

GOLF

Rhythm in his swing

MP's Fletcher mixes golf and music career

By Jason P. Skoda
AHWATUKEE FOOTHILLS NEWS

There is quite a bit of downtime in competitive golf.

Between shots, waiting on an opponent to swing, walking from the green to the next tee box, and standing on the box until the group ahead clears the fairway.

Everyone deals with it differently.



Austin Fletcher

There might be no one, however, who handles it the way a Mountain Pointe junior golfer occasionally does.

That's when Austin Fletcher sometimes becomes simply, Austin.

"I am constantly working on my music," Fletcher said. "There are times when I am golfing that I start going over one of my songs and working on things. It's mostly during practice rounds, but during competition sometimes, too."

Fletcher has two passions — golf and music — and he is hoping to do both of them as long as he can, making a career of both, if possible.

"If I had to I would always choose golf," he said. "But with the opportunities out there, there is no reason I can't do both for as long as I can."

Golf has been good for years. Mountain Pointe coach Tony Ramseyer remembers him on the range when he was about 11, but the music is really coming to the forefront right now.

Fletcher, whose stage name is Austin, released an album on his website with his brother, Eric, a former Pride golfer, producing it.

The album is called "My Turn" and can be sampled and purchased on his website, www.austinlovesgolf.com.

"I think it is really, really good," said Fletcher, who went solo after trying a group act with his brother called iLL Fletch. "I think it is more appealing to a wider range of a demographic. As far as branding, solo is the way go right now."

His manager and mother, Cathy, said they are serious

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High schools, youth, outdoors, recreation



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CROSS COUNTRY

Preserving the well



Desert Vista schedule about running well at right time

By Jason P. Skoda
AHWATUKEE FOOTHILLS NEWS

Chris Hanson has a couple of aces and a solid bullpen, which would be great if he was Desert Vista's baseball coach.

But he is not.

He is the Thunder's longtime boys cross country coach, but he approaches the team's running schedule with a similar approach as a baseball manager does with his pitching staff.

"I feel like you have to limit the number of times they run really hard," Hanson said. "You don't run your best pitcher out there every single day. There has to be some time off and you don't go to the well too often."

The Thunder's top runners competed only once all year prior to Saturday's Woodbridge Cross Country Classic in Costa Mesa, Calif., by design.

"There are certain races we want to step into it knowing we have fresh legs and we are ready to go," he said. "We want them to experience success, get in their work, but we don't want them pushing themselves every single week."

Woodbridge is one of those weeks where Hanson wants to test his top runners, and tested they were in the country's largest cross country meet.

"Southern California is the toughest state in the country," Hanson said with a laugh on the bus ride home Sunday. "It's why we go there."

Hanson took the whole squad; the non-varsity runners competed in class-based events, while the varsity ran in the sweepstakes race.

The Thunder came into the year ranked in the nation's top 25 and had the chance to compete directly with some of the nationally recognized teams.

It turned out to be a good test as Desert Vista finished 16th out of 22 teams in the sweepstakes race and 26th overall in a field of more than 100 schools from throughout the West.

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Desert Vista's Ryan Dykstra, left, and Carter Macey, middle, are shown at the start of the Sole Sports Running Zone XC Festival on Sept. 3. Macey finished 65th and Dykstra 72nd Saturday at the Woodbridge Cross Country Classic in Costa Mesa, Calif., one of the largest high school cross country events in the nation. [Photo courtesy of ThunderCC.com]

Rhythm

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about making this something to build on for the future. His parents are both classically trained pianists and Eric, who does a lot of song writing, has a talent with a mixing board and putting it all together.

"We are a music family and I think we can turn this into something special," she said. "I think the rhythm of a golf swing is really similar to playing the piano. Maybe they are from the same part of the brain, I don't know, but I think they are intertwined."

Fletcher calls his style futuristic R&B, while his golf game can be called consistently good.

"I remember seeing him on the range with his dad (Daniel) when Eric was on the team," Ramseyer said. "He was about 11 and had this perfect little swing. I knew he was going to be good and then he eventually became just the second freshman to be part of our state qualifying team in my 11 years."

"He has really taken off and become our No. 1 golfer."

