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These young golfers are anything but green

Area juniors make an impact on state and international levels.

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Win a Sacramento junior golf event, and you've accomplished something.

That has long been the case in an area where the competition starts young and runs deep.

The next generation of golf standouts is taking its game on the road with much success.

Austin Roberts, 15: The 5-foot-8, 130-pounder nearly became the youngest winner in the 97th California State Amateur before losing 7 and 5 to Nick Delio in the final last month in Studio City.

"It was really great the whole week – meeting all the new guys I played with," Roberts said.

A Carmichael resident and high school sophomore to be, Roberts said he is deciding between attending Sacramento Waldorf, where he went last year, and Rio Americano in the fall. Age only matters when it comes to determining grade level, not golf prowess, he said.

"Age doesn't really matter if you work hard at the game," he said. "I felt confident the whole week I could keep up with them – not only beat them, but outplay them as well."

Delio, 18, was the Big West Conference Freshman of the Year last season at Cal State Northridge.

Roberts is one of eight representatives from the First Tee of Greater Sacramento selected to go to Kansas later this month to attempt to qualify for the Champions Tour First Tee Open at Pebble Beach in August.

Ashley Noda, 14: Another smallish (5-3, 115 pounds) player with a big heart and bulldog approach, she finished second in the California Junior Girls State Golf Championship in Pebble Beach this month.

In four match-play wins, Noda twice won in extra holes and twice beat girls headed to Division I programs on golf scholarships.

For the second year in a row, the Roseville resident also has qualified for the prestigious

Callaway Golf Junior World Championships at Torrey Pines, Tuesday through July 18.

Noda will be a freshman at Loretto this fall.

Grant Rappleye, 18: The Elk Grove resident was selected by the U.S. Golf Association to represent the United States against China in Beijing later this month in an eight-person (four girls, four boys) team event. The three-day, Ryder Cup-style event will be Rappleye's final junior event before playing golf for Sacramento State in the fall.

At 6-4, he should stand out in a city that will begin hosting the Olympics less than two weeks later.

Cooper Hunt, 7: He qualified in Las Vegas for next month's U.S. Kids Golf World Championship in Pinehurst, N.C. It's the second year in a row Cooper, who lives in El Dorado Hills, has qualified.

Cooper, who turns 8 Tuesday, will debut with the First Tee of Greater Sacramento on Monday at Cold Springs. First Tee competition usually is limited to kids ages 12-18.

Sacramento's Cameron Champ, now 13 and a force on the local junior scene, also was 8 and the youngest before Cooper to start playing with the First Tee.

Joel Slak, 15: Like Noda, the Folsom resident has qualified for the Callaway Golf Junior World Championships in San Diego.

He shot a 2-under-par 70 at Morgan Creek on Monday to win the overall title in the First Tee tournament against boys as old as 18.

Joshua Seden, 10: The Rocklin resident will travel to Orlando, Fla., in August after qualifying for the Drive, Chip & Putt Junior Challenge national final for the second year in a row. The Golf Channel is covering the costs.

Brandon Urbano, 18: On June 27, he became the second person worldwide to achieve the Ace level with the First Tee. The accomplishment took four years of life skills training and is the highest rank attainable, equivalent to becoming an Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts.

The Sacramentan did so the day before leaving for the U.S. Scholar-Athlete Games in Rhode Island, an Olympic-style event with 1,000 participants from 34 countries.

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