

Lemons putting young golfers on course



Doug Lemons

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CantonRep.com staff report

Posted Mar 21, 2009 @ 07:45 PM

JACKSON TWP. —

Whether age 4 or 84, Doug Lemons still sees the same reaction when a golfer hits a solid shot — excitement. The former First Tee of Canton program director also sees the game's future in the faces of those 4-year-olds and children in general. But it takes patience to bring it to fruition. That's why Lemons has formed the Ohio Junior Golf Academy, which will operate out of Rolling Green Golf Course. "I just love working with junior golfers," said Lemons, a PGA professional and Canton resident. "Everyone thinks their child is the next Tiger Woods. There are some of them where I can't wait to see them grow up, but then again, I'm not in any hurry for them to grow up. "You can't make it too confusing. If a child is not having fun, he's going to lose interest." The academy, which will have open houses March 28 and 29, will have programs available for golfers age 5 and up, including Little Tee (ages 4-7), Junior Tee, Pro Tee and a golf readiness program designed to get junior high students prepared for high school golf.

"All I ask for is two things, attention span and comprehension," Lemons said. "If a 4-year-old can give me that, I can work with him and we can have fun." The Tee classes include at least six hours of instruction meeting twice weekly, with a tournament and cookout on the final day. The golf readiness program includes three days of weekend instruction covering the game, rules and etiquette. "I'm very proud of this program," Lemons said of the 17-hour readiness program. "We want them to be their own coach, so when things go bad, they will know what to fix." Assisting Lemons will be Tom Samartino, Andy Zaboda, John Karamas and Sanctuary pro Bill Rice. But Lemons also is seeking "mentors" — high school seniors, college freshmen — to fill summer jobs. Lemons also is offering school-enrichment programs, where he will go to schools and offer golf lessons as part of gym classes. "If you catch juniors when they're looking for something to do, you can give them another choice," said Lemons, also the tournament director of the Canton-Akron U.S. Kids Tour this summer. "We ask them, 'Did you have fun today? If you did, we can take this to another level. Web- site ohiojuniorgolfacademy.com, e-mail: doug@ohiojuniorgolfacademy.com or call (330) 412-2320