



Ben Sanders, pictured here sending a disc toward the basket, says he is grateful for volunteers, businesses, and county and city leaders who helped build the course. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BEN SANDERS

Disc Golf a Hit in Mackay

Disc golfers can fling for free day and night at new course in Mackay

By Dianna Troyer

Ben Sanders did a double take when a friend introduced him to disc golf.

“I couldn’t believe it,” he says. “There was a 90-year-old playing, pushing his walker and disc cart around the course. Watching him, I realized this could be a lifetime sport for me. I’ve loved throwing Frisbees since I was a kid. I took right to it. The more I played, I got hooked.”

When Ben and his wife, Tawni, retired to Mackay in 2019, he was determined to

build a course for the community to use for free.

“I have to admit, I wanted a course for myself, too—just to get out, exercise and laugh with other players,” says Ben, 58. “It’s three blocks from our house, so I can go anytime.”

Volunteers worked more than a year to build the town’s first nine-hole disc golf course on the edge of the rodeo grounds. It officially opened in April with a tournament, the Wind Blown Open. Thirty disc golfers from throughout southeastern



Idaho competed.

“About 10 people were contender players who compete regularly on a circuit,” Ben says. “They really liked our course. We laughed about having only one dust devil and a few gusts blowing.”

The course has been well received by competitors and local residents.

“It’s been a tremendous success,” Ben says. “People are using it, especially in the evenings or mornings when it’s cool. We even installed solar-powered lighting in trees so people can play at night with glow-in-the-dark discs. People will even be able to play during winter with colored discs.”

About 20 locals joined a league—the Top of Idaho Disc Slingers—and play regularly. Ben offers lessons and equipment to beginners.

Families have come from as far as



Jesse Brownson won the first Wind Blown Open Disc Golf Tournament with a 3 under par for 36 holes.

Pocatello and Twin Falls to Mackay to play the course.

“They told me they found it online at the Professional Disc Golf Association’s website,” Ben says.

He registered the course with the PDGA. He also became a PDGA-certified rules official, enabling him to organize and officiate at sanctioned tournaments.

Ben says he is grateful for community support from city and county leaders, businesses, and volunteers.

The city provided about 3 acres of unused land at the rodeo grounds. Nine business owners donated money to buy baskets and tee pads, and to advertise their businesses at each hole.

Volunteers hauled away weeds, brush and tree branches. The county provided heavy equipment to install the baskets and tee pads at each hole.

“A lot of sweat equity has gone into the course,” Ben says.

While designing the Mackay course, Ben recalled the layouts of other courses he played. He was introduced to disc golf in Alabama, where he worked for the U.S. Civil Service, directing logistics support for the U.S. Army Material Command.

“I retired from the Army as an Airborne Ranger, and we came home to Mackay to raise our kids,” Ben says. “After they finished school here, we realized we’d have to move away and work for the Civil Service for about 15 years. Then we could afford to come back here to retire. The valley has always been home to us.”

Ben says one of his most gratifying jobs in Mackay was working for Lost River Electric Cooperative Inc. as a clerk. A talented artist, he was asked to design the co-op’s logo.

“I did a pencil sketch of Mount McCaleb, and the board liked it so much it’s still being used,” he says, laughing.

Ben says wherever he has worked, he has always tried to make people smile.

He says playing disc golf requires minimal skills.

“It helps to have a sense of humor when you play,” Ben says. “Just come out, try it and have fun.” ■

For information about the course and tournaments, visit [Top of Idaho Disc Golf on Facebook](#). A map of the course can be downloaded to a smartphone. For lessons or equipment, contact Ben Sanders at 208-720-9795 or sanders5229@bellsouth.net.