



Ponte Vedra Invitational and “I’ve Got a Dream”

Ponte Vedra Inn and Club-Lagoon Course and Jacksonville Golf and Country Club

Tournament Story

January 14 and 15, 2018

Some say it was the toughest two days on the course they had ever experienced on the NFJG TOUR circuit and I tend to agree. It's going on six years now that I have been affiliated with this great junior tour and I have to admit the past several weeks have been brutal for our NFJG TOUR events. The Artic fronts timed themselves perfectly to disrupt our flow of things here around the first coast, but this weekend we toughed it out and completed another 2-in-1 tournament.

The first front that pushed down forced us to reschedule the Ponte Vedra Invitational, so we simply combined the already scheduled “I’ve Got a Dream” Tournament with the Ponte Vedra Invitational this past weekend and it worked out just fine. A little cold and a lot windy, but we got it all in. Thanks for playing!

There was a great deal of competitive golf going on around town this past weekend. Annika was at the World Golf Village and the JAGA Amateur was being played at Hidden Hills Country Club. Some of the best amateur/college players in Jacksonville and around the state teed it up and they too had a difficult time putting any really good rounds together. Bad weather is just one of those elements you need to deal with and know in the back of your mind that everyone will be playing the same condition and that all scores will reflect it and just take one shot at a time. Bottom line, don’t let the weather defeat you.

Many thanks to the Pros at both Ponte Vedra Inn and Club and Jacksonville Golf and Country Club. Both courses were in magnificent condition with greens pure and fast. Send them a note of thanks. They'd appreciate that.

In the **Boys 16-18 Division** Jacksonville's Cade Black would remain steady in his play with two solid rounds of 82 and 81 in terrible weather conditions. Four shots off the lead after round one Black remained steady in round two while the leaders all imploded with big numbers after solid round one scores. Black would take home the championship trophy outlasting Runner-up Todd Roy by four strokes.

With a twelve stroke lead after round one Flagler Beach's Olivia Whitten would cruise to victory in the **Girls 15-18 Division** with a score of 170. Julia Butler of Jacksonville would take home the Runner-up spot with a final two day total of 183.

In the **Girls 12-14** Division Tyler Ann Whiting from Daytona Beach and Alexandra Gazzoli from Palm Coast would battle to the end. After round one the rivals would be tied at 86 apiece. In round two, starting on the 10th tee the fierce battle would continue and last to the very end. After 35 holes of play they would find themselves standing on the ninth tee box tied for the lead with just the difficult 9th hole to play. An unfortunate double bogey at the last by Gazzoli would be a heartbreaker and the end to a great one-on-one duel, which would lead to Whiting nipping Gazzoli by a single stroke for the championship.

Two Ponte Vedra Beach residents in Lucas Slayden and Carter Lewis would top the field of 16 players in the **Boys 13-15 Division**. Ty Boston from Fernandina would be the round one leader with 78. Ponte Vedra's Carter Lewis would be at 79 and Lucas Slayden would be three back at 81. The trio would meet on the #1 tee box during the second round.

At the reachable par-5 both Lewis and Slayden would birdie while the leader struggled early with a double at the first and a triple at the second, Slayden with a two over par 38 on his opening nine would catch Lewis and surpass Boston for the lead. After the 12th hole Boston would now find himself well back and it was simply a two man race to the end between Lewis and Slayden. The duo, both struggling would battle to the very last, both carding a 44 on the nine to tie for the lead with a total score of 163. Off to the #1 tee for extra holes they went where Slayden would win with a par to take home the PVI crystal champions trophy. Cold, wind-beaten, but resilient!

St. Augustine's Jackson Klauk would be a late entry into the Ponte Vedra Invitational **Boys 10-12 Division** and he would come ready to battle, but then so would Danny Erickson, Matthew French and eight other eager players. Klauk would birdie the par-4 second hole and the par-5 7th hole to jump to a three stroke lead, but a nine at the par-5 12th would allow fellow competitors to catch up. After round one Klauk would take home a three stroke lead over Danny Erickson.

In round two Klauk would start out in fine fashion, just one over after six holes of play with Erickson the same. Then it all just seemed to come apart as Klauk posted up five double bogeys and a quad. Erickson, on his back nine did not play his best, but he did manage the golf course well enough to secure the lead and take a six stroke victory in the end. Klauk would hang on to claim the Runner-up spot.

This week the entire field competed against each other to determine the overall tournament winner regardless of age or gender. Four players from three different divisions tied for the overall title forcing a play-off of the ages, but it took just one hole for **Danny Erickson of the Boys 10-12 Division** to snag the overall tournament honors. A birdie at the first hole, a straightaway par-5 would be good enough to eliminate Lucas Slayden and Carter Lewis of the Elite Tour Boys 13-15 Division and take home top honors, the globed crystal trophy signifying champion of the entire field. Cade Black from the Boys 16-18 Division was the other player tied for the overall, but at play-off time was not available.

In the "I've Got a Dream" **Boys 16-18 Division** Casey Lyons from Medford Lakes, New Jersey become a member and played in his first NFJG TOUR event. Lyons is here for a three month period working on his game and would post up a nice round of six over par to nip Cade Black for the one day event.

In the **Girls 13-18 Division** Reni Jancsik fresh off rehabilitation would come back to the TOUR strong, ready and able. Jancsik would not only open her round with a solid four over par 40 on her opening nine,

but she would come back and close the deal with a one over par 37 on her closing nine to take the title away from Savanah's hard charging Rachel Wohn (81). Jancsik not only shot the low round of the day. It was the low round of 123 rounds of golf played during the last two cold and windy days.

In the ***Elite Tour Boys 13-15 Division*** Campbell Kennedy took on a very talented division of 10 to come out on top in the one day tournament. His 80 nipped Lucas Slayden by two strokes.

The ***Rising Tour Boys 13-15 Division*** captured a new champion in Lake City's Ty Folsom. This was Ty's first event. Not a bad way to start out. Hill Flanigan was just one stroke off the lead. The young Flanigan played some steady golf coming in, but just could not make the needed move to capture the lead. Veteran Thomas Cush "The Cush" snagged the third spot at 96.

Danny Erickson walked away with the Gold in the ***Boys 10-12 Division*** with an 81 while Cam Goldknopf took home the Silver with a score of 86. Mathew French nipped Davis Chandler by one stroke at 88 for the Bronze.

This week the ***Foundation Elite*** had 13 challengers in the field and new comer Luke Balakiewicz of Jacksonville took home top honors out dueling St. Johns Bryson Hughes 87 to 89. Ryan Houck recharged his batteries after his last performance to capture the Bronze also with 89.

The ***Foundation Rising*** had another first time champion in Joseph LaNasa. LaNasa shot himself a respectable 52, while Michael Wenk finished two back at 54. Maxwell Morgan took the third spot beating Kathy Miller in a scorecard playoff for the Bronze medal.

Great job to all who played and to all of our parents and grandparents who supported our kids.

Coming up is the ***Conservatory at Hammock Beach – The Adult-Junior Championship***. Champions get exemptions into the JAGA Family Championship come April 19th at World Golf Village – King and Bear.

See you on the links!

Jack Aschenbach, PGA