Swing kids: Ease children into golf by letting them have fun

BY I.W. LEONARD

Copley News Service

才en Bowman has seen it happen far too often now to consider it a mere coincidence.

When Tiger Woods wins a PGA Tour event, Bowman says three or four new kids, their parents in tow, show up for his afternoon lesson program at the nine-hole Sun Valley Golf Course in La Mesa, Cali£

Take off to the great north

attention of the world renown Eco-Challenge event, which is the largest and most prestigious of all of the current adventure races. The Eco-Challenge will use Sault Ste. Marie as the site of this year's North American Championship this July 17-26.

McMillan said that the selection is tantamount to having a professional endorsement that the region can compete with anywhere in the world for spectacular and rugged landscapes that provide the backdrop for outdoor activities.

He believes that there is the legacy that this event leaves in that a significant number of followers of this race will also want to visit the location and experience the route as best they can.

Still, McMillan likes to stress that anyone, including families, can recreate in the Sault, but also take advantage of the amenities of an urban area.

"Those who have been here know we have wonderful accommodations, dining, gaming, nightlife, shopping and culture, while at the same time being minutes away from a rich, natural setting," he concluded. "And for those who don't, we're trying to get the message out."

For more information about recreation opportunities in Sault Ste. Marie, visit their web site at www.sault-canada.com. Information on the Eco-Challenge can be found at their web site at

www.ecochallengeNAC.com Nancy Sundstrom is a local freelance writer.

There are kids who would stand in front of their televisions, their little fingers gripped to a golf club, playing along with this pop icon — the box every morning, the guy

guy they see on their Wheaties who beats them in computer golf before they go to bed each night.

But if Tiger can lead them to the course, he can't teach them proper balance or grip or swing plane. That's the job for Bowman, and other pros who are waiting out on the range to welcome Tiger's little legions.

Increasingly, they are seeing girls and boys such as Christopher Tuulik, who was a 5-year-old, 50-pound kindergartner when his parents hooked him up with Bowman because their "little golf nut" was getting so good and so to

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improve, they couldn't help him anymore.

Like many other kids, Christopher's interest in the game was piqued before he could stand upright. Then it was off to the range, and eventually his first round, at 4 years but he wants a child to build old.

"He played about seven holes," said his mom, laughing at the memory. "And he really wanted to finish. But he was just too tired from all the walking."

Christopher's parents handled the situation perfectly. according to David Emerick, the lead instructor at the Golf University, who has worked with dozens of children as coordinator of North County Junior Golf Tour, based at Rancho Carlsbad (Cali£).

"The main thing is to show an

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interest in what they're doing," Emerick said.

So, how do you get them started? For the youngest of players, Emerick advises beginning on the putting green — with a 1-inch putt. It may sound silly, on success, not failure, and 20 misses in 20 whacks will send them back to trading Pokemon cards in no time.

"From there, do some chipping off the green with a little stroke, " said Emerick, "and

work your way up to a full swing."

Don't be too concerned about equipment if your child is 10 or younger. Manufacturers will tell you that adult clubs are too heavy, but Emerick says he's been cutting down clubs to the proper length for years, with excellent results.

"Little kids," said Emerick, "only need about three clubs anyway-a putter, a 7-iron and some type of 7- or 5-wood."





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