

GOLFERS GUIDE TO AUSTIN

Golf gains popularity among women

by DENISE WORHACH
For the Austin Business Journal

When attorney Margo Frasier takes to the fairways at Lost Creek Country Club, she gladly leaves behind

her courtroom winner-take-all attitude. She tries to concentrate solely on the ball in front of her and the pin ahead.

Frasier admits few distractions, even when her 13-month-old joins her for a special mother-daughter outing

twice a month.

"I stuff her car seat in the golf cart and away we go," she said. "She thinks it's fun."

Besides the recreational benefit for both, Frasier sees the business applications for golf as well. She picked up the game in 1987 so she would no longer feel excluded when her colleagues teamed up for an 18-hole break from business meetings and bar association retreats.

She also has invited male and female clients to join her for a round after work. Like many busy working women, Frasier, who works for the law firm of Bickerstaff, Heath & Smiley, plays golf for some of the same reasons that busy working men do. But with a difference.

Recognizing that difference led to the formation of the National Executive Women's Golf League, based in West Palm Beach, Fla., in July 1991. The organization now counts 50 chapters and 5,000 members, according to Donna Linder, a professional golfer and instructor at Barton Creek Country Club.

"Obviously, there was a need," Linder said. "And I've found the same thing to be true in Austin."

Linder reports an incredible response to her efforts to start a local chapter of businesswomen who golf.

"I'm hoping 75 to 100 women (sign up) by the end of the first year."

Golf group for women

Linder said a kickoff party for the group on March 21 would be a chance for people to get to know each other. The party will be from 7 to 9 p.m. in the ballroom at Barton Creek Country Club.

"It (The Executive Women's Golf League) provides a place to play and people to play with — and the underlying theme, of course, would be ...networking.

"Believe it or not, one of the biggest barriers to working women playing is having to get a tee time on the weekends and then putting a group together."

Adding to the difficulty, some private clubs refuse to let women play until after 1 p.m. on Saturdays, a holdover from an earlier era where women's schedules were assumed to be more flexible than men's. Some clubs offer ladies' days on Tuesday or Wednesday mornings as a concession.

Linder said that only one of the three courses at Barton Creek Country Club observes this no-women-allowed rule. Great Hills, Austin, and Onion Creek country clubs have similar re-

strictions while public courses are open to all.

Some people view the boy's club mentality as a definite handicap.

"The number one reason that people quit golf or don't continue with golf is not time or money, but intimidation," said Barbara Puett, a former state amateur champion and six-time Austin city champion. She now teaches golf at River Place, a privately-owned public facility.

Learning strokes and manners

Both Linder and Puett said their students often seek out their services because of their non-threatening nature and methods. Amidst the practice swings and putts, they pass along tips to make their students familiar with the finer points of being more comfortable on any course anywhere. They cover everything from what to wear to where to drop your golf bag and where to cast your shadow.

"The (main) problem in golf today is not skill level — it's slow play," Puett said. "So I take them out there and show them how to play in a timely fashion."

At the end of her course, Puett literally walks her students through a nine-hole course.

To jog her student's memory when she isn't around, Puett co-authored a book called "Golf Etiquette" with Jim Apfelbaum of Austin. Puett reports brisk bookstore and pro shop sales of the book across the country, but credits another source for excellent sales.

"We've gotten good reviews in business publications."

Along that same track, she estimates that 95 percent of her students in Austin are professionals who fear bad manners more than missed shots.

"If you see someone not playing fair out on the golf course you're certainly not going to make him your accountant."

Business contacts

Puett said the popularity of her book and the sport of golf among working women is easily explained.

"There are a lot of women in business now. They're finding a lot of business is done with golf course connections.

"They find they buy their insurance with people they play golf with."

Some women call Puett for lessons after a boss or peer suggests they learn the game to enhance their career, she said. She has heard that comment from

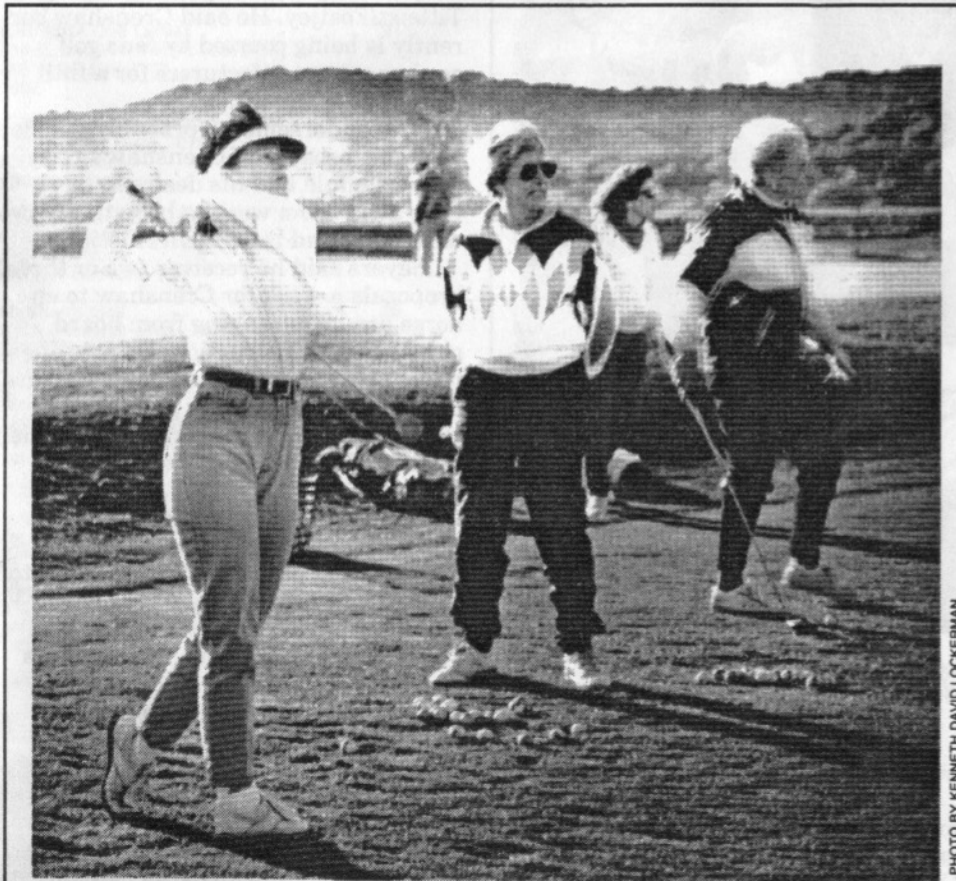


PHOTO BY KENNETH DAVID LOCKERMAN

Jamie Schiefelbein, left, watches her golf ball sail while instructor Barbara Puett looks on. Puett teaches golf at River Place in Austin.

Golf groups play at public courses

by MICHAEL BURTON
For the Austin Business Journal

Some may view golf as an exclusive country club sport but in Austin, at least, it's a sport that crosses all social, ethnic and financial lines.

The city of Austin maintains and operates four widely-used courses — the Hancock, Lions Municipal, Morris-Williams and Jimmy Clay golf courses

ranging in age from 16 to the late 70s.

Unlike other associations, the AGA often goes outside Austin to host tournaments.

"We've played at Forest Creek, Bluebonnet, Blackhawk, Bastrop, Wimberley, Marble Falls..wherever we can," Womack said.

Forest Creek Golf Course is located in Round Rock while Blackhawk Golf Club is in Pflugerville. Bluebonnet Hill