MATT KERN

 Matt Kern was one of the top junior golfers in the state when playing for Castro Valley High from 1998 to 2001. Playing as the No.1 golfer on the varsity team, he led the Trojans to Hayward Area Athletic League championships in both his freshman and sophomore years. But the best was yet to come.

 “I caught fire my junior year,” he recalled in an understatement. That year he not only won the HAAL individual title, he also captured the North Coast Section individual championship in a field that included current PGA touring professional James Hahn.

 Playing in junior events around the country, Kern won five of the seven tournaments he entered that year, including an American Junior Golf Association tournament at Trophy Lake Golf and Casting in Port Orchard, Washington, that attracted many of the nation’s top juniors. He returned to Castro Valley for his senior season, leading the Trojans to yet another HAAL title.

 Kern earned a golf scholarship to the University of the Pacific where he played four years, graduating in 2005. He was a member of the UOP team that qualified and played in the NCAA Division I Championship at Ohio State his freshman season.

 Matt’s father, Bruce, got his son started in golf at the age of eight, but Matt didn’t really take the game that seriously until a few years later. By the time he was an eighth grader at Canyon Middle School, though, Kern was good enough to earn a junior scholarship at Castlewood Country Club. That’s when he gave up his other childhood sports – baseball, basketball and soccer – to concentrate on golf.

 One of Kern’s greatest strengths was his length off the tee. With drives in the 300-yard range, he could reach most par-5s in two, which meant he would be putting for eagle. At one point during his career at UOP, he led the NCAA in eagles made.

 Now 37, Matt still enjoys golf, but with two sons and a daughter – ages 10, 8 and 5 – and all their activities, he doesn’t have time to play competitively. Matt, his wife Ryan, and their three children have a home adjacent to the Woodbridge Country Club (near Lodi) where he is a member.