

WANTED!

Driver or drivers of vehicles which are responsible for damages to greens and fairways at DeLaveaga Golf Course. A \$500 reward is offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible.



Pete Amos/Sentinel

The 12th fairway, above and at left, is virtually in ruins after the latest 'attack' of vandals at DeLaveaga Golf Course.



Pete Amos/Sentinel

DeLaveaga Golf Pro Looking For Answers To Recurring Problem

Golf/Ed Vyeda

Gary Loustalot's nightmare won't leave him alone: four-wheel drive trucks roar through DeLaveaga Golf Course on a destruction mission, shredding fairways and splattering greens. The course is left in ruins and the DeLaveaga golf pro feels as torn apart as the course.

The problem is, it's not a dream; it's real and each time Loustalot, who lives down the hill from the course, hears a four-wheeler screech past his Prospect Heights home, a paranoia sets in: he's going to find a nightmare waiting for him the next morning up at the course.

Loustalot's fears are hardly unfounded. Repeatedly, vandals have methodically destroyed parts of the golf course. The latest victim is the 12th fairway, just off Upper Park Road. Monday night the turf near the tee area was

ripped apart by spinning tires, leaving a strip the length of two football fields in a shambles.

"It's all across the fairway, about 190 yards long by 40 to 50 yards wide," said Loustalot. "They had to spend a pretty good amount of time down there."

The vandalism at DeLaveaga has reached the point where the Men's Club and the Junior Golf Association have joined forces to offer a \$500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandals.

The 12th fairway hasn't been the only target. Out at the 16th green, the putting surface farthest away from the clubhouse area and tucked away from the road, has been hit twice over the past couple months. It will be closed to play for at least two more weeks, forcing the course to use a temporary green for some six weeks, minimum.

The damage to the green is estimated at \$3,000, said greenskeeper Dick

Fassio, who noted the fairway repair cost should be about \$1,000. "The first time I drove up to the fairway, it looked like somebody had plowed it under," Fassio said. "There were strips six to eight feet long. It was the worst I have ever seen."

"We have cables all around the course," Loustalot says. "But they run right over the steel cables. When they were on the green three weeks ago, they came right up a canyon. It was so steep, I don't see how you could drive a motor-cycle up that. They did."

Policing the area is difficult, since the roads don't connect all the holes on the course. "They can get back there and not be disturbed," says Loustalot, who is. "The police come up and look, but they can't take tire tracks. Just like last night (Monday). I swore I heard the guy coming down the hill by my house. The police make their runs up here, but they can't get back to the out-of-the-way places."

Apparently, the vandals can.

Fassio said extra patrols would be costly and that is gates were erected at the entrance to the park and the back road which leads to the rifle range, it might help. "The hours of 10 (p.m.) to 2 (a.m.) are critical hours," Fassio feels.

At the 12th fairway, the vehicles made circular spinning marks. "They just peel the turf right off," Loustalot said. "Five percent could be laid back, but the other 95 percent has to be cut up and dragged out. It will have to be reseeded."

Insurance for the course only covers the clubhouse and concession facility, Loustalot said. And, he feels, the damage really can't be measured in dollars and cents, anyway.

"It's the nothing-to-do syndrome," Loustalot explains of the recurrent problem. "They must be thinking, 'What do we do tonight?' So they come up and ruin the golf course. Maybe it isn't always the same guys. We don't know."

"We just know where they've been."

Fassio said he and his crew cleaned up the fairway and was able to mow it this morning. But he's tired of running a repair crew instead of a maintenance crew. "Whoever is doing this is a real jerk. I think it could be the same person who just likes destroying property."

And Fassio likes the idea of the reward. "If somebody reads he can make some money squealing on his buddies, we might get somewhere."

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The third annual Santa Cruz Beverage Golf Tournament has brewed up its most expansive package yet for this year's Sept. 17 event at the Aptos Seascope Golf Course. The benefit for Special Olympics, sponsored by the Santa Cruz County Retail Liquor Dealers Association, is open to 144 men and women golfers and features a round which should keep participants busy for a full 10 hours.

A four-man scrambles tournament, the Beverage Tournament entry deadline is Sept. 3, with registration fee \$65. The fee covers everything from coffee and donuts at the 9 a.m. registration, to all golf at the 11:30 a.m. shotgun start.

The usual tournament activities — tee-prizes, closest to hole competition, complimentary refreshments — will be spotted around the course. Entry fee also includes a ticket to the prime rib awards dinner, at 6:15 p.m. at Seascope.

The golf is fun-oriented, says coordinator Andy Del Pozzo. And the slogan of the event is, "A day of fun for us allows our special kids to have their day of fun, too." Del Pozzo says the tournament has received good support from the community and expects this to be the biggest of the three the association has staged.

For more information, call Dick Sutton, tournament chairman, 425-1966, or Del Pozzo, 476-3500.