

The NFJG TOUR Championship

Marsh Landing and Glen Kernan Country Club

July 30 & 31, 2018

Hard to believe it's the end of the 2017-2018 Tournament season already. Man time has flown by! I guess if the ole adage (time fly's when you're having fun) is correct we had a lot of fun along the way. I know I did and the NFJG TOUR Staff totally agrees that this year was a great deal of fun filled with outstanding golf on outstanding golf courses, from familiar faces of dedicated NFJG TOUR supporters. This season brought out many new faces from referrals of those so dedicated to NFJG TOUR to grow the junior program here in our own back yard.

In the past five years we've grown together quite a bit and we've turned the heads of those organizations interested to figure out how we do what we do. You know what? The answer is simple. We do what we do because we truly care and we have dedicated PGA, LPGA and other outstanding staff who are dedicated to growing the game for our kids, here in the Greater Jacksonville arena. I've said it a hundred times. We're blessed with great parents from all walks of life and we have loving partnerships who CARE and provide needed dollars! We're diversified and we believe in inclusion for all. Our program builds for the future and we offer more opportunity to play higher level golf than any other organization I know of at our level and that's how it should be while we encourage our members to play on this outstanding local junior tour to make it BIGGER and BETTER every year.

When you look at the "Incentives Program" list on the website it gives you the general idea of our goal to provide junior golf opportunity at a low cost and at great courses. I think that's a 😊. The Staff's greatest satisfaction is to watch our junior players grow, mature and navigate their way to top of the charts. My staff and I routinely talk about those who have passed through the ranks of the NFJG TOUR and WOW are there some impressive players and so many more to be added to the list. We read and hear about them all the time and it's truly an energetic feeling to know that they once played on the NFJG TOUR and that we had something to do with their direction in golf and in life. So, to our 15 players who are headed to the college ranks we wish you all the best and know that we will be watching you as you grow your future and every once in a while your name will come up in our conversations.

Sweet deal! This past Monday and Tuesday marked the passing of another great season. The TOUR Championship is always the last event of the year and it's unfortunately normally surrounded by many outstanding junior events and high school tryouts which prevents many of our players from attending this great finale, but still we manage to get a great field. Sixty-six players hit the links with the hopes of being this year's champion. For this event you would need to bring your "A" game if you wanted to compete for the 'Overall' that is.

Marsh Landing Country Club and Glen Kernan Country Club are certainly two great clubs to finish up on. This has been a traditional ended form many years and it will continue to be so as long as we don't wear out our welcome.

I want to start out by thanking the Professional Staff and the Membership at each of the clubs for growing the game for our players. Ryan Mikesell and Johnny Randolph join the list of our top PGA Pros in the area so give them five minutes of your time and send a letter of thanks. Hey! Better yet, you might just even consider picking up the phone to call the Pro. I'm betting you'll put a 😊 smile on his face. You might get the recorder, but when he hears your thank you he'll be pretty pleased. Thanks for doing so.

That's right! Logan Underwood was at it again. Bottom line, when you're good, you're good and this kid is good! Underwood competing in the **Boys 16-18 Division** ripped four birdies and an eagle at the par-5 18th hole to shoot a four under par 68 to take a three shot lead in round one over Jacksonville's Colin Sirbaugh (71) and a four shot lead over Jacksonville's Dragon Theam (72).

Sirbaugh just returning home from a church group trip to Minnesota hadn't touched a club in two weeks. Sirbaugh was quoted as saying he didn't have much expectations, but was thrilled to be back and happy to play. He was reminded, "You just never know", you might play your best. Golf is funny and sometimes practice is overrated. "71" not bad!

Theam playing in his last NFJG TOUR event would also carve up five birdies on the day to post an even par round of golf at 72 to stay in touch of leaders.

In round two this trio of players would throw up darts to the pin all day. The group would total 14 birdies in a shootout to the end. Underwood would strengthen his lead early with four birdies on the front side to turn at four under par 32 and would add three more on the back. Theam would be unable to make a move early on the leader to threaten for the lead, but he would birdie four times on his inward half to distance himself from Sirbaugh who played well, but struggled on two holes deep in his round. The hiccup would cost him the Runner up spot.

