

# DISC GOLFERS CHART A NEW COURSE

The inexpensive and all-ages sport is growing, with Riverside Golf Club featuring a full-sized 18-hole layout

... **A**hhh, the golf course. Trees swaying gently in the breeze, sand traps looking like bald patches on an otherwise lush head of green hair, 18 holes of drives, approach shots and putts, flying multi-colored discs soaring through the air en route to a metal basket — say what?

We're talking about disc golf here, not that other game that requires sticks and a small dimpled sphere.

Disc golf is similar to traditional golf except instead of using a club and ball, plastic discs — a harder, thinner version of a traditional Frisbee — are thrown with the goal of landing them in a basket.

According to the Professional Disc Golf Association — yes, there is one — an estimated 500,000 people play the sport each year on more than 2,000 courses around the world.

"It's growing exponentially, there were only 900 courses four or five years ago," said Cliff Towne, course directory editor for the association. "With ball golf becoming so expensive it's a great alternative ... you can play a round for free at a lot of places and it's never more than \$15, which usually gets you an entire day."

## STARTING YOUNG

One group that seems to be embracing disc golf is young people.

Educational Disc Golf Experience, a nonprofit organization based in South Carolina, has designed specialized curriculum to train teachers to

instruct students on how to play the game.

According to program representative Jon Lyksett, in four years the organization has introduced disc golf to students of all ages in more than 300



Julia Owen, 32, of Riverside, retrieves her golf disc from one of 18 holes, or baskets, at Riverside Golf Club, the Inland area's first disc course.



Discs that are harder and thinner than traditional Frisbees are used in disc golf.

schools in 37 states.

One of the biggest draws of disc golf is that it's inexpensive. All you need is a disc, which can cost as little as \$8 and is available at most sporting goods shops.

"It's easy to teach and you don't even need to have a course, you can set up portable baskets and be ready to play," Lyksett said.

"It's a safe, healthy sport and I think it can really grow in the high schools on a club level and maybe progress into a competitive varsity sport."

## BY THE NUMBERS

2,119

Disc golf courses worldwide

1,659

Disc golf courses in the United States

93

Disc golf courses in California

500,000

Number of people who play disc golf recreationally each year

9,629

Professional Disc Golf Association members

COURTESY OF THE PDGA

## THE NEXT LEVEL

Oak Grove Disc Golf Course, in Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena, opened in 1976 as the world's first permanent disc golf course.

Like many courses that followed, its location in a park made it a popular family activity. But now there's a

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**CLIFF TOWNE,**  
COURSE DIRECTORY  
EDITOR FOR THE  
PROFESSIONAL DISC  
GOLF ASSOCIATION



DAVID BAUMAN/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Shayne Anderson, of Grand Terrace, sets up for his tee shot during a round of disc golf at Riverside Golf Club.

contingent trying to elevate the sport to a more competitive level.

Roose Swinea, a disc golf course designer for Fly18 based in Orange County, has designed 16 courses and specializes in merging disc golf baskets on traditional golf courses. His latest project is putting baskets alongside the holes at Riverside Golf Club — the Inland area's first disc course.

"Traditionally disc golf had always been free, and while that's an option that I'm glad is still around, you got what you paid for," Swinea said. "What I've tried to do is evolve the courses as the game has evolved.

"We're talking full-sized courses with par 56 just as long as a traditional golf course, quality bathrooms, a pro shop. One of the obstacles in getting to that next level has been image and these courses are changing that."

The Riverside course, which officially opened this week, is 12,813-feet-long and features professional and amateur tees. Rounds range from \$6 to \$15 depending on what time you play and whether or not you use a cart.

Disc golf players traverse the greens right next to ball golfers, and as Swinea puts it, "They don't hit into us and we

don't throw into them."

Debbie Eschrich, manager of Riverside Golf Club, said when she learned about disc golf, "I figured it was something that was missing out here in the Inland Empire that could really benefit the community."

But some course regulars are not thrilled to see discs flying around.

"I have nothing against the sport of disc golf ... I wouldn't mind playing it myself," said Dave DeWoody, who's been playing at Riverside Golf Club for 20 years.

"It's just that I'm not sure I want to see the baskets on the golf course. ... I



Felipe Arango, 32, of Riverside, throws a golf disc at Riverside Golf Club, where disc golf enthusiasts are able to play their sport on a full-sized golf course.

## AREA DISC GOLF COURSES

### Riverside Golf Club

**Where:** 1011 N. Orange St.,  
Riverside

**Fees:** \$6-\$15

**Information:** 951-682-3748  
or [www.fly18.com](http://www.fly18.com)

### Twila-Reid Park

**Where:** 3100 W. Orange,  
Anaheim

**Fees:** Free

**Information:** 714-522-2202

### Central Park

**Where:** Goldenwest Street and  
Talbert Avenue, Huntington Beach

**Fees:** \$1

**Information:** 714-425-9931

### Hahamongna Watershed Park Oak Grove

**Where:** Oak Grove Drive and  
Foothill Boulevard, Pasadena

**Fees:** Free

**Information:** [www.ogdgc.org](http://www.ogdgc.org)

### Morley Field

**Where:**  
221 Morley Field  
Drive, San Diego

**Fees:** \$2-\$2.50

**Information:**  
619-692-3607

don't know if they belong here, but we'll see how it goes."

### THE FUTURE

Now entering its fourth decade, there are those who feel disc golf is ready for major sponsorships and network airtime.

According to Matt Gillis of the PDGA, the tour points leader can earn close to \$40,000 a year in prize money.

"We've got a good grass-roots base and the game is getting more popular, but sponsorship is important to get to that next level," he said by phone from the association's headquarters in Ap-

pling, Ga.

So far, he said, professional tournaments have been sponsored by companies within the industry, such as Rancho Cucamonga's Innova Discs. The company, which has been around since 1983, is the largest manufacturer of golf discs in the world.

"The game is especially growing among the 15 to 25 (year old) male crowd ... I think if that interest keeps up you might see disc golf on TV one day," said Tim Selinske, co-owner of Innova Discs.

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