

Entertainment

Herald Times Reporter

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THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2001 ♦ C1



Jill Carron, Nic Juza and Alyssa Van Lanen launch their discs while playing disc golf this past weekend in Two Rivers. Area residents can now play the hot new sport any day of the week at Silver Creek Park's recently built disc golf course.



Jon McDonough of De Pere "putts" the disc into the basket Saturday during what was billed as "The World's Biggest Disk Golf Weekend" at a temporary nine-hole course at Neshotah Beach in Two Rivers. Manitowoc's Silver Creek Park has the county's first permanent course.

Latest craze, disc golf, merges the precision of golf with the free-spirited fun of Frisbee

By SUZANNE WEISS
 Herald Times Reporter

Thursday
 May 10, 2001

MANITOWOC — Where can you play 18 holes of golf for free?

At Silver Creek Park, that's where. But leave your clubs at home. This is disc golf; it doesn't require them.

Here is what you need to play this latest reincarnation of the traditional sport:

■ **A disc golf course** — Manitowoc residents have been driving to Sheboygan, Green Bay and Appleton to play disc golf. No longer.

Silver Creek Park's 18-hole course, installed in October, is getting finishing touches just in time for the summer season. It is one of about 34 disc golf courses in the state.

"This sport is growing by leaps and bounds," said Tim Hildebrand, the disc golf enthusiast who was instrumental in obtaining local sponsors that made the Silver Creek course possible.

"In the past five years there has been a 15 percent growth in the number of players and courses."

Silver Creek's front nine holes begin west of the lower parking lot next to the field house. The course follows the creek west, circles out along Highway I-5 and up the hill, where it finishes in a loop.

The back nine holes start to the east of the picnic area, follow along the lake, across the creek to the upper turn-around lot through the woods and finish in the lower lot.

■ **How to play, Think golf** — "It's the same game. It's just a different projectile," Hildebrand said.

Other differences include the "holes," which are elevated galvanized steel baskets with chains that stop the flight of the plastic Frisbee-like discs.

The sport is also less expensive and less time-consuming than golf. A single player can finish 18 holes in about an hour and a half, Hildebrand said.

"Putting is the hardest part of both games," Hildebrand said.

The Silver Creek course will have



Tim Hildebrand, Wade Juza, Jeff Malloy and Jim Van Lanen Jr. have been instrumental in getting disc golf off the ground at Manitowoc's Silver Creek Park, where area residents can play for free at the park's new 18-hole course.

par 3, par 4 and par 5 holes for recreational players; all holes will be par 3 for advanced players.

And yes, there are hazards and out-of-bounds penalties.

"If you have a bad game, you don't have to throw your club, you can throw your disc," Hildebrand said with a laugh.

■ **A golf disc (or two)** — For about \$7, you can buy a plastic disc and get started, said Jeff Malloy, recreation supervisor for the Manitowoc Parks and Recreation Department.

The discs are smaller in diameter, flatter and heavier than traditional Frisbees, he said.

Stores that sell disc golf equipment typically have a chart that tells which discs are best for beginners, Malloy said.

"A putter is probably the most important," Hildebrand said. "It's the easiest to control."

Putting discs are less aerodynamic than driver discs and absorb more energy when they hit the basket, he said.

Drivers are designed with beveled or tapered edges so they travel long distances, Malloy said.

An all-purpose driver disc that is easy to control is recommended for beginners, Hildebrand said.

More experienced players might have as many as 10 to 15 discs, including long- and medium-range drivers and clubs that veer left, veer right or fly straight.

There is even an approach disc, which is the equivalent of a pitching wedge in golf.

Discs range in weight from 140 grams to 180 grams, with the lighter discs traveling farther and the heavier discs offering more stability under windy conditions, Malloy said.

The discs come in fashionable colors, with illustrations and tie-dyed patterns.

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DISC: Golf merges with Frisbee in latest sports craze

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terms; some are made from glow-in-the-dark materials for those players venturing out after sunset.

Discs are available at Culture Cafe, City Limits and the Mobil station at 30th and Dewey Streets.

■ **Friends or no friends** — One of the beauties of the sport is that it appeals to all ages and can be played solo or in groups — from a lone businessman taking a long lunch to a group of teens, organizers say.

"It's something the kids can do. It's not going to cost a lot of money. It will occupy their time," Hildebrand said.

The sport has wide appeal and can be played by families, the "guys" getting together or a young couple out on a date.

Malloy said.

"You can't stereotype the disc golf player," said Hildebrand, who also touts the sport's health benefits.

"It's a cardio workout," he said.

■ **More information** — The Golf Disc Association Web site gives a detailed history of the sport and its rules: www.discgolfassoc.com. The Manitowoc Parks and Recreation Web has a map of the Silver Creek course and more information: www.manitowoc.org/parkandrec

Local enthusiast and course sponsor Jim Van Lanen Jr. also has a Web site that promotes the sport: www.discoverwisc.com.

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Interested in trying a sport new to the lakeshore? Here are some upcoming disc golf events taking place at Silver

Creek Park:

■ **A Disc Golf Singles League** — Registration deadline is May 18 for this 13-week league, which begins at 6 p.m. June 4. Cost is \$13.65 per player. Register at the Parks and Recreation office, 930 N. 18th St. For more information, call Jeff Malloy at 683-4533.

■ **Best Shot Doubles League** — A doubles league may be offered if enough interest is shown. For more information, call Wade Juza at 794-8072.

■ **Disc Golf Course Grand Opening** — Members of the public are invited to see the new disc golf course and learn how to play the game starting at 1 p.m. June 10. The event

will include refreshments, games, prizes and local disc golf experts.

■ **Professional Disc Golf Tournament** — Here's a chance to watch 80 pros from the Professional Disc Golf Association compete for a cash purse beginning at 9 a.m. July 22. The event is part of the Wisconsin Tour.

■ **Amateur Disc Golf Tournament** — Members of the public are invited to play in this tournament, also part of the Wisconsin tour, scheduled to begin at 8 a.m. on Sept. 8. Prizes will include T-shirts, golf discs and disc golf bags. To register, call Jeff Malloy at 683-4533.