

# To relax, play disc golf instead

By **Brian Pearson**  
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Any way you look at it, disc golf is better than its more pedestrian counterpart. For one, you don't have to wear fluorescent, plaid, polyester pants to play. And compared to regular golf with its skinny metal sticks and dimple-faced balls, disc golf is as challenging, less expensive, more casual and more creative.

A round of disc golf can be played almost anywhere. Everything within sight outside your front door — trees, fire hydrants, the windshield of the neighbor's new car, the garbage cans and that pesky dog that knocks them over — has the potential to be a target.

A disc will not usually crack a window or hurt anyone, so it's a matter of naming the "hole" and getting to it in the fewest possible strokes.

A full round of regular golf — including driving, chipping and putting — can't be played safely in a populated area. Regular golf lessens the dangers of smashing bay windows or bopping tricycling children on the heads with flying golf balls because it's played on a specially designed course.

Disc golf courses exist, too. Nelson McNorton, production manager for the Professional Disc Golf Association, or PDGA, says there are more than 300 official courses in the United States.

Targets on an official course, called "pole holes," are metal poles that stand 52 inches off the ground with a basket secured around the pole half-way up. Vertical chains attached from the outside of the basket to the top of the pole, stop the disc in flight, causing it to fall into the basket.

The average length of holes on a disc golf course, McNorton says, range from 60 to 100 yards. Regular golf holes can exceed 450 yards.

Disc golf courses do not need greens, defined fairways or special types of grass. Besides vertical obstacles — such as trees, bushes and hills — and water hazards, it doesn't matter if the terrain has short grass, tall weeds or thick sand. You could be up to your eyeballs and surrounded by prickly pears and still wing a disc into a basket.

Disc golf obstacles and hazards are similar to ones in regular golf. There are out-of-bounds shots and the water hazards, one-stroke penalties each. Like regular golf, a disc golf course has trees and bushes, but it's a stroke penalty if a disc gets treed six feet up.

For \$4,354, the PDGA will come to a selected site, design a course and cement nine pole holes into the ground. This, McNorton says, is the "no-frills course." The "deluxe course" costs \$5,370 and has nine portable pole holes which can be relocated to change the course. A no-frills course of 18 holes costs \$8,172 and the 18-holed deluxe course costs \$10,307.

Fred Collins, manager and head golf professional at Bear Creek Golf World in Houston, said it costs big bucks to build and maintain a regular golf course. Excluding money spent on purchasing the acres needed for a decent 18-hole regular golf course, it costs about \$2 million to develop a golf course terrain and \$1 million to build a course clubhouse. He says an average 18-hole course costs about \$500,000 a year to water, fertilize, and maintain a fleet of lawn mowers and maintenance employees.

Most disc golf courses, on the other hand, are found in city parks or on college campuses. Considerable less expensive than its countryclub counterpart, it can cost less than \$2 to set up a permanent course without the poles.

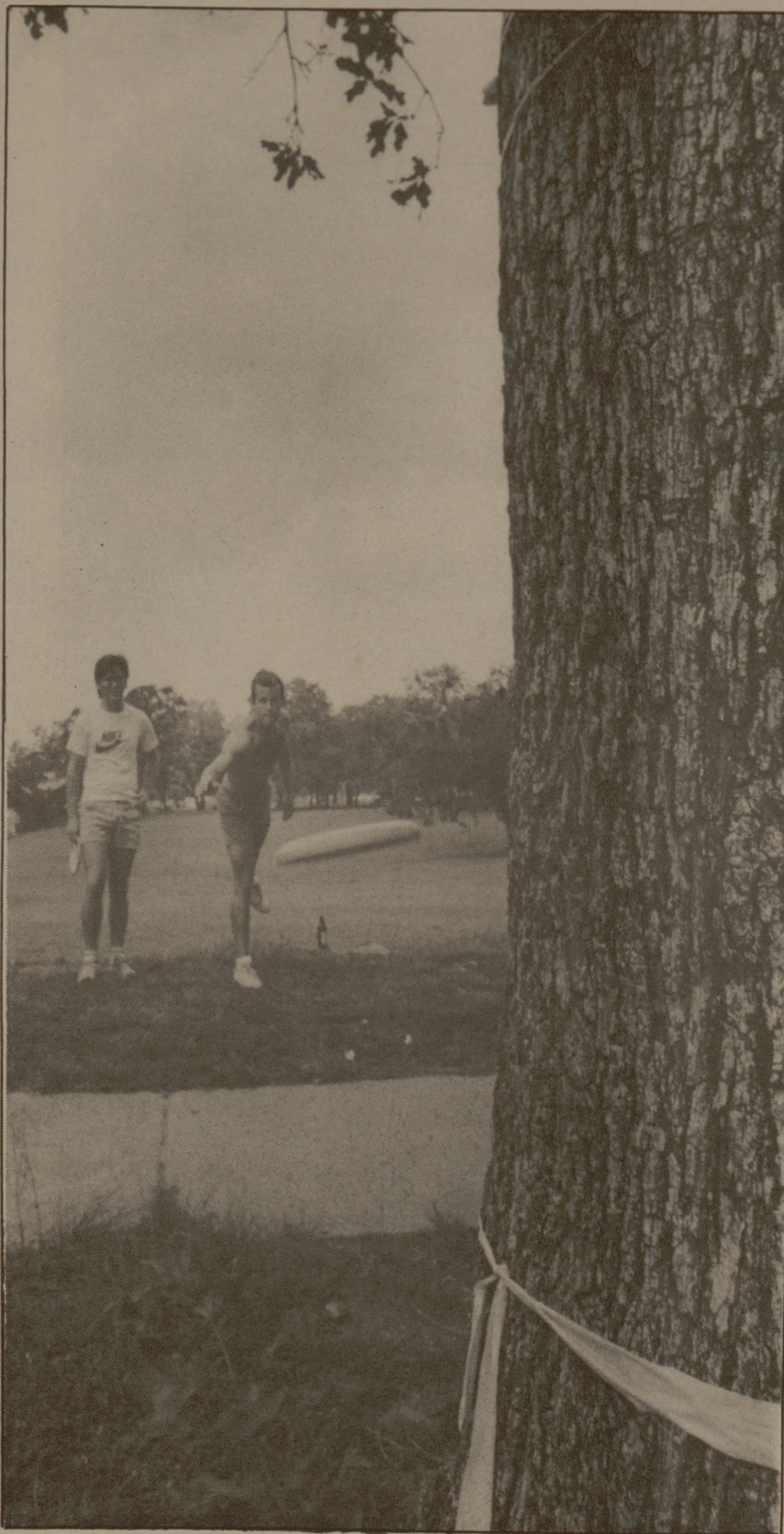
The poles are not strictly necessary for the recreational disc golfer. If the city or college will not pay for pole holes, any hardware store will sell you a roll of fluorescent pink or yellow ribbon. Pick yourself out 18

trees, (light poles or similar vertical objects) and put one ring of tape around the object about knee high and another about shoulder high. Pretend the area between the ribbons is the basket.

On most disc golf courses, anyone can play and there's no charge. Collins says

the average cost for green fees on a regular golf course is \$12.

The only mandatory equipment required for disc golf is a golf disc. The cost for a golf disc is about \$7.50 and although one disc can be used to play a round, but most players use more. Like clubs but considerably cheaper, discs are designed for either putting, driving, chip-



Dave Hubbard putts for a tree target on the A&M disc golf course as Scott Fisher watches.