

The Titleist Invitational

St. Johns Golf Club

Tournament Story

“Build it and they will come” was a quote from a long ago movie about baseball called “Field of Dreams”. We all have dreams and goals and we should act on them, regardless of the fear of failure. I was once told by an Admiral while I was in the Navy that a vision is just a dream and a dream without action is wasted time, but a dream with action is power. This has always resonated with me and this past weekend was certainly the power from the dream with three years of action. We (together) (staff and member) (junior and adult) built it and 91 players came to tee it up and compete in the 2016 “Titleist Invitational” held at St. Johns Golf Club. The field was the largest ever in a two day NFJG-web.com Junior Players Tour event and the golf was spectacular. The golf course was in its best shape in three years of hosting this event at the club. What was truly inspiring was all the laughter and smiles on the faces of our junior tour players and their parents, grandparents and friends. The weekend was long for our dedicated Staff of 12, but in the end when we stood in a circle revisiting situation which occurred over the weekend and the result was the same, all smiles and laughs. We were joined by nine players who drove from West Palm Beach to see how the NFJG TOUR operates and you all should them great warmth and welcomed them with open arms. Thank you for that!

This great weekend was dedicated to PGA Professional Tom Stecker who lost his battle to ALS this past year and no doubt with the great condition of the course and weather we had that Tom was looking down upon us all as the NFJG TOUR players challenged the course. Thanks to all our players for wearing some form of RED in support of fighting ALS and supporting Tom. Many thanks to Wes Tucker and Tommy Aycock the PGA Professionals who insured we were well taken care of and to Sebastian and his Food and Beverage Staff for their great food and customer service.

This past weekend Wes, Tom and I established the NFJG TOM STECKER AWARD. This award will feature the names of all of the “Titleist Invitational” overall winners since 1990. The overall winner is determined by the overall low 36-hole score regardless of division. This trophy will be maintained in the Pro-shop at St. Johns and a replica will be given to each junior victor. This year the award will go to Lucas Park with a score of 142.

Lucas Park was up for this weekend’s challenges as he fired the low round of the event with a five under par 66 to win the Elite TOUR Boys 13-15 by eight strokes over Runner-up and St. Johns Golf Club member Jason Duff. This was Parks second NFJG-web.com Junior Players Tour victory winning previously at the King and Bear Open. This week the NFJG TOUR welcomed back on of the top junior amateurs in Florida, Matthew Soucinek from Lake City who was the Third Place Winner. Soucinek admitted he didn’t have his “A”, but I’ll bet he will strut his talent in the near future, although a 76-76 is not too bad of a score in my book.

Park opened his first round with a bogey, but quickly adjusted with back-to-back birdies and another five birdies for a total seven birdies throughout the day to card a “Sweet” 66. Parks second round would

involve a ten stroke difference (76) and only two birdies on the day, but an “EAGLE” three at the par-5 12th would give him another spark and allow him to join a club of five players in the NFJG TOUR Eagle Club. Jason Duff would put six birdies on the card while Soucinek could only capture three.

Our next lowest round of the weekend was in our Girls Division. Chloe Schiavone, who I would say is the most improve female golfer in the last two years. Schiavone shot even par at 71, two strokes ahead of Izzy Pellot at 73 and four ahead of Tori Mouton at 75. Schiavone would have four birdies on the day against four bogeys to shoot her even par round. Mouton would have just two birdies, but they would come back-to-back on the 17th and 18th holes to stay in touch with the leader.

Pellot would avoid mistakes on the back nine and return a perfect scorecard with just one birdie for her 18-hole effort. During round two, just like boys, the girls would find the round to be a little tougher, as the winds picked up and the course dried out.

Round two would prove to be all Izzy Pellot as she powered her way through the golf course. Playing with the Leader Schiavone, Pellot would strike first and at the turn the battle was all tie. At the 10th Pellot would stumble with a bogey, then taking charge with birdies on the 11th and 12th holes. Schiavone would also birdie the 12th, but would double bogey the 13th and lose control of her game and the lead for good.

Tori Mouton, Katherine Jakeway and Cortney Qiu would all tie for the Third Place spot. A scorecard play-off would reveal Tori Mouton the winner. A strong finish with a one under par for her final five holes would be the determining factor.

