

Is there a single secret to developing a successful junior golf program? Yes, there is. There is a "key ingredient" without which the job cannot get done. The key, is a nucleus of dedicated people. The need for people who care enough about kids to spend time with them is great! Maybe, at first, the need will be for only one or two, however, this will increase as the program expands. Besides the professionally trained staff there are volunteer people around. The job though, is to find them. If you have this magic ingredient – good people – you have the best of the possible beginnings.

### **The Priorities**

There is another step after having enlisted those dedicated types, that step is the placement of priorities.

A decision must be made as to what is to be done first. The program will face a high risk of failure if too much is tried too soon. List the tasks in order of their importance and work on them one at a time.

Some obvious logical priorities for getting a junior golf program underway are:

1. Getting dedicated people to help.
2. Creating an atmosphere where the management or directors will encourage junior golf activity.
3. Finding equipment to be available to youngsters who have none.
4. Establishing a program of events: clinics, matches, tournaments, lessons and meetings.

### **Private Clubs vs. Public Clubs**

Young golfers, whether club members or public players, deserve a strong program at their home course. It is at the "grass roots" level where the special kinds of positive results that have been suggested previously can best be achieved. The conduct of young players will reflect the early kind of training they have received. Logically, the place for them to get that training is where their playing abilities were developed – at their home course.

#### **1. Private Clubs**

Although junior programs at private clubs are somewhat handicapped by being restricted in their draw for talent, there is a distinct advantage in at least knowing personally who the juniors are. By having the address and telephone numbers of each possible candidate, the task of communication is simplified and seems limited only by imagination and persistence. Many private clubs, because of a lack of juniors have opened up special junior memberships. These memberships are available to juniors who are not already members of private clubs and have shown an ability and dedication to the game of golf.

Private clubs should not delegate the entire responsibility of conducting junior golf activities to the professional staff. The golf professionals and their staff have an essential role to play in the success of any junior golf program, but that responsibility should be one that is shared. A Junior Golf Committee should be established which represents all of the involved parties. Such a committee might resemble the following:

**Committee Member-** Junior Golf Chairman (A club member, preferably with a place on the Board of Directors) The Chairman has the overall responsibility for the junior golf program. This is the ONE person to whom suggestions or criticism can be taken, who has the authority to deal with them. In addition to helping formulate policy and communicating with the Board, the primary responsibilities in

this position should be to develop the schedule of events and to oversee the work of other committee members assigned to junior golf.

### **The Golf Professional**

The club professional should supervise and direct the learning of skills, rules, etiquette, and other aspects related to playing the game. He or she should carry out the directives of the Board relative to the junior player's use of the course and golf facilities and should serve as a counselor, teacher and coach for the youngsters.

### **Two Male and Two Female Adult Members** (possibly, but not necessarily, parents of currently active juniors)

Volunteers are needed to provide transportation, to handle starting times, scoring, awards, record keeping and securing additional help for the other committee members.

### **Two Male and Two Female Junior Players** (From the two oldest age classifications)

The program is for the youngster, and they should have a strong voice in what happens. These junior representatives might be officers of the junior club, if there is one. Otherwise, they can be elected by the juniors, appointed by the head professional, or better yet, earn their way onto the committee by a formula for an accumulation of points based upon participation and performance. The Junior Golf Committee should meet at the course on a few occasions prior to the start of the junior season and approximately once every two weeks after the season begins. The junior players on the committee should bring thoughts and desires of the junior club to the committee. Channels of communication should be kept open with the golf course superintendent and he should definitely be included in a clinic given by the professional on the care and the consideration of the course. Attendance at this particular clinic should be required, and the clinic should be held before any competition of the season has begun. Included should be specific procedures such as fixing ball marks, raking bunkers, replacing divots, policing the course for litter, plus other related needs.

## **2. Public Courses**

At the public golf course, the aspects of conducting a junior golf program are somewhat different. The first step is to attract juniors to the course. The most logical place to contact prospective junior players is in the schools, since this is surely where they will all be. Interest can be aroused by offering clinics at the course as well as in the schools. If the plan is to provide clinics within the school, this must be first cleared with the local school administration. At the same time, a request can be made for the cooperation of the physical education staff in posting notices or in making announcements pertinent to the program. Other productive sources for promotion are the local news media, parks and recreation directors and gathering places for young people in the vicinity.

Once you have solved the promotion problem, a committee, arranged similar to that suggested for the private club program, can be established. Use adults from your men's and women's clubs at the course to serve on the committee and be sure to include a representative from the course management.

### **Junior Rates**

To make golf financially feasible at public courses for as many youngsters as possible, there should be a special junior greens fee, or at least the opportunity to earn one. The fee for junior golfers will

vary widely depending upon the nature of the ownership(private or municipal), the locale, the demand, the course overhead, and other factors. A junior rate reduction generally varies from ½ to ¼ of the adult price. Junior rate reduction at some courses are in effect only at non-peak hours. These times should be posted. A special rate applies for juniors at some courses only when the junior has passed a test (administered at the course), which demonstrates competency in knowledge of proper etiquette and skill in golf. Junior monthly and season tickets are also a popular means of providing more economical golf.

Public courses that show an interest in youngsters generally manage to find a way to provide playing privileges to those youngsters who are short on money but long on willingness to work. These work duties might include picking up range balls, repairing ball marks on greens, sweeping, forecaddying at tournaments and running errands during golf events. All of these are examples of trade-off duties that can be arranged.

Not all public course junior players can afford golf clubs. Finding used clubs for them at little or no cost is very possible. Most pro shops have an old club barrel at the back room from which can be salvaged a few clubs that have little chance for resale. Many golfers at your course also have extra clubs lying around the house that they would be willing to donate if they knew there was a good use for them elsewhere.

With active cooperation at the public course by people who are interested in helping provide a golfing opportunity for youngsters, no junior need be turned away because of lack of finances.

## **Program Outlines**

1. Junior Program
2. Advanced Instruction
3. Golf Camps

### **1. Junior - Junior Program**

#### Week 1 - Putting

- Grip
- Posture
- Set-Up
- "Stroke"
- Idea of the game is introduced
- Suggest playing a few holes on the Putting Green
- Introduction of the use of ball marks and order of play

#### Week 2 - Chipping/Pitching

- Posture
- Set-Up
- