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## Birdies and Frisbees fly at Moraga Commons Disc Golf Course

By Casey Scheiner



Damon Rothgeb tees off at the first hole of Moraga Commons' disc golf course. Photo Casey Scheiner

Brian Hanson is preparing to tee off of the first hole in Moraga. Yet, he is not holding a golf club, nor is he placing a peg in the ground at Moraga Country Club. Instead, between the skate park and volleyball courts at Moraga Commons, he wields a disc, looking to launch the round, flat, plate-like object into a chained basket rather than hit a small, dimpled ball into a hole.

Hanson is one of many locals joining in on the disc golf craze that recently swept the nation, with the Professional Disc Golf Association quantifying that over one million people now regularly play. Further, the Moraga Disc Golf Course Facebook group has accumulated over 600 members. With summer arriving, that number should only spike as citizens flock outside to enjoy the warm weather at the only disc golf course within six miles of Moraga.

"Disc golf popularity locally and worldwide has rapidly expanded," Glenn Murray, the organizer for Moraga Commons' Tuesday Weekly Handicap Singles League, explained. "Lamorinda youth and adults have enjoyed the course over the past 40 years, but it's more popular now than ever."

The sport that George Costanza of "Seinfeld" coined "frolf," or frisbee golf, has strong roots at Moraga Commons. The course, donated by the Moraga Women's Society, celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. Co-designed by "Steady" Ed Headrick, the creator of the Frisbee and the father of disc golf, and Bay Area disc golf pioneer Charlie Callahan, Moraga Commons boasts deep ties to the fabric of the sport itself.

Lamorinda residents revere its rich past, with users on the Disc Golf Course Review website calling it a "historically great course" and an "old historical course . with historical Steady Ed significance."

Although its past glory may constitute much of the course's identity, the future has begun to take the reins of disc golf in the area, as the pandemic triggered a surge in youth participation.

"I started playing disc golf around three years ago, but I got more serious around a year ago after playing one of the weekly tournaments here and wanting to improve," Chase Kivelson, a sophomore at Campolindo High School, said. "I love the community here [at Moraga Commons]. It's so inclusive. Everyone is always super welcoming, so I've gotten a lot of friends out of the sport."

Through all sorts of fun challenges, from drastic elevation changes to dozens of trees serving as obstacles, the nine disc golf holes, all Par 3s, which wind around the grass of Moraga Commons have brought exercise, joy, and friendship to thousands of Lamorinda citizens over the past four decades.

"It's a super nice course with a lot of variety in shots," Damon Rothgeb, an Oakland man who drives to Moraga twice a month to play disc golf at the Commons, concluded. "I love everything about disc golf: throwing the disc, watching it fly, and making improvements. It's like a fun puzzle that I'm trying to solve."

So, when the calendar turns to National Disc Golf Day on Aug. 6, it's safe to say that Moraga Commons will be filled with disc golf enthusiasts.

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