

Moraga golfer makes the record books

By Diane Claytor

Every golfer dreams of that elusive hole-in-one. Lori Dixon-Boettler hit her first one, right-handed, in 2003. This year, Dixon-Boettler accomplished something that very few ever have; in fact, according to various record keepers, including the U.S. Golf Association, she is likely the only woman to have these bragging rights: this past fall, Dixon-Boettler hit her second hole-in-one, this time playing left-handed. And the vivacious Moraga grandmother claims that golf isn't even her primary passion; swimming is.

Acknowledging that she has natural athletic abilities, Dixon-Boettler was an avid tennis player for many years. Living in Orinda, divorced with one young son, Dixon-Boettler met Fred, an ardent golfer (now her husband of 28 years) and states that she "probably never would have started playing golf if it wasn't for him." In fact, the very energetic 72-year-old says, "as a young person, I thought 'who would play a slow and boring game like that.'" But then she started playing and discovered that not only is golf far more difficult than

she expected ("In tennis, the ball is always moving. In golf, the ball is just sitting there. How hard can it be?" she remembers thinking), "it's such a beautiful way to enjoy the outdoors."

Naturally left-handed, Dixon-Boettler spoke with a golf salesperson who, when hearing about her strong tennis backhand, suggested she play golf right-handed. Since left-handed clubs are harder to come by, she took his advice. After only four years of playing, Dixon-Boettler reached the golfer's pinnacle by hitting that hole-in-one at the Moraga Country Club, her home turf.

In Hawaii several years later, Dixon-Boettler and her husband started talking to a man they frequently saw fishing. As luck would have it, the fisherman was Mark Rolfing, an on-course commentator and analyst for NBC/Golf Channel and host of his own NBC Sports series, "Global Golf Adventure." Dixon-Boettler, who is anything but shy, asked Rolfing if he knew of any woman who's ever gotten a hole-in-one playing both left- and right-handed. When he said he was

unaware of any, Dixon-Boettler was inspired to take on the challenge; the very next day she ordered left-handed clubs and has been playing that way ever since.

Fast forward to September 2018 at Michigan's famed Three-tops Course (considered one of the hardest par three courses in the U.S.). Dixon-Boettler has actually been thinking about switching back to playing right handed, "But," she says, "I keep hearing in my head, 'no woman has ever gotten a hole-in-one playing both right- and left-handed.' And, since life is about making and reaching goals, I decide to stick with the left hand."

She plays the first hole but can't find the second one "and I'm so embarrassed. We're holding up foursomes behind us because we can't find the hole," Dixon-Boettler reports. They finally find it and she swings again. "Now we can't find the ball. Optimistically, when you can't find your ball," Boettler continues, "you look in the hole. And, amazingly, there it is. The ball marked with my signature 'L.'"

Excitedly asking if anyone witnessed this, someone from the group behind them responded and he verified this incredible accomplishment to the course golf pro.

According to the National Hole-In-One Registry, only three people are listed as scoring a hole-in-one from both left and right sides: Dixon-Boettler and two male golfers. Communications with the USGA revealed similar information: there are 21 times listed when someone achieved a hole-in-one playing right- and left-handed, but there are no names or genders associated with this list. "You are the first verified woman that's ever done this,"



Lori Dixon-Boettler shooting her second hole-in-one — this one left handed — this year in Michigan

Photo provided

Dixon-Boettler was advised by Jerry Tarde, Golf Digest editor.

Not one to ever rest on her laurels, Dixon-Boettler is now reaching for new goals which don't include tennis rackets or golf clubs.

Twenty years ago, with a bad back and on her doctor's recommendation, Dixon-Boettler started swimming. She now swims competitively in the Masters Championships and won three first place medals for her age group in the Senior Games earlier this month.

Dixon-Boettler no longer plays tennis. She still plays golf, although

says she'll probably switch back to playing right-handed. And she swims as frequently as possible. "That's what I really love doing," she says.

A spiritual woman who reads psalms and proverbs every day while sitting in her favorite chair taking in the beautiful views from her Moraga Country Club home, Dixon-Boettler, who prides herself on being a motivator, hopes to inspire others to keep moving, no matter how old. And, she proudly states, "You can learn new skills at any age."

