

SPORTS & RECREATION

Women's golf league bringing fun to the fore for retired ladies

BY MEG HASKELL
OF THE BDN STAFF

The women gathered outside Traditions Golf Club in Holden early Tuesday morning were in high spirits. Laughing and chatting, they waited for golf pro and club co-owner Colin Gillies to step out into the sunshine with his clipboard, then quieted down as he read off their names into teams of four. Once assigned, the six teams wasted no time dispersing across the nine-hole course via foot and in carts for a low-pressure, high-fun scramble.

"We try to be fun and easy and accommodate all levels of ability," said league member and self-described golf addict Susan Payne, 62, of Holden. The scramble format works well toward this goal, especially since many members of the Tuesday morning women's league are relative newcomers to the game, older players or both.

Many people take up golf at retirement age or older, Payne said, citing the game's social and health benefits. It can take a while to get the hang of it, she noted, but taking a few professional lessons can make a big difference. And regular play in friendly, supportive company builds on those skills.

A scramble gives every player a chance to hit her best ball without overwhelming

less skilled players or jeopardizing the overall performance of the team. In a scramble, all players on the team tee off, then decide which ball is in the best position. The other team members then place their balls within a club's length of that spot for the next shot. The process continues down the fairway and onto the putting green until one player sinks her putt and the team moves on to the next hole.

While there are a number of longtime golfers in the women's league, Gillies said, there are lots of beginners as well. "This is not a league of terribly competitive players," he said. "We try to make it as comfortable and nonthreatening as possible by making up compatible teams with a mix of skill levels."

Most of the players in the women's league are retirement age or older. Many play several times a week, at Traditions as well as at other courses in the area. Among them is Hilda Wardwell, 93, of Bangor, chipper and smart in her aqua polo shirt, dark purple shorts and sparkling white visor. She picked up golfing when she was 50, she said, when her late husband retired.

"I was always an athlete," she said. "I was good at tennis, bowling, baseball, all of it. It just came easily to me. But golfing was harder to learn. It didn't come naturally, but I figured it out eventu-

ally. Now I'm over the hill, but I still like to get out and play." If she doesn't play at least twice a week, she said, her game suffers.

"It's a good workout," she said, looking out over the grassy course. "And I like the girls."

Susan Payne said the women who play at Traditions value the social aspects of the game more than the men do. In addition to being more talkative and interactive on the course, they're more likely to stay for lunch at the clubhouse to chat longer with teammates and other players. Men, she said, tend to be more competitive and focused on the outcome of the game.

Payne only started golfing about eight years ago. Like Hilda Wardwell, she was looking for an activity she could share with her husband, who was about to retire.

"He had played when he was a kid, but then he developed back problems. He never played the whole time we were together," she said.

Though she was not especially sports-minded herself, Payne pitched the idea that if they both became competent golfers, it would allow them to be outdoors, meet new friends and stay active together. It worked. She and her husband are both members at Traditions now and play regularly there and at other clubs in the area.

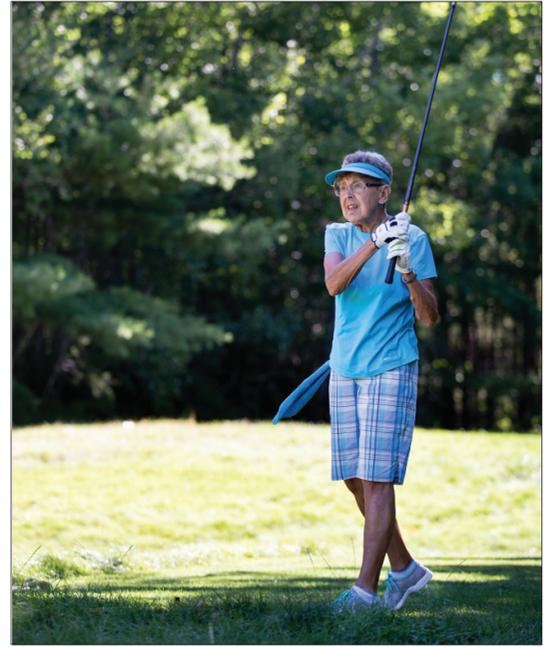
"The ironic thing is, I've never been athletic myself at all," Payne said. "I played no sports as a kid, I had no exposure to sports when I was growing up. It was just not part of my family structure at all." She had to start from scratch, not only learning the rules and techniques of golf, but also the culture and language of sports competition.