Part of the reason he has reached a new level this year is because he went from a set of Hogan gravity backs, which were hand-me-downs from his father, to a set of Srixon.

He got the new sticks shortly after last season ended and it took some time to get a feel for them, but it is clear that he has confidence standing over most shots these days.

"It took me a couple of months to get used to it because the sweet spot is a lot smaller than my old set,"



Mountain Pointe's top boys golfer, Austin Fletcher, is also a singer/entertainer. [Darryl Webb/AFN]

Ramseyer said. "Right now, every club feels good in my hand and I am happy with the way I am playing."

Fletcher has had a scoring average of 37.0 heading into last week's match against Mesa and Highland. Moving into the No.

1 spot has been a natural progression after being part of the state team as a freshman, when he finished 35th at state, and as a sophomore, when he tied for 23rd.

"I don't think about being our No. 1 golfer because we have

some really good players," he said. "I just want to play as best as I can, but when it comes to state I definitely want to be No. 1. I want to get to the next level this year."

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Thunder

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"It is just a great meet and tested us like we wanted," top runner Carter Macey said. "When we see other runners that much better than us, then it gives us the drive to work harder."

The Thunder have been led all year by Macey and junior Ryan Dykstra, and last weekend was no different. They finished first and second, respectively, among their team. Macey, a junior, had the best time of 15 minutes and 21 seconds to finish 65th with Dykstra at 15:26 to place 72nd, while the team averaged 15:37 on the flat and fast 3.1-mile course.

Macey is starting to get comfortable with the title of being the Thunder's No. 1 runner.

"We are about running as a team, as a pack, and doing the best we can," he said. "I came into the year wanting to be at my best, not the No. 1 runner, but that is the way it has happened so far. Ryan and I push each other and I want to finish

in the top five at state."

Ryan Smith (15:42, 97th), Jonathan Furseth (15:44, 101st), Zach Smith (15:53, 116th), Tyler Bonebright (15:56, 118th) and Nick Kooniga (15:57, 119th) filled out the contingent in the sweepstakes race.

While the top two were impressive, the fact that the rest of the lineup all finished under the 16-minute mark is what made it a successful team race. It is the same group that helped the Thunder win the Sole Sports Running Zone XC Festival in Scottsdale on Sept. 3.

While the Scottsdale event was a good in-state starter event, the Woodbridge race was a test against an elite field.

"We went knowing the competition was unbelievable," Hanson said. "There are some real thoroughbreds in California and there were top programs from other states. It was an opportunity to rub elbows with some of the best and that will only make you better."

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Desert Vista junior Carter Macey continued his strong start to the season with an impressive finish in 15 minutes and 21 seconds last weekend at the Woodbridge Cross Country Classic in California. [Courtesy of ThunderCC.com]

Briefs

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ling registration.

The fee includes a T-shirt, poms, souvenir photo, refreshments and admission for one parent to attend the football game.

For a registration form or more information, contact 4stbatlle@gmail.com or racalianno@aol.com, or call (602) 751-8734 or (480) 225-0650.

You may also receive a form from any DV cheerleader.

Arizona middle school golf championships on tap

The Arizona Middle School Athletics Association (AMSAA) announced it has opened registration for its first-ever Middle School State Boys & Girls Golf Championship, open to all sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students in the state of Arizona.

The event, scheduled for Saturday, will take place at Sundance Golf Club in

Buckeye, one of the West Valley's newest 18-hole championship golf courses.

Golfers can register at www.amsaa.org.

The \$50 registration fee includes one round of golf, box lunch, event T-shirt and individual photograph.

DV wrestler headed to Australia

Desert Vista senior Kendall Love has been selected to participate in the 24th annual Down Under Sports tournament in the summer of 2012.

Love, who won a state title last season at 135 pounds, will be a member of the West Coast Central wrestling team. In order to make the trip possible, donations are being accepted.

Checks can be made out to International Sports Specialists, Inc. and mailed to Down Under Sports, in care of Kendall Love, at 1755 North 400 East, Suite 201; North Logan, Utah, 84341.

For more information, call (435) 753-4732 or visit www.downundersports.com.

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