In the Boys 16-18 Division playing from the tips birdies would be hard to come by. TOUR Champion Ryan Ulmer would start out his day with a birdie at the first, but would not put a circle around another number on the card all day. Birdie men Kyle Jewett and Ashin Chadha would only post two each and Troy Sheffield would be the birdie leader with three. After round one Ulmer would took a comfortable lead by four strokes, but one never knows what will happen when the wind starts to blow and moving day approaches.

Round two would indeed paint a different scenario. With birdies still as hard to catch as a hummingbird, Sheffield would illustrate great course management and out par the field avoiding any major mistake. Ashin Chadha would double the 8th and Chase Macey the 15th, Levinson would triple bogey and Ulmer would quadruple the par-4 13th to let victory slip from their hands.

Kyle Jewett had the best round of the day and tournament for this division with a 74, twelve shots better than day one. In the end, Troy Sheffield would once again taste victory and bragging rights for a year, as he outlasted Chadha and Macey by one stroke. A scorecard playoff would determine the Runner-up and Chadha would be the winner sending Macey to the Third Place Position.

In our Rising TOUR Boys Rowen Parker would bring his seasons best as he took a three stroke lead over Tyler Broadus and a four stroke lead over Charles Kurtz. Parker would birdie the 7th and the 12th holes to create his day one lead.

On the front nine of round two Kurtz and Mason Holder would be the ones making a move toward the lead. Holder would turn at even par for the day and Kurtz two over, but double bogeys at the 11th would halt the momentum.

Ford Chandler was another story as he would come in strong shooting a two over par 37 on the back. Holder would better his day one score by 13 strokes.

Coming into the 12th hole with a so-so comfortable lead Parker would run into a snag losing 10 strokes to par in next five holes. Needing a strong finish after a four over par at the par-5 16th Parker settle his nerves to go par-par to claim victory at the Titleist Invitational by one stroke over Runner-up Tyler Broadus. Charlie Kurtz's strong opening nine resulted in a third place finish.

In the Boys 10-12 Marcos Park (75) took home a three stroke lead over Sam Davis (78) and a four stroke lead over Danny Erickson (79) with four other players tied at 81. Marcos Park would make birdies at the 4th and 7th to turn with and even par 36. Davis would string seven pars to open his round to turn at 38 and Erickson at 39. Carson Brewer would make bookend birdies on his front nine with birdies at the 1st and 9th holes to shoot 37.

No matter what the start, it's all about the finish and how you make up those mistakes. Andrew Davis made up ground with a birdie at the 10th to shot 38 on the back improving by five strokes over the front. Park would turn at 39.

In round two the top three players had a total of 45 pars and only one birdie. Out of the 54 holes only one double bogey was recorded. This double proved to be the difference between 2nd and 3rd place as Marcos Park played some brilliant golf to take home the gold trophy. Andrew Davis carded a perfect back nine to take the Runner-up trophy and Danny Erickson took home the Third Place Trophy.

Our Foundation Boys found no new winner hoisting the Gold as Phillip Dunham once again showed why he is one of the best junior golfers around. Birdies at the 3rd and 5th would result in a one under par 35 score for round one. Cody Tucker would stay within striking distance at 41.

In the second round Cam Goldknopf would start out strong and Dunham would be faced with turmoil off the bat with a double bogey at the first hole, opening the door for both Tucker and Goldknopf. One would think there's more trouble brewing, but not here, as Dunham comes back with a birdie at the second and then again at the 6th and the 9th holes to shoot even par at 36 for a 1 under par total 71. Get your signatures now!

Cody Tucker would take the Runner-up position and Cam Goldknopf would take the third position.

Our Foundation Girls found another battle between Tylar Ann Whiting and Alzabeth Whiting. Joining the threesome of players this week was newcomer Sofia Pecoraro who was playing in her first ever junior tournament. Pecoraro had a front seat to what had to have been the best back and forth competition of the weekend. Although golf is based off of par, one could look at our Foundation scores as a par is a birdie, as a bogey is to par, as a double bogey is to bogey. For these girls it just had to be thrilling weekend and I can't imagine what the caddies were going through. Awesome stuff!

When the smoke cleared from all the fireworks Tylar Ann Whiting would win this battle, Alyzabeth Morgan would finish Runner-up and Sofia Pecoraro would take home the hardware for third place.

Congratulations to all our participants to Sherri Pla and the Junior Players from West Palm Beach, Florida.

See you on the links!

Jack Aschenbach, PGA
Executive Director
North Florida Junior Golf Foundation
(904) 868-9535