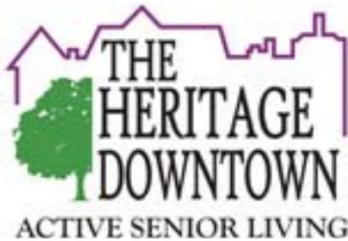
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New novel delves into science of CRISPR Cas9 gene editing technique use

By Sophie Braccini

Today's young adult audiences want realistic, challenging, dark and suspenseful storytelling. It is a trend that comes from adult literature, think of "The Reckoning" by John Grisham or "Dark Sacred Night" by Michael Connelly. Books such as "Thunderhead: Arc of a Scythe" by Neal Shusterman are not for timid hearts; and now, Lamorinda Weekly's own editor Jennifer Wake, who writes under the name J. Finn Wake, has published such a young adult novel: dark, mysterious, and thrilling. It is also a story born of the author's love of the sea and its inhabitants. As science fiction borders recent rogue science incidents, "Cry of the Seals" is a modern day fairy tale where the fairies are crossing the boundaries between the human and animal kingdom and the bad witches are picaroon scientists manipulating genes we fear could pop out for real any time.

The story is set on the Pacific coast of Northern California. Two teens, quirky and brilliant 15-year-old Noah and his friend Taylor, a fearless girl, get tangled in a dark mystery that requires them to push both their intellectual and emotional boundaries.

Noah is different, and he is embarrassed by what is a little too "special" about him. He is not badly victimized at school, but bullying is never very far. He has few friends, but for Taylor, and Noah also has newly realized gifts, such the ability to hear and understand marine mammals. When Noah shares his perceptions and ideas with Taylor, it is enough for the adventurous girl to start a spiral of actions that they are unable to stop until complete resolution.

It is a classic story of good versus evil, where rogue scientists will stop at nothing to conquer recognition and fame. The interesting twist here is that just recently, such a scientist in China claimed to have edited a human genome and given twins genetic traits that will reproduce in future generations.

Scientific aspects in the book

involve genetic editing using CRISPR Cas9 (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats), the RNA-guided gene-editing platform that makes use of a bacterially derived protein (Cas9) and a synthetic guide RNA to introduce a double strand break at a specific location within the genome. Wake's description of this genetic editing technique will satisfy science-minded youth, but it is explained simply enough to make it accessible to all. Bottom-line: what the author uses as the base of her story is real science and the extrapolation she makes is, unfortunately, not impossible.

Besides the scientific backdrop, this is the story of youth overcoming differences, taking risk for a good cause and maturing in the process. Wake does not shy away from difficult ethical questions such as whether the ends justify the means, and parents who get the

book for their child will enjoy reading it for all the good conversation topics that can come from it.

"Cry of the Seals" is Wake's first novel. She has been a writer for years, contributing to regional magazines and newspapers. The characters are well developed and very credible. The ending might leave the reader wondering, as some questions go unanswered and others have found too quick of a denouement.

It is fair to say that about half of the readers for young adult literature are not that young anymore, and those interested in a good adventure, set on the edge of land and sea, and who are intrigued by what is possible with science today might also want to check out "Cry of the Seals."

The book can be found at Orinda Books, ordered through other book stores, and purchased online.

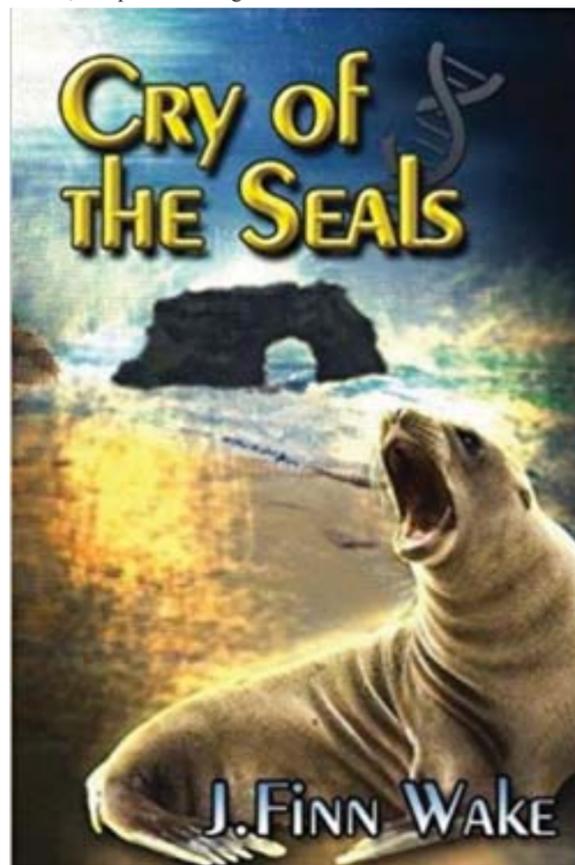


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