

Golfers Play a Round on the Bay

By Mark Tower

Thirty two-person teams loaded their plastic sleds with golf clubs and colorful golf balls and took to the ice Saturday, March 6, for the annual "Ice Chip" golf scramble on Moran Bay in St. Ignace.

Good ice conditions and unseasonably warm and sunny weather made for a great event, said organizer Mark Spósito.

"It was really a lot of fun," Mr. Spósito said. "The weather, of course, was exceptional. I think I got a little sunburnt."

One of the most notable parts of this year's tournament, he said, was the first hole-in-one for the event, snatched up by Andy Brown on Hole #9.

"I doubt we will ever see that again," Mr. Spósito said. "Actually, I'm amazed somebody got a hole-in-one. It just kept rolling and rolling until it plunked into the hole."

Mr. Brown, along with golf partner Jimbo Brown, won the first of four flights for the day's scramble. The team of Pat Doud and Jim Bentgen took the second flight, Chris Paquin and Todd Insley won the third flight, and Janet Brown and Sandy Krause took the fourth flight.

Many teams of St. Ignace residents participated. In addition, some visitors have begun scheduling their winter travel plans to coincide with the event, like Richard Moore of Tennessee and his group of friends from Plymouth.

The group heads to the Upper Peninsula each year to snowmobile, and came across the unique golf tournament last year when snowmobiling to Mackinac Island.

"Now, we schedule our snowmobile trip every year for this weekend so we can come out and play golf, too," Mr. Moore said. "It's a lot of fun."

The number of teams was about par with what the golf scramble has seen in the past few years, Mr. Spósito said, and the new format of all-par-3 holes and a shotgun start was well received by Saturday's

golfers.

"It was getting to be so many teams that we weren't able to finish the tournament," he said. "The shotgun start seemed to really speed things up. I think we will stick with that for next year."

The sled design contest, which has drawn as many as 15 contestants in previous years, had only two entries this year, despite the fact that prizes were introduced for the person with the most creative and well-designed golf cart sled.

Saturday's golf tournament wraps up the series of sports events newly branded this year as U.P. Winter Fest, which also included the U.P. Pond Hockey Tournament, the Youth Pond Hockey Tournament, and the Snow Softball tournament, which was canceled for lack of snow.

With adult pond hockey growing from 100 teams in 2009 to 131 this year and youth pond hockey growing from six to 20 teams, Mr. Spósito said this year's series was a success.

The special events committee, an informal group of St. Ignace residents who help plan events like the four winter sports-themed tournaments, is now focusing their efforts on planning for the summer.

The group, which meets at least monthly, plans to meet at 3 p.m. Thursday, March 11, at the Mackinac Grille restaurant in St. Ignace to discuss budget priorities for 2010 summer events. Anyone is welcome to attend to provide suggestions and volunteer their efforts to build current special events and introduce new ones.

"Now, we get to start planning to spend some of the money we have made off the tournaments," Mr. Spósito said. "This is probably the most important event meeting of the year."

About \$30,000 was raised for the budget from the adult pond hockey tournament alone, he said, one of the group's most profitable events. Since all the equipment has been purchased for the pond hockey tour-



Above: Teams tee off on an icy golf course stretching from the old railroad dock in St. Ignace to the southernmost edge of Moran Bay Saturday, March 6, during the annual "Ice Chip" golf scramble.



Middle Right: Three teams get ready to tee off on the ice-covered waters of Lake Huron near American Legion park Saturday, March 6, during the annual "Ice Chip" golf scramble in St. Ignace. Pictured are (from left) Sandy Krause, Kari Visnaw, Janet Brown, Lora Brown, Nicole Brown, all of St. Ignace, and Veronica Dobrowolski of Mackinaw City.



Bottom Right: Three two-person teams get ready to head to chase their golf balls across the ice after teeing off on Moran Bay Saturday, March 6, during the golf scramble. Pictured are (from left) Cindy Litzner, Ashley St. Louis, Ashleigh Therrian, Sarah Tamlyn, Barb DuFresne, and Charlie Levi.

nament, those profits now can go straight to funding other local events.

"Now," he said, "we have got some money to use to hopefully organize some fun stuff this year."

One new idea is to use the money to build free outdoor movies through the summer months.

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