

★ First Tee party in Suffolk

Already in Nassau, youth program introduces game

BY JEFF WILLIAMS
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The First Tee has officially gotten a tee time in Suffolk County.

Part of the national organization that introduces youngsters to the game of golf augmented by educational and life-skills mentoring, the First Tee Metropolitan New York at Suffolk County will begin initial programming at the Town of Islip's three courses, Brentwood CC, Holbrook CC and Gull Haven GC, sometime in May and hopefully be up to full speed in the fall. The program joins the Nassau County First Tee at Eisenhower Park.

"We have this successful program in Nassau County, we're coming up on our 20th anniversary," said Justin Draycott, First Tee Long Island Regional Director. "We feel like there is a need in Suffolk County. Golf is hot again due to COVID, and there are a lot of kids who haven't played golf or are looking to try a new sport and we feel it's a great opportunity to bring it out to Suffolk County, especially in some areas in need like Central Islip, Brentwood, Bay Shore."

The First Tee conducts programming for youngsters ages 6 to 18 and families can register a child by going to the First Tee website at www.firstteemetny.org. While there are registration fees, they will be waived for families in need.

"We offer scholarships to families in need," Draycott said. "It's the kind of thing if you ask, you get the scholarship. We aren't doing major background checks. We feel like if you ask for a scholarship, you'll get it."

For Draycott, a former teacher and golf pro, the First Tee is about golf as a central component that drives the educational and life-skills mentoring.

"I'm excited to bring the educational component to Suffolk County," Draycott said. "We have this Path to College program where we follow kids from middle school all the way



First Tee of Nassau County, at Eisenhower Park, is approaching its 20th anniversary.

ACES

Bill Gschlecht, Harbor Links Executive No. 1, 127 yards, 3-wood

Billy Molesky, Glen Cove GC No. 16, 165 yards, 6-iron

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into college. With the pandemic, I think some of the extracurricular activities, STEM education [science, technology, engineering and mathematics], has kind of fallen off. I think we can fill in some of these gaps during the pandemic, catch some kids up in their education."

Draycott's initial goal for the Suffolk program is to have two

or three sessions a week during the summer and by fall, three to five after-school sessions. He will be working with the pros at the three Town of Islip facilities: Bill LePosa at Holbrook CC, Doug Jansen at Brentwood CC and Vincent Cirino Jr. at Gull Haven. Draycott will be conducting free clinics at the courses in May as a way to introduce the program.

"By the summer I'll have registration for the programs and by the fall is when I will launch the Path to College program at all three Town of Islip golf courses," said Draycott, whose Nassau program includes about 500 youngsters.

West Islip resident Tom McAteer has raised money for the First Tee and has recently become a board member.

"I did some looking around and wondered why we didn't have First Tee in Suffolk

County," McAteer said. "It just really didn't get off the ground. I'm on the Islip Town Parks Foundation with [town supervisor] Angie Carpenter. I spoke to those guys and said there's something that would be great for us to do. Bay Shore, Brentwood, Central Islip would be a pocket that would be wonderful to bring the First Tee resources to."

McAteer is executive vice president of Suffolk Transportation Service, which will be providing some transportation for The First Tee.

"There's no major investment on the part of the town and the taxpayers, but this is a wonderful program and providing the venues makes me feel great that we are in the position to do so," Carpenter said. "Our golf pros are just so excited about the opportunity. It helps build future generations of golfers."

IN BRIEFS

GOLF

Detectives won't reveal cause of Tiger's crash

The Los Angeles County sheriff says detectives have determined what caused Tiger Woods to crash his SUV in Southern California but would not release details Wednesday, citing unspecified privacy concerns for the golf star.

Woods suffered serious injuries in the Feb. 23 crash when he struck a raised median around 7 a.m. in Rolling Hills Estates, just outside Los Angeles. The Genesis SUV he was driving crossed through two on coming lanes and uprooted a tree. Woods is in Florida recovering from multiple surgeries.

Sheriff Alex Villanueva has been criticized for his comments about the crash, calling it "purely an accident" and saying there was no evidence of impairment.

COLLEGES

Emmert: Equality discussed

NCAA president Mark Emmert promised the Women's Basketball Coaches Association he will work with coaches to fix the "stark difference" between the Division I men's and women's tournaments.

While Emmert noted that a major hurdle was trying to hold both basketball tournaments in identical formats required by the pandemic, he added nobody liked the results.

Bueckers women's POY

Paige Bueckers is in a class all by herself. UConn's star guard became the first freshman ever to win The Associated Press women's basketball player of the year award.

NHL

Sabres end losing streak

Linus Ullmark stopped 31 shots and the Buffalo Sabres snapped an 18-game skid — the NHL's longest in 17 years — with a 6-1 win over the Philadelphia Flyers.

NFL

Seahawks, Lockett agree

The Seattle Seahawks and veteran wide receiver Tyler Lockett have agreed to a four-year contract extension that includes \$37 million guaranteed, according to a person with knowledge of the deal. — AP