

Beware! The child of golf has come!

Most vices affect only the malefactor, his family, his friends, and perhaps a few unlucky bystanders. Most vices, considered individually, rarely harm society. But when they do, as in cases of habitual shopping-mall sniping and chronic war criminality, such transgressions reverberate into another realm, more evil than pathetic.

One vice, desert golf, is nowhere near random murder or the ordering of torture, but in this arid land it's hard to call the "sport" merely pathetic. That's because desert golf is a vice that robs water from future generations for the purpose of temporarily gratifying a privileged few. Knowing this, it's difficult to deny desert golf at least a toehold in that large grey area one might call "malicious behavior."

Thanks to relatively dry times over the last 10 years, the local community-development zeitgeist has finally shifted away from golf promotion and toward water harvesting. Yet in the midst of this positive trend, another scalawag hovers under the radar. They call it "disk."

Disk, or Frisbee golf, is a hybrid of regular golf and basketball. You play by the general rules of golf, but you aim for a wide, belly-level, backboardless hoop with a metal mesh that dangles down. Players even tote an array of specialized saucers - the equivalents of wedges, woods, putters, and nine-irons - in customized backpacks.

In defense of disk, Frisbee golf does not require an incessant wasting of water, and most diskers would be proud to say that their courses don't use pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and chemical fertilizers. Plus, they'd add, a disk course never needs mowing, so, unlike normal golf, its existence doesn't burn fossil fuels.

Certainly, on any sinner spectrum, local diskers would be placed further from the Beltway Sniper and our former defense secretary than desert golfers would be, but it is important to realize that Frisbee golf can be detrimental to the desert



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environment, especially when played in arroyos.

Our city's two newest Frisbee golf courses, the one up at St. John's College and the one next to the Genoveva Chavez Center, have been built in the Arroyo Chamiso, one of the area's biggest arroyos. The problem is that, just as in regular golf, players must chase their projectiles wherever they land, and the inevitable trampling associated with this practice destroys native vegetation.

We New Mexicans choose to live within a very fragile ecosystem. For this reason, one of the most important jobs of any permacultural designer here is to establish clearly defined pathways. I commend the sentiment of those who desire to get people off their couches and into nature, but in the case of disk, up and down our ephemeral waterways, this is a mistake. Unless ample funding for erosion control is in the budget of every disk golf course, we should encourage sports on designated fields and walking, hiking, and biking along established paths. The hipper child of desert golf is certainly a great leap from its inappropriate parent, but ultimately it'll damage our delicate desert should it ever take off as a fad.

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