

## FOOTGOLF



LARRY STOGALL/KITSAP SUN

Craig Byerly, assistant superintendent at Gold Mountain Golf Club, lines up a footgolf shot. Gold Mountain will begin offering the sport, which combines soccer and golf, starting July 1 and will host a free night of footgolf June 30 from 5-8 p.m.

# CHANGES AFOOT

■ Gold Mountain readying Cascade Course for sport of footgolf

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**BREMERTON** – Gold Mountain Golf Club instructor Sue Skjonsky stood on the sun-drenched tee box. She took aim down the fairway, then let her shot rip.

The ball barely made it off the ground,

traveling about 40 yards. Not far in the game of golf — but golf wasn't Skjonsky's game of choice on Thursday afternoon.

Donning argyle socks and sneakers, Skjonsky was demonstrating the sport of footgolf. As the name suggests, it combines soccer and golf. Starting July 1, it will be offered seven days a week on the front nine of Gold Mountain's Cascade Course.

"All it takes is the skill to be able to kick the ball," said Gold Mountain general manager Daryl Matheny, whose club is offering a free night of footgolf on June 30 from 5-8 p.m.

Popping up as an organized sport roughly five years ago, footgolf appears to be gaining in popularity across the globe. There are

See FOOTGOLF, 4B



## FOOTGOLF from 1B

22 countries represented as members of the Federation for International Footgolf.

According to the American FootGolf League, there are over 140 courses in 31 states offering footgolf. Meadow Park Golf Course in Tacoma began taking tee times for footgolf in April and did 1,100 rounds in May.

By summer's end, 10 courses in Washington will offer footgolf.

"I think it's going to take off," Matheny said.

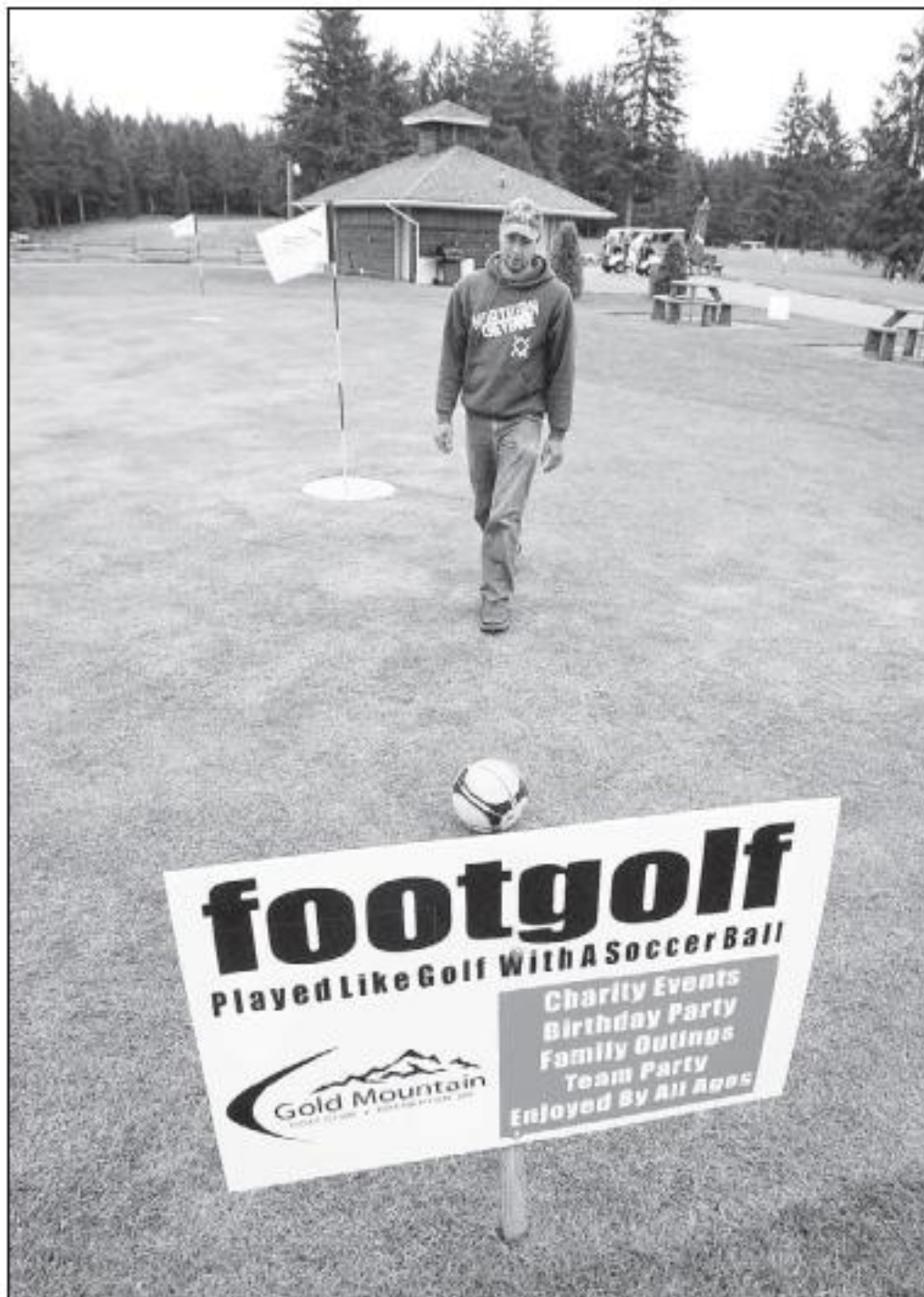
Matheny said his club began considering the addition of footgolf earlier this year and figured with a 36-hole layout, Gold Mountain had plenty of space to do it.

