a 4 over par 40 to take the Gold Medal, while four time champion Kaitlyn Schroeder would take the Silver. Congratulations to Kaitlyn Schroeder, as this week she will take on new challenges as she moves up to the Girls 13-18 Division. Alyzabeth Morgan had a great showing, as she fired a nice 47 to take a one stroke advantage over newcomer Candace Jackson to take home the Bronze Medal. Tournament by tournament the scoring average is going down for young Morgan and soon she will be a top contender! Mark my words!

Our Foundation Boys found eight year old Phillip Dunham hanging on to take home his 10<sup>th</sup> Golf Medal of the year. Boys 10-12 here we come! Dunham opened his round with a bogey at the first, but said that's enough of that and strung eight straight pars in a row to shoot a one over par 37. Jack Roberts continues to put the pressure on Dunham, but on this day a double bogey at the par-3 seventh would take the air out of the balloon. No worries there's plenty of golf left for some great competition. Cam Goldknopf would take home the Bronze.

Outstanding job by all our participants and once again congratulations to all our medalists!

Keep practicing with a purpose and we'll see you on the links!

Sincerely,

Jack Aschenbach, PGA  
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