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Back in the swing

At 79, area's historic miniature golf course brightens its image

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IRONDEQUOIT — Bob Horn's first round of miniature golf at Parkside Whispering Pines was free this year.

Horn, of Irondequoit, got a hole-in-one on the 18th hole of the historic Sea Breeze course during his final game last year. That earned him a free game.

He just had to wait all winter.

"I came here as a kid, and I'm still coming in," said Horn, 48, who was there with his sons Dan and Joe, and daughter Nicole.

That's a common refrain for customers of the 79-year-old course, which was the first to be named to the National Register of Historic Places. The place also was honored by Rochester's Landmark Society in 2006, with a historic landscape award.

Jim Papas, who has owned the place with his brother Greg for 13 years, hears that type of comment all the time. While many miniature golf courses have come and gone from the Rochester area, Whispering Pines on Culver Road endures.

"I talked to a man the other day who had brought his grandson," Jim Papas said. "He said, 'Remember bringing my son here, and that was 35 years ago.' That's pretty neat."

The Papas brothers also own the Parkside Diner, which is next door to Whispering Pines. They recently sank about \$20,000 into the course after a March windstorm downed a tree, causing damage to the "shed" where golfers check in.

Old sidewalks were also torn out and paved over, and new lighting was added.

While replacing the shed, workers found a 1937 sales-receipt book from when the course was called White Maple miniature golf, Papas said. The book apparently had fallen between floorboards and a wall.

Jim Papas said he plans to continue renovating each year, to make the place "look like a little park." Some would argue that it already does, with its many shade trees and proximity to Durand-Eastman Park.

The course has a signature hole, in which golfers chip a shot instead of putting, as is done at most miniature golf facilities.

More than one overzealous golfer



KRIS J. MURANTE staff photographer

Nicole and Roger Stewart, of Webster, prepare to tee off on the first hole as they play a round of miniature golf at Whispering Pines in Sea Breeze.



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Nicole Horn, 15, of Irondequoit, gets a putt through the tunnel as she and her family plays a round of mini golf at Whispering Pines.

has, one might say, overswung there.

"That's why we have nets there," Papas said, adding that he plans to install a sand trap to add more authenticity.

Back to the Horn family. The brothers teased their sister about what they called her less-than-stellar play.

"Dad's got a 22, Joe and I have 23, and Nicole ... I'd rather not say," said Dan Horn, 25, rattling off the scores.

"I always come back, to try to beat these guys," said Nicole, 15, a sophomore at Eastridge High School.

"But he usually wins," she said,

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pointing to her father, "and I'm last."

Moments later, Nicole scored a hole-in-one on the 18th hole, earning her a free game, just as her father had done last year.

Another family tradition, at Whispering Pines. ◻

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Whispering Pines
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