Standing at the 18th hole I was informed by spectators that Underwood was then four under par as he prepared to hit his approach shot to the 18th hole. With all three players in the fairway, first up was Sirbaugh who hit his approach on target, but flew the pin to about 30 feet. Theam, next up from 125 yards out would fire one of those darts to the pin, to about three feet of the pin. Underwood from 120 out would do one better hitting his shot that landed six inches from the cup, took a bounce and a little checky-checky dancing near the cup, ending up two and half feet from the pin. I was lucky enough to catch the shots on video. Both would make the birdie putts and a cheer was led by Sirbaugh with a smile and a handshake of congratulations for his fellow competitive players. Underwood would card 11 birdies and an eagle leading to the "OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP".

About an hour prior. Andrew Riley playing in the **Elite Tour Boys Division** would be all smiles, eager and ready to get to high school tryouts to continue his fine play. Riley's opening round at Marsh Landing Country Club started out Birdie-Birdie and ended with a birdie at the 18th hole to shoot an even par round of 72 to take a one stroke lead over St. Augustine's Brody Stevenson (73) and a three shot lead over Jacksonville's Markus Lam (75) and Ponte Vedra's Lucas Slayden (75). Riley would be the overall leader in the club house.

Wouldn't you know it, Riley's second round started out just like the first round with a Birdie-Birdie on the first two holes of play. Then another birdie at the ninth. Riley begging of the golf gods to give him more had his wish granted with back to back birdies at the par-5 11th and then again at the par-3 12th

and another at the par-4 16th. Six birdies in all as he made an early statement with his four under par 68, “Not today Boy’s, not today”.

Now that’s the kind of golf we all dream of. Brody Stevenson and Markus Lam would play well once again, but no match for the rifle irons and red hot putter of Riley. Great job fella’s.

Ponte Vedra’s John Patrick English would earn his first Gold Medal in the ***Rising Tour Boys 13-15 Division***. English would shoot an 83-88 171 to nip Jacksonville’s John Miniotas by one stroke. Yuriy Dekalsky would bring home the Bronze medal five strokes off the pace.

In our ***Girls Elite Tour Division*** Lisa Colee would earn the overall title with a fine round of one under par 71 for round one. Colee would open her front nine at Marsh Landing Country Club with a two under par 34. She would add another birdie at the par-3 11th hole to go to three under for the day. An unfortunate double bogey at the par-4 12th hole and a follow up bogey at the 13th would be a setback, but she would bounce back with birdies at the par-5 14th and par-4 16th hole. St. Augustine’s Elizabeth Kondol would be her closes challenger three strokes back at 74 followed by Marissa Cardenas six strokes back at 77.

Round two at Glen Kernan would start out with strong moves by Cardenas (36) and Kondal (37) gaining three strokes on the leader (39), who was rattled on her opening nine. But at the turn, the rattle would shift hands and at the par-5 2nd hole (their 11th) Kondal and Cardenas would become erratic and lose strokes to the now steady and recomposed Colee who would string eight pars to victory in this year’s TOUR Championship. Marissa Cardenas would be the Runner up and Elizabeth Kondal would be the Third Place Winner.

In the ***Rising Tour Girls Division*** Thanya Arusa would capture her third win of the season with a fantastic Elite style round of 77. Her nearest competitor would be Victoria Greene 11 strokes back. Arusa would sail into the championship and win by 22 strokes. Victoria Greene would earn the Runner up spot 21 strokes ahead of the third place finisher Jacksonville’s Emma Wells.

The ***Boys 10-12 Division*** only had two players in the field this week as most of this outstanding division was competing in the US Kids Worlds Tournament in Pinehurst, NC.

During round one Ryan Houck would unleash his lowest round of his NFJG TOUR season. The young superstar fired a five over par 77 to take a commanding lead over Chase Ricks. Sixteen strokes would separate the two and a steady Houck would be impossible to catch unless disaster struck, which it did not. Houck playing top level golf would have four birdies during his fine play and would earn the Champions Trophy. Ricks the Runner Up Trophy.

In our ***Foundation Rising*** 9-hole division – Jacksonville’s Brandon Fowler was getting serious. Fowler fired an opening round of 48 and followed it up in round two with another 48 to nip the four time medalist Preston Shields (98) by two strokes to claim the top award. Sofia Davila would be the Third Place Winner with a score of 105.

OK What’s left? Well, the “Back to School” Tournament hosted by Ponte Vedra Inn and Club. Call the club to register as our tournament webpage says and then it’s the Annual Awards Banquet at TOP GOLF

Presentations will take about an hour and then its two hours of fun on the range. Let's do this. Sign up now as the deadline is tomorrow and any signing up after that will need to pay at late fee. Sorry, but we must commit our dollars for the final number of participants.

See you on the links!

Jack Aschenbach, PGA