"It's a huge piece of property," he said.

Matheny said several Kitsap Pumas soccer players were brought in to help Skjonsky, head pro Mark Knowles and superintendent Ed Faulk with the design of the 18-hole, par-71 course, which is stretched over the Cascade's first nine holes.

"It should be a really good course," Kitsap Pumas captain Cory Keitz said. "It should be fun and challenging for everybody."

Grounds crews this week began putting finishing touches on the course. Greens consist of closely-mowed areas in the rough. Holes are cups 21 inches wide and roughly 18 inches deep. A practice "putting" green with several holes is located behind the outdoor snack shop.



PHOTOS BY LARRY STONGA (L)/KITSAP SUN

Nick Byerly tries the footgolf practice course at Gold Mountain Golf Club.



Matheny said the club still needs to install flags, cut tee boxes — which will feature novice and expert tees — and finalize score-cards.

Before Gold Mountain regulars go thinking the sport of golf is being turned upside down at one of the state's most pristine and affordable clubs, Knowles said footgolf isn't going to change what his club does best. No one looking to swing the sticks is going to be turned away.

"It's not going to replace golf," Knowles said.

Footgolf won't begin until 5 p.m., typically the time the golf course starts to empty. Walk-up players are allowed, but making a tee time is suggested. Footgolfers can go out as solo players or in groups as large as four.

Typical golf attire is expected, but Skjonsby said the only dress code rule that will be strictly — unless someone shows up shirtless — enforced is footwear. Sneakers or indoor/turf soccer shoes are a must.

"No soccer cleats," she said.

Skjonsky said the way the footgolf course is designed, a mom or dad could go out and play nine holes of golf, while a young son or daughter could simultaneously play 18 holes of footgolf in 90 minutes or less.

A golfer also could play the footgolf course as a par-3 course, using only wedges.

"There are more avenues



Craig Byerly, assistant superintendent at Gold Mountain, and his son Nick dig a hole for a footgolf cup. The sport uses soccer balls and 21-inch cups but otherwise largely follows the rules of golf.

of play," Skjonsky said.

Knowles said footgolf seems like a perfect activity for families, as well as for people who wouldn't normally have a reason to spend time at Gold Mountain.

"Golf is not growing. This is something that is," Knowles said. "For years, we've been trying to figure out how do you get more rounds out here. ... I think it's a great cross-utilization of the golf course. Hopefully, the community likes it."

“It should be fun and challenging for everybody.”

*Cory Keltz, Kitsap Pumas captain talking about footgolf*

## FOOTGOLF AT A GLANCE

**What is footgolf?:** Footgolf is a combination of soccer and golf. Players use soccer balls on a traditional golf course with 21-inch diameter cups. The rules largely correspond to the rules of golf.

**Free exhibition:** Gold Mountain Golf Club, which is now a member of the American FootGolf League, is hosting a free night of footgolf on the front nine of the Cascade Course from 5-8 p.m. Staff members and Kitsap Pumas players will be on hand to demonstrate the sport. There will also be barbecue available for purchase.

**Open for business:** Starting July 1, Gold Mountain will be open for footgolf rounds on the Cascade Course front nine beginning at 5 p.m. Rates are \$12 for adults (walking), \$8 for youth (walking). Players can bring their own balls. Renting a ball is \$5. Call 360-415-5432 to make tee times.

**Other courses:** Meadow Park Golf Course in Tacoma began offering footgolf in April. Two other courses — Eagle Ridge Short Course in Spokane and Foster Golf Links in Tukwila — currently offer the sport. According to the American FootGolf League, 10 courses in the state will offer footgolf by the end of the summer.