

A full course deal



PHOTOS BY MATT JONES |
THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

ABOVE: Boyd County coach Missy Kennedy, right, checks in with West Carter's Kenzie Kilgore as Kilgore waits to tee off on the 18th hole during the Region 12 Tournament at Hidden Cove on Sept. 18, 2023. **LEFT:** Greg Cherry talks to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten players in the MTXE winter basketball league. **BELOW:** Morgan Kennedy, of Ashland, watches her tee shot on the 10th tee box during the opening round of the 2024 Bluegrass Junior Open.

Cherry, Kennedy embrace dual roles at area tournaments

BY MATTHEW SPARKS
THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

The new golf season will be in full view at Hidden Cove Golf Course this weekend.

East Carter will host 105 players and 23 teams on its home course at Grayson Lake on Friday. Teams from different parts of the state are set to arrive and compete for 18 challenging holes.

"Our kids love our course and they play it all the time," East Carter coach Greg Cherry said. "Hidden Cove is not an easy course and getting the other players in the area to come here, our kids take pride in that. Seeing the difficulties they face every day and getting to come here and play this course too means a lot to them."

The tournament schedule on the Kentucky Golf Coaches Association website is plentiful but only a few emanate from our area.

The East Carter Invitational will tee off on Friday. Eagle Trace Golf Course in Morehead hosts two. The Ashland Invitational hosts a boys tournament at Bellefonte Country Club on Aug. 5. The Boyd County girls golf team entertains the field at the Lady Lion Invitational at Hidden Cove on Monday.

Cherry said hosting a tournament presents organizational challenges but provides several benefits for golf programs.

"Hosting a golf tournament can also serve as a fundraiser," Cherry said. "Golf is an expensive sport. We have to find ways to make money. Our community has been great with donations. It's just another way to have extra meaning along with the most important thing. It gives our kids the chance to, not only play golf but to play and compete at one of the best courses in the area. It's going to be a fun day."

Boyd County girls coach Missy Kennedy said hosting a tournament for local golfers to play close to home and showcase Grayson Lake to different schools.

"One of the reasons I wanted to host a tournament is there wasn't a lot of tournaments being held in the area," Kennedy said. "Almost every school has a team, whether it's one or two girls or five to six. It's very challenging. We travel a lot to Lexington and northern Kentucky. It means a lot to host. I am biased

WILLIAMS ADAMS'S STAFF PICK



Sparks tees up golf coverage

BY WILLIAM ADAMS
THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

Covering sports in a two-person sports department understandably creates a fair number of obstacles, especially when one of those two people has to be at their desk five days a week to paginate the sports section and get it ready to be sent to the printers.

Limitations are put on what we can cover, when we can cover and where we can go to cover the various events our area schools take part in.

Inevitably, some sports don't get as much ink as we'd like to give. One of the sports we don't get to cover as often is golf.

Area schools travel all over the place to compete in matches throughout the season and have dedicated coaches who are in charge of scheduling and organizing

said events.

Matthew Sparks's feature focusing on East Carter golf coach Greg Cherry and Boyd County coach Missy Kennedy provides good insights into the hard work and planning that goes into the job of being a varsity golf coach.

The story also highlights the intricacies of the sheer logistics of coaching the sport, with multiple tournaments happening at the same time, and golf courses not wanting to give up a Saturday from the public.

Hearing from the coaches about the work that goes into leading a golf team is interesting, but also hearing how rewarding it is for the coaches is great as well.

And of course, it wouldn't be a proper Matthew Sparks story without a clever headline, "A full course deal." He couldn't resist serving that one up to us.

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because I work for the Kentucky Department of Parks. Grayson Lake is a great place to host a tournament. The space is great and it's a great course to play and it's challenging. It resembles a lot of the courses that we play on across the state of Kentucky."

Boyd County welcomes 10 schools on Monday and has around 40 players participating in their event. The golf season starts earlier than other fall sports and it allows the chance for more golfers in the field before school begins.

Monday's docket includes five different tournaments in the commonwealth, which doesn't allow many out-of-town teams to travel to Grayson.

"I'm competing with several different golf tournaments that day," Kennedy said. "It's very hard for golf courses to give up their course on a

Saturday. I understand that. We try to do it on a Monday and do it before school starts. I have the same number of teams coming that I always have. I have a lot of teams coming with just two or three girls and that's OK. It's all about wanting the girls to play in a tournament atmosphere."

Cherry and his staff will be occupying plenty of real estate on Friday. The Raiders are familiar with their surroundings so it can free up the coach to tend to the tournament needs.

"There are a lot of things that go into playing Hidden Cove," Cherry said. "It's not necessarily a wide-open course. There are some really tough holes. There are many types of force-carries where you have to hit it over creeks and ravines. You have to be able to shape balls because

some holes and fairways go left or right. and you have to put it in between the trees and hit fairways."

"You have to hit shots that you are not used to hitting," he added. "I want them to see how beautiful this course is and challenge them to come to Grayson and take on the

beast of our golf course."

Cherry's golf cart will encounter plenty of miles during the tournament. As a host, the safety and enjoyment of 100-plus players is the top priority.

"It's very difficult to manage hosting a tournament and taking care of your players," Cherry said. "Most of our kids have played competitive golf before. They know our golf course well enough that they can answer any question themselves. There are a lot of things that go into taking care of the golf course. We have to pick the different tees. I have to drive around to monitor the players and watch the heat index. We have to make sure we have enough water out on the course. Count the scorecard and make sure everything adds up."

Kennedy enjoys the hosting process. It's something that she looks forward to each season.

"I'm a golf pro and this is my life," Kennedy said. "Running golf tournaments is my thing. My husband is the head pro at Grayson Lake. Pulling everything together is pretty easy for me. It's what I do for a living."

"My girls are great," she continued. "They know that the first thing in the morning I will be running around to get information to all the coaches. After that, I will get out there and coach my girls. ... We have some great volunteers out at Grayson. It's always a big day and you want to make sure everybody is taken care of out on the course."

The East Carter Invitational and the Lady Lion Invitational will begin with a shotgun start at 9 a.m.

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