

2016

Oak Marsh Challenge

Tournament Story



What a great start to the 2016-2017 NFJG TOUR Tournament Season. With the temperatures in the low 70's along with a hint of wind and a golf course gleaming of green it was nothing but a brilliant day! Omni Amelia Island's Plantation Oak Marsh course was in magnificent condition with greens full and rolling pure (especially after the recent passing of Matthew). The views were spectacular and worth the trip alone, but let's play some golf shall we?

Fifty Six junior TOUR players hit the links eager to bring home their first victory or just simply break the ice for the first time as they experienced the thrills and adventures of the NFJG TOUR. The Staff was just as eager and excited to be back on the tournament trail once more.

As many know, Oak Marsh may be one of the shorter courses we play, but it is one of the toughest requiring constant course management. Let the mind drift for a moment and you might find yourself counting the holes score on two fingers or putting a couple more times than you thought on the same hole. With fairways winding in all directions players were required to try and work the ball around well defended landing areas and greens. In the end many great scores were had in spite of the difficulty of the course.

At 10:00 am the first group would be announced to the tee and the Boys 10-12 Division lead by Sam Davis would be selected as this year's opening division and player. Hitting the tee after Davis would be TOUR veterans Jack Hardy and Cam Goldknopf. All three hit the fairway running and in confidence.

Because of his outstanding skill level eight year old Phillip Dunham who won 17 times on the NFJG TOUR in the previous season would advance to the Boys 10-12 Division. He would once again continue his trend of winning as he would shoot the low round of the day, a three over par 75 to claim the championship in the Boys 10-12 Division, followed by Sam Davis and Andrew Davis. Dunham would also be the tournament overall winner.

Patrick Hamlin would birdie three holes during his final nine holes of play to capture the Boys 16-18 division title, but he only did that after winning a three way sudden death play-off. Jay

Adams of Fernandina Beach would battle back after a double bogey start on his first two holes of the opening nine to tie for the lead with Hamlin and Conner Going would birdie the 17th to force a three way tie. Hamlin would declare victory with a par at the first sudden death play-off hole.

Our Girls 13-18 division was the second largest field of the day with 13 competitors. In the field would be many of the TOUR's veteran Elite players. Great start to the year Ladies!!

Taylor Holwell would start the day by showing the field that she has been working hard on her game and is ready for some serious challenges. Holwell would have her best showing on TOUR with 12 pars and birdie on the day to vault atop the leader board with a fine round of 79 and would wait until the final group hit the scoring tent to determine her fate. Hannah Stevens who also set her mind to make a statement during the open event would birdie two holes on the day to also come in at 79 to tie for the lead forcing a sudden death play-off. Katherine Jakeway playing some respectable golf would hit the par-5 18th hole in three needing and wanting a birdie to take home the win, but aggressive play on a long putt would result in a four putt and a score of seven on the final hole leaving her one back of the leaders. The result would be a third place finish.

On the first sudden-death hole (18th) Holwell would stripe her third shot to 15 feet left of the pin while Stevens was in jail in the trees left of the green. A low punch and a shot well calculated would end up 20 feet right of the pin and would result in a tie at par after both birdie putts were missed. With time running out, both players would return to the 100 yard maker for a dual of CTP's. Both would hit the green, but Stevens would be the closest to the pin and declared this week's champion. With a cheer of congratulations, a hug and a high five by the two players both would be winners for their show of great sportsmanship.

In the Elite Tour Boys 13-15 Division newcomer James Ballato would take home a Gold Medal for his fine play. Both he and Jake Lytle would tie for the lead at 82 forcing a sudden-death play-off starting on the first hole. Ballato would par the hole and claim victory for the first time. Lytle would finish in the Runner up spot and Will McGriff would take home the Bronze just one stroke back.

In the Rising Tour Boys 13-15 Division— James Clay Tucker fresh out of the Boys 10-12 Division would have a very solid start to his Rising Tour exposition, as he would fire a nice 78 to lead the largest field of the day and claim his first win. Newcomers John Bennett and Andrew Riley would earn their first TOUR Medals coming in 2nd and 3rd respectively.

This week The Foundation Division would be consolidated with three boys and one girl in the field. Rumor has the Foundation TOUR will grow in the coming months as the USKids Players advance up the tournament ranks. Richard Hayden Ruth was all smiles as he sported a nice 43 with a birdie at the 4th hole. Alyzabeth Morgan, last season Player of the Year would fire a very nice 48 to take the Runner up spot while newcomer Anderson Palm would become a first time award winner finishing in the Third spot earning his first NFJG TOUR Medal.