

## Fox Run is Open for Play

Written by Story and Photos by Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 19 June 2015 03:56

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For those who are tired of the Gallup to Grants commute on a regular basis, or even farther, the news about Fox Run Golf Course is good, and getting better.

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Although not up to the highest standards, or even to previous ones, the work at Fox Run is improving and laying a solid foundation for future years. It has taken months of planning and preparation, but just in the month Max Johnson and Troy Kyle have been in Gallup, the course has improved. Water pumps in the lake areas are working well, the greens are growing back in, and contours and bunkers have been adjusted to provide a more playable course.

“We started on the back side, making the greens more receptive,” said Kyle, a senior in NMSU’s Professional Golf Management course and a 25-year Army veteran. “As the top dressing continues with adequate aeration, the greens will slowly grow better grass. We still have some artificial greens, but hope to have most of them in order by August 15.”

The greens will be softer, too, so the ball will not continue running as some golfers have experienced. At the same time, the surface will provide a quicker run for the putts. The effect will be similar on all greens so the player does not have to drastically change his putt on every hole.

The course is a work in progress after several years of trying to patch the problems as they occurred.

“It’s a great experience for us,” said Johnson, who was a kicker for the Aggie football team. “The practice area has improved and lessons are available. The Free Kids Camp is scheduled for August 3-6, but if demand warrants it, another will be scheduled for July.”

The main concerns for a total approach to are drainage and irrigation of the course. The money for the front nine has already been allocated by the City Council for 2016 at a cost of over a million dollars. The total cost could be almost \$2.5 million, if not more due to unforeseen problems or inflation.

Discussion with Johnson about the use of Astro-turf brought him quickly back into the conversation.

“There is no benefit to the use of Astro-turf on a golf course,” said the tall blonde senior in

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Turfgrass Science. "Some golfers can stick the approach, but balls have a tendency to bounce higher and run longer on that surface. That is not a good thing in golf."

Fresh water supply is not at maximum for now and will not be until the pipeline is finished in several years. Effluent water will necessarily be used in the meanwhile, but if tender care is given to the course, it may not make much of a difference.

Both Kyle and Johnson work under the direction of their individual directors, Pat Gavin of the PGA Golf Management Program, and Turfgrass Program Director Ryan Goss. Minimal wages to these directors are paid by the city with per diems and expenses attached. Johnson and Kyle receive \$17 per hour and are provided with housing adjacent to the course, with utilities paid.

Kyle mentioned that interest is picking up and wanted everyone to know the pro shop still offers club repairs and grip replacements, and has been bringing in the latest gear from Callaway, Titleist and Taylor Made. He's also selling older merchandise at discount prices to make room for new inventory.

Monthly fees for golfers have also been reduced in order to entice them to play Fox Run with quite a few others that have opted for a local course, regardless of the less than standard conditions. When you consider the price charged in Grants, the cost of driving over and back, and the almost two additional hours of lost work time for the trip, only the pro golfer would reasonably choose that hardship.

Even Tiger Woods, in his early days on the pro circuit, admitted playing on some truly terrible courses to make his game better. It seemed to have worked!

There are no bleachers at Fox Run, but I will be around for the Big Brothers Big Sisters tournament in August, so I will have to sign off on this column with, I'll see you at Fox Run and we'll talk.

**For more info: [www.gallupnm.gov](http://www.gallupnm.gov) or call (505) 863-9224.**

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