

2020 Junior Azalea

Palatka Golf Club

March 7-8, 2020

Yep! It comes and goes so fast and before you know it the season is over. Another great event is in the books and what a great weekend. Yes, a little chilly and a little windy, but all-in-all a great weekend on a very challenging course. The Palatka Golf Club is not known for its length, but it is known for the tough Donald Ross designed greens and sneaky fairways requiring players to place their ball correctly throughout the course. The true challenge is selecting the correct club and ball flight to stick a green. On this course, be off line just a yard and you may regret it. A mouth-watering birdie or eagle can quickly turn into a bogey or worse. It's easy to three putt from six feet and I will venture to say only a handful of the players can say they did not.

The golf course headed by PGA Professional Andy Heartz is in the best condition that I have ever seen it in, so kudo's to his entire team for getting it ready for the best junior tour around. Many thanks to our sponsors from "**3rd Street Charities**". This group is 100% behind the efforts of the North Florida Junior Golf Foundation and the "Junior Azalea" which spins into the Senior Azalea and THE AZALEA. The crew spent their entire weekend making sure our kids had a great experience. The Palatka Men's Golf Association did another bang up job by providing safety for our kids and watched for the stray balls as the balls arced over the hills and took wild bounces at times reducing the time spent looking for a ball. We all know you get some wild bounces at Palatka Golf Club once and a while.

No doubt Jacksonville's Adam Vermut likes Donald Ross designed golf courses. One thing for sure he plays this style golf course well. In 2019 Vermut shot 69-71 to finish second to St. Augustine's Logan Underwood who nipped him by one stroke and this year Vermut played in the **Boys 16-18 Division** and playing well again posted rounds of 72-71 to tie for the overall lead with the NFJG TOUR's #1 ranked player Jacksonville's Moses Compaan.

The duo battled it out all day and after regulation play the two players would need one extra hole to determine the 2020 champion. Vermut would win that hole and capture that title with a birdie at the first sudden-death hole.

Everyone knows even-par or anything near par is a chore on this course. You must work for birdies and work even harder to save par if out of position on this course. Vermut, known to make a bunch of birdies only had four on the weekend while Compaan carded only five who alongside Trevor Humphries was the birdie leader for the weekend. Great job to both of these two outstanding champions.

In our **Girls Division's** Deland's Stetson bound Lisa Colee put another check mark next to her name with victory over the 20 player field firing a 78-77 to take the Overall Championship for the Girls and top spot for the **Elite Tour Girls**.

St. Johns Ashley Huffman would be six back, but would best her round one score by five shots shooting 83-78 to take the Runner-up position, nipping Fleming Islands Alyzabeth Morgan by a single shot.

Danielle Dailey would post up scores of 88-91 to lead the **Rising Tour Girls** and smiling Sarah Harpster would shoot 92-90 to take the Runner-up spot.

In the **Elite Tour Boys** Division Jacksonville's Tyler Mawhinney would battle it out with the round one leaders St. Augustine's Nicholas Farraye (76) and Jacksonville's Alexander Lymus (77). The trio would have a final round battle of who could hang on and avoid the BIG mistake of a the dreaded big numbers. In the end Mawhinney would take charge and sail to victory nipping hard charging Andrew Davis by one stroke. Davis would bogey the last hole, but would shoot the low round of the day for the Elite group with a respectable score of 76.

The **Rising Tour Boys** had seven players in the division and a pair of 88 posted up by St. Augustine's Anthony Rivera would be good enough to take the gold. This would be Rivera's second win in a row. Grant McKinney would be the Runner-up with scores of 90-88. He would tie with Orange Park's Connor Hess and win in a scorecard play-off.

The **Boys 10-12 Division** Jacksonville's Ricky Ruth was back on tour after a break and he would show no rust. The four time champion would take Ponte Vedra's Wolfgang Weiler into a sudden-death play-off where Ruth would win with a par at the first play-off hole. Ruth Fired scores of 75-77 while Weiler posted scores of 77-75.

Put this event on your tournament schedule as next year it will get bigger and better. It will be the same time of year. Right before THE PLAYERS. Exemptions for higher level golf is pretty spectacular for this event.

- **2020 AZALEA** – four fully paid exemptions to represent the NFJG TOUR are; Adam Vermut, Moses Compaan, Connor Holcroft and Teddy Sotsky
- **2021 SALLY** – One fully paid Exemption – Ashley Huffman
- **2020 North Florida PGA Junior Championship** – four fully paid exemptions; Adam Vermut, Moses Compaan, Lisa Colee and Ashley Huffman
- **First Coast Women's Amateur** – two fully paid exemptions – Ashley Huffman and Alyzabeth Morgan
- **Selection to the Florida Junior Tour Team Championship**
- **One last thing** – One player was selected to be PGA TOUR Player Russell Knox's caddie on Wednesdays practice round and participate in the "Caddie Shootout". Luck winner was **Teddy Sotsky**

Have fun at THE PLAYERS Championship. Next up is the NFJG TOUR Challenge at The Golf Club at South Hampton followed by the Florida Coast Ryder Cup.

See you on the links!

Jack Aschenbach, PGA