

Pitching in



PHOTOS BY JERRY BEARD | THE JOURNAL

Volunteers pour concrete for a new disc golf tee box at the Shaver Recreation Complex in Seneca last month. Pictured, from left, are Greater Oconee Disc Golf member Sam Medders, Seneca Recreation employees Justin Mark and Petey Ridley and GODG's Caleb Rankin.

Disc golf group helps install tee pads at Shaver course

BY NORM CANNADA
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SENECA — While it isn't as well-known as its more traditional counterpart, disc golf is growing in popularity as players learn to fly discs toward a metal basket to make pars, birdies and bogies instead of using drivers, irons, putter and balls.

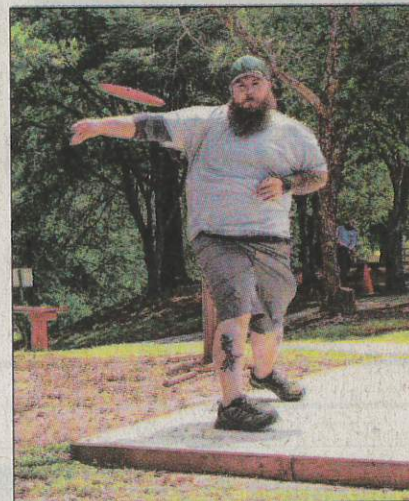
The popularity of the sport has caused courses to spring up around the nation, including about a half dozen or more in Oconee and Pickens counties.

Seneca recreation direc-

tor Rick Lacey said the first course was built behind the Shaver Recreation Complex around 2003 or 2004.

"It's grown since then," he said. "We have a lot of folks that come out late in the afternoons and walk through the woods and play. It's just about an everyday thing for a lot of people. I know our course gets used every day, weather permitting."

In addition to other courses in Walhalla, Easley, Central and at Chau Ram Park near



Bo Carlson of Seneca throws a disc from a newly constructed tee pad at the Shaver Recreational Complex in Seneca on Friday.

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GOLF: 'How can that not be fun?'

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Westminster, Shaver added a second, longer championship course about a year ago that has attracted more disc golfers.

MAKING IT BETTER

A group of local disc golf enthusiasts have volunteered their time and money to help make the new course even better.

Members of Greater Oconee Disc Golf led efforts in recent weeks to put in cement tee pads — the equivalent to a tee box in golf — where the golfers can launch the first stroke of their discs.

"It gives you a stable base to plant your feet," said Bo Carlson, one of the 70 to 80 active members in the local organization. I tried my hand at golf, but I wasn't very good at it. I like watching the discs fly. I think the backhand turnover is the prettiest shot."

The group raised about \$3,000 to put in tee boxes and volunteered their time, energy and muscle to put the cement into the frames. So far, they have completed half of the 18 holes at Shaver's championship course.

Sam Medders, who has been playing disc golf for about six years, said R.W. Able was the group member "who had the vision to get this course in."

He and his wife are living in Spain right now because of her job.

"With the concrete tee pads, it will be more attractive for more people to come and play," Medders said. "Once the word gets out that we've got concrete tee pads, there will be a lot more foot traffic on this course. We had a tournament here back earlier in the spring, and the feedback from that tournament was, 'I would like to come back, but I don't think I am if there's no concrete tee pads or if the tee pads aren't better.' That feedback got to the rec department. I

went and talked with them and here we are."

Medders said he played golf for a while, but "was tired of coming home mad."

"When you retire, you've got to find something to do," he said.

"That's the thing about disc golf is people from all over — all kind of interest levels — they find this and it's like, 'Dadgum, this is fun.' You're throwing plastic out in the woods. How can that not be fun?"

TOURIST ATTRACTION

He added the attraction of good disc golf courses brings in tourists.

"It's not just locals that play," Medders said. "The last major tournament we had here, we had 35 people from North Carolina. We had people from Tennessee, people from Georgia. I think there was 150-something people registered for that tournament — prob-

ably about 30 were from Oconee County. So they're coming from all over Upstate South Carolina and three surrounding states, for sure."

Lacey said the other nine tee pads will likely be filled with cement "in the next couple of months." He credited the local group members for their efforts to help get the course in and help to complete it.

"They raised \$3,000, and we poured \$3,000 worth of concrete," he said. "They kind of laid it out. They played it for a long time trying to figure exactly where the tee pads needed to be. They have been extremely helpful with everything — volunteering — they weed eat, they spray, they do a lot of stuff. It's been awesome having these guys doing as much as they've done."

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