

Breaking away

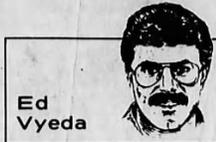
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Local junior golf program proud of graduate

JUST BY winning the U.S. Women's Amateur, Kay Cockerill paid back everything she might have thought she owed to learning how to play in the Santa Cruz Junior Golf Program. A teaching pro couldn't ask for a better role model.

"She's one of the ones who really makes a program shine," says Santa Cruz golf pro Rick Walker, who, together with DeLaveaga Head Pro Gary Loustalot, restructured the junior program to its present state. As both watched Cockerill's triumph at Pasatiempo, they couldn't help but feel a bit special.

"I got goose bumps all over, I was so happy for her," Walker said. "When it was over, I turned to Gary and told him, 'We were just there for a moment, when she was passing through.' I know we had a hand in it, but I didn't hit any of those thousands of practice shots she hit



Ed Vyeda

Golf

for the last seven years."

And they continue to pass through Santa Cruz area golf courses — close to 300 juniors having participated in this summer's junior sessions. A couple days after Cockerill's victory, at one of the final juniors classes of the summer, "She was the talk of the day, especially with the girls," Loustalot said. "It stimulated them. Now, it's a matter of keeping them stimulated."

Women's golf today has some solid name players from Santa Cruz Coun-

ty: young veteran LPGA Tour standout Janet Coles, an ex-UCLA golfer who followed another Bruin (Cockerill) throughout the Amateur week; and Juli Inkster, one of the best players in the game, who won three U.S. Amateur titles. And now Cockerill. If there were to be a Santa Cruz County Golf Hall of Fame — indeed, maybe there should be — those three would belong.

As Walker said, the Santa Cruz golf community has a lot to be proud of. Places like the Aptos Par-3 are outlets for kids to start, and courses have junior programs available, some year round. It's all there for any kid to take advantage of. Once in a while, one like Cockerill ends up paying everything back, in full.

One of the key things that keeps the Santa Cruz junior program alive is financial sponsorship by the Great

Birdie Shootout celebrity pro-am at DeLaveaga. The seventh annual Shootout is planned to expand to a couple days of play (at DeLaveaga and Pasatiempo this year), with three days of activities, Saturday through Monday, Jan. 24-26.

Scheduled featured guests include Lee Trevino and Huey Lewis. Walker, the tournament director, is hoping to finalize a deal this week to have a big chunk of the event sponsored by the Toyota company. Gallery ticket sales are to directly benefit the local junior golf program.

There may be more quality players on the way. Dennis Ventry, who lives at Pasatiempo, just returned from competing for the NorCal team in the prestigious Hogan Cup matches in Portland. He shot 79-77 at Riverside Country Club, as one of the

five select juniors on a team that placed fourth. Ventry is a junior at Bellarmine Prep in Santa Clara, where he returns as the No. 2 player from the 1986 Central Coast Section championship team.

Meetings continue concerning the proposed development of an additional nine holes at DeLaveaga. Loustalot had a report due today for the respective committees formed to analyze the possibilities of adding onto the course. No one, though, is saying much, officially, about the proposals, but there should be a formal announcement made — one way or the other — before the end of this year.

Aptos Seascape assistant pro Jeff

McMillen teamed up with a foursome of men's club members to qualify for the Oldsmobile Scrambles grand finals next month at Disney World in Orlando, Fla.

McMillen's team — Cliff Rettig, Jack Robb, Dennis Marc and Tim Woods — shot 13-under-par, 57, in Monday's NorCal tournament at Carmel Valley Ranch. That score got the group into a five-way playoff for first place, which continued until dark without a finish, forcing a comparison of cards to determine the two qualifiers for the national finals. The finals are Oct. 10-13.

Seascape head pro Eddie Duino's team shot 10-under and assistant Don Elser's team was 12-under; but they need to stay home, anyway, to help coordinate the Sept. 30 special exhibition day with Janet Coles, and the Group Fore women's mini-tour event Oct. 20-23.