"My biggest challenge was getting my body to move in an athletic way," she said. It took about five years for the lessons and practice to kick in.

"At some point, it turned into an addiction," she said. While she and other "snowbirds" at Traditions continue golfing in Florida and other warm places during the winter, others make do with a computerized indoor golf simulator at the clubhouse that keeps their skills up and maintains important social connections until spring comes again.

Colin Gillies said golf is a great activity for retirees to pick up, including couples and singles. Though it has long been considered a sport of privileged white men, Gillies said the industry has made great strides in reaching out to women, minorities and younger players in recent years.

"When women come out here, we don't want them to feel intimidated, lost or unwelcome," he said. "At first, they



MICKY BEDELL/BDN

Rachel LaPointe watches her ball after teeing off at Traditions Golf Club in Holden on Tuesday morning. The club hosts a women's league there weekly, and while there are a number of longtime golfers there are lots of newcomers as well.

may not be good enough to play on their own, but they can play in the league with other supportive women who understand our philosophy."

Golf's country-club reputation as "exclusive, exclusionary and elitist" is falling

by the way, Gillies said. At family-friendly Traditions, which boasts a pizza joint, a miniature golf course and a go-cart track in addition to the nine-hole regular course, he said, "we've learned to check our ego at the door."

Old Town HS football star to play for Husson

BY ERNIE CLARK
OF THE BDN STAFF

One of the state's more prolific high school football wide receivers of recent vintage has found a collegiate home.

Recently graduated Old Town High School standout Andre Miller will join the Husson University football program for the upcoming start of preseason practices.

The 6-foot-3 Miller, an All-USA Maine choice last fall after leading Old Town to an undefeated regular season and a berth in the Class C North championship game, also considered playing at the prep school

level before opting for Husson.

Miller will be joined on the Husson roster by his longtime quarterback at Old Town, Jake Jarvis. Coyotes' coach Lance Cowan is optimistic both can be contributors for the Division III Eagles.

"I think they may be able to compete right away," Cowan said. "The skill level is right there for Jake, and for Andre it's obviously right there as well."

Miller had 49 pass receptions for 1,068 yards and 17 touchdowns last fall, including 14 catches for 337 yards and five touchdowns in two postseason games, a 38-7 semifinal victory over

Foxcroft Academy and a 40-27 loss in the Class C North final to eventual state champion Winslow.

Miller also was a game-changing threat on both defense and special teams for Old Town and was named to the All-Big 10 first-team as a wide receiver and defensive back after helping the Coyotes enter postseason play as a No. 1 seed for the first time since 1982.

Miller, who also competed in basketball and outdoor track and field for Old Town, most recently starred in this year's Maine Shrine Lobster Bowl Classic football all-star game held last month in Biddeford.

He made seven pass re-

ceptions for 207 yards and four touchdowns -- with three of the scoring passes thrown by Jarvis. Miller was named the East squad's most valuable player after helping his team score a 58-52 victory over the West.

Miller joins a Husson University football program coached by Gabby Price that finished 7-3 last fall, 6-1 in Eastern Collegiate Football Conference play.

The Eagles open their 2016 season Sept. 3 at Alfred (New York) University, with the home opener on Friday, Sept. 16, against Dean College of Franklin, Massachusetts.

Bangor Parks and Rec fall soccer, Labor Day Road race registration open

Bangor Parks and Recreation Department is accepting registrations for its 2016 fall soccer program. Teams will practice one day per week and play games Saturday mornings at the Union St. Athletic Complex. This program is open to children in grades K-6. All groups will be sorted according to age group and gender. The fee is \$35 Bangor residents, \$45 others, a \$10 late fee will be assessed after Sept. 8.

A meet and greet will take place Saturday, Sept. 10. No registrations will be accepted on that date.

To register, go to BangorParksandRec.com or stop by

the facility at 647 Main St. For info, call 992-4490.

The Bangor Parks and Recreation Department is seeking coaches for its youth fall soccer program. Teams practice one day per week and play Saturday mornings. For information, call Tim at 992-4493 or email tim.baude@bangormaine.gov.

Parks and Rec is also now accepting registrations for its 54th annual Labor Day Road Race set for Monday, Sept. 5. Race start time is 9 a.m. Race starts and finishes at Bangor Parks and Rec, 647 Main St. Race day registration will take place 7:45-8:45 a.m. Entry fee is \$20. The first 100 registrants will receive a T-shirt.

Register in advance at BangorParksandRec.com or stop by the office.

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BANGOR, 283 Forest Ave.

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