

Bob Kerr



A long trip for the kids from Button Hole

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Some people did some traveling to take part in the CVS Caremark Charity Classic in Barrington this week.

But none traveled as far, perhaps, as Khadijah Aigoro, O'Mali Castillo and Angelo Casey.

They came from Button Hole, where golf is played from the ground up and the best views are city views.

They came from Button Hole to Rhode Island Country Club, where golf is played for the easy fit of it and a player can sometimes see the Bay with a club in hand.

They were there when the tournament started on Sunday, and they were one of the best parts of it. They were among nine players from The Button Hole Short Course and Teaching Center, the 9-hole, par-3 inner-city gem in Providence. They were chosen to carry the sign boards showing the scores of the pro players during the pro-am competition.

They put on khaki pants, at least one of them for the first time. They also put on sneakers, tournament shirts and hats and helped bring the changing face of golf to one of its old, traditional bastions.

They also helped bring two of the state's great and growing traditions together.

They are 12 and 13, attend the Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School and would never have had golf on their personal sports calendars if a fine little course had not been built in their neighborhood.

Now, there is a place where many of them can walk or ride a bike to and play a game that some of them will become very, very good at.

Button Hole was built on the Providence-Johnston line where a gravel pit used to be. And it has put golf clubs in places where they have never been before. The driving range often has an international look to it.

Kids have come to Button Hole, unencumbered by years of ugly slicing and hooking, and learned from the patient but demanding Jerry Morgan, a teacher who knows just how unique the little golf course is.

"He makes it hard for us," says O'Mali Castillo, who is 13. "He has us doing the same thing over and over."

At Rhode Island Country Club, Castillo noticed some differences with his home course.

“Rhode Island Country Club is bigger than Button Hole,” he said. “But at Button Hole you learn what to do.”

Button Hole has a bunch of generous benefactors, and the CVS Caremark Charity Classic and its creators, Brad Faxon and Billy Andrade, are prominent among them. So it seemed fitting that some of Button Hole’s young players were in the tournament mix. They got to see some of the best up close. They got autographs on balls and hats. They got a hint where golf might take them.

Khadijah Aigoro, who is 12, said she watched the pros for the way they grip the club and swing.

“If not a good shot, I at least like to have a good swing,” said Aigoro, who started at Button Hole last fall.

She said she might like to be a lawyer. She is learning what can be a vital ingredient for success in the legal trade.

It was a good day at The Country Club for the Button Hole kids.

“For four or five holes, I got to drive the cart,” said Angelo Casey, who was a baseball player before he found golf just around the corner.

But there was one disappointment. The kids knew they would be among some of the best golfers in the world, and that meant just one thing, just one name.

“I was mad Tiger Woods wasn’t there,” said Castillo. “I love Tiger.”

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