Disc-y Business

A community sport taking flight in Corpus

By Mark Travis



On a trip to Lamar Park, nestled in a tranquil Bay Area neighborhood between Alameda and Santa Fe streets, you are likely to see strollers being wheeled around, toting teething toddlers and pampered Pomeranians. But upon further inspection, you will notice that some of these all-terrain carts carry cargo that is even more temperamental. When the sun hits them right, a sheathed set of vibrantly colored discs sparkle like the inside of a rave, waiting to be called upon to confront the breeze in a round of disc golf.

The Coastal Bend—thanks to its generous and reliable winds which both complicate and facilitate the sport—has been home to an ever-growing disc golf community since the 1990s. The first disc golf course in Corpus Christi, a sprawling 20-hole course with marked elevation changes, was established at West Guth Park in Annaville in 1996. A nine-hole course was installed at Lamar Park soon after in 1998, and since then, courses have also been constructed at Waldron Park in Flour Bluff and, most recently, at Oso Creek Park on the city's Southside.

If these courses seem more crowded lately, it's because the scene has expanded exponentially in recent years. "The sport blew up during the pandemic," Ludwig Kramarz, owner of Parked-It Disc Golf Emporium, said. As the community sought outdoor, socially distanced activities that also served as healthy fitness routines, disc golf gained popularity. Kramarz opened his shop in 2021 to help supply an increasing demand for equipment locally. "We haven't looked back since," he shared.

Disc golf, like ball golf, is played in rounds of 9 or 18 holes, with a typical game taking one or two hours to complete. Courses vary in size and complexity, but a full round should account for close to 2 miles of walking. However, unlike ball golf, this sport only has one essential item—discs—and its courses are almost all open to the public. The combination of affordability and low-impact aerobic activity makes disc golf extremely accessible to new players. "Disc golf appeals to a wide spectrum of people, of all ages and capabilities," Tim Teague, a 40-year veteran, said.

Corpus Christi's competitive disc golf scene has grown in proportion to the overall player base. An influx of clubs has made it possible for mini tournaments to be played on an almost nightly basis at one of the city's local parks, with some of the more prestigious local events typically taking place at the "Gold" course at Live Oak Park in Ingleside. Although there are several ranked professional players based in the Coastal Bend, most practitioners see the sport as a casual endeavor. "A great majority of people are just looking to get out to enjoy a beautiful day," Chris Salinas, a local professional player, said. "Get the legs working, the blood flowing and taking in the sunlight."

While enthusiasts often possess a vast arsenal of discs with differing aerodynamics, grips and situational utility, beginners can dip their toes into the water relatively inexpensively. Stephen Juarez, a community liaison at a local rehab hospital, paid $30 for a starter kit when he first took up the sport a decade ago. Still, most golfers teed off for the first time using a friend's disc. On this particular Thursday evening, Juarez has brought two of his co-workers to play their first round. It's a familiar origin story in the sport, for its appeal is evident from the moment you let your first disc fly.

"It's like therapy," Juarez said. "You can come out here with some buddies or by yourself, get your walking in, get to be outside, see the happy families and the animals. It's healing."

Pick up a copy of Third Coast Disc Golf's guide to the Coastal Bend's courses, along with details on how to get involved, at Parked-It Disc Golf Emporium.

CONTACT

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