

2017 Open at the Hills Wrap-up

Hidden Hill Golf Club

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One of the more tricky and testy courses NFJG plays, Hidden Hills is truly a test for these great players. With tight fairways, encroaching homes, and pretty quick greens, the kids had their work cut out for them. To add onto the difficulty, the seemingly favorable forecast took an unexpected turn towards the lesser favorable side with a dreary, chilly and cloudy day. The temperature hovered around the sixty-degree mark most of the day instead the mid seventies that were expected. Based on these predictions, there were many participants (and spectators) in shorts and short sleeve shirts scrambling for anything they could find to keep in the warmth. Let's see who was able to battle the elements and the course and come out on top this week.

Boy's 16-18: Starting on the back nine, this division would have the luxury of beginning their round on the less difficult side, but would need to play well down the stretch on the tougher front nine. The top three finishers were definitely a tale of two nines with first place Jay Adams (77), and third place Will Grattan (78) both shooting better on the front nine (their back), while second place Jonathan Lumley (78) was just the opposite. Lumley started hot carding one under on his front side, giving him a four-shot lead over Adams, and even carrying that bogey free total through twelve holes. Then came the tricky par-5 fourth hole where Lumley missed a step with a nine and allowed Adams and Grattan back in the race. The last five holes were a battle with the players staying within two strokes of each other as they closed out their rounds to finish in their respective positions. Jay Adam's five over par 77 would be the low round of the day and good enough to earn himself a fully paid exemption and invite into the ***Len's Friend's Golf Tournament*** hosted by PGA TOUR Player Lenny Mattiace at TPC Sawgrass on December 17th.

Girls 13-18: This division was very competitive through the first nine holes with eight players within four strokes of each other for the lead and seemingly headed on a crash course for a battle down the stretch. But Lacey Tucker (81) and Lisa Colee (81) had a different plan. They grabbed the reigns and didn't let go as they both shot in the thirties on the back nine (37 & 39 respectively) which landed them tied for first place at the end of regulation holes. So they head to a playoff. With barely enough light for a 1-hole play-off the girls would go to the 120 yard marker to determine this events champion with a closest to the pin challenge. Both players would pull the ball perfectly pin high left, but Tucker would edge out Colee for the victory. An impressive stat about this division is that each of the top seven finishers all managed to card at least one birdie during their round with third place finisher Beatriz Dietz (86) along with Isabel Matos, Rachel Wohn (87) and Olivia Whitten (87) each carding two. The Girls too were battling for an exemption to the ***Len's Friend's Golf Tournament***. Earning the exemption would be Lacey Tucker, but because she had already earned an exemption into this event Lisa Collee would be the last girl's recipient for this exemption.

Elite Tour Boys 13-15: This division ended up having a marquee "featured" group for this event with one pairing finishing 1-2-3 in the final standings. James Clay Tucker (78), Andrew Davis (79), and Logan Flores (80) were those players. All three players were able to stay in contention thanks to carding a two over

thirty-eight on one of their nines with Tucker and Davis posting theirs on their final nine to finish strong and edging out Flores for first and second place respectively.

Rising Tour Boys 13-15: This division was essentially a two-horse race with Campbell Kennedy (78) and Adam Vermut (80) leading the third place finisher Thomas Cush (89), by an impressive eleven and nine strokes respectively. The two thoroughbreds were tied after their first nine holes with a four over par score of 40. On their back nine, both carded five pars, however, the difference maker was while Vermut's other four holes were all bogeys, Kennedy traded in one of those holes for a birdie and the deciding margin of victory to take home the title.

Boys 10-12: At the start, you could look at the line up and the blank scoreboard and tell this division easily seemed to be one of the toughest and closest competitive division of the tournament. Ironically in the end, this division would be separated by eleven strokes, with the top six competitors separated by seven strokes! The only thing that kept this division from being a complete runaway for Champion Phillip Dunham (81) was back nine troubles. While Dunham did win by a good margin of four strokes over Jackson Klauk (85), it could have been a much larger margin of victory, but as many have experienced, "THE HILLS" can bit you at any time during the round. On the long, tough, par-5 eleventh hole (which has an island green), Dunham would struggle carding a five-over par ten, opening the door for players to climb back in the competition. Taking advantage was Klauk who threw up a very impressive, perfect 9-hole score of one-under par 35 to get him back into contention, which was fifteen strokes lower than the front nine score of 50. Admittedly, Klauk said he had a terrible opening nine holes, but never gave up. Richard Hayden Ruth (86) played consistently shooting 44-42 respectively to finish in third taking home his first medal in the Boys 10-12 Division.

Foundation Elite: Girl power was the name of the game in this division with Alyzabeth Morgan (80) taking the crown over second place Ryan Houck (84), and third place Chase Ricks (90). Starting their rounds on the tougher back nine, the players were definitely tested early. However, they fought hard through it and all three bested their first nine scores on their second nine by a respective two, four, and a super impressive twelve strokes!

Foundation Rising: In the 9-hole Foundation division, it was also a pretty tight competition with everyone in the division finishing within two strokes of the title. Tavi Sport (57) was the one who was able to pull off the victory over Randy Cavanagh (59) and Canada's Carter Lavigne (59). Cavanagh and Lavigne did their best to try to take over the lead on the last hole by each besting Sport by two strokes, however it was just too little too late as Sport held on for the win. Cavanagh would win the scorecard playoff for the runner up position and Lavigne would take back to Canada the NFJG TOUR's Bronze Medal for this third place finish.

Boy's 13-18 (Overall): When combining all the scores from three boys' divisions (Elite Tour 13-15, Rising Tour 13-15, and 16-18), it becomes a heated battle to crown the overall champion. The top eight scores from this combination were only separated by a mere three strokes. The top place went to Jay Adams (77 - Boys 16-18) who narrowly edged out the winner of each the Elite Tour Boys 13-15, and Rising Tour Boys 13-15, James Clay Tucker (78) and Campbell Kennedy (78) respectively, along with the second and third place finishers in his own division, Will Grattan (78) and Jonathan Lumley (78).

The next tournaments up on the schedule are the “away games” with a little bit of travel on the docket as we head to ***Prestwick at Plantation Bay*** in Ormond Beach on Sunday, December 10th for the ***Plantation Bay Open***. Then, we head up to ***Laurel Island Links*** in Kingsland Georgia for the ***Georgia Peach Open*** on Sunday December 17th.

We look forward to seeing everybody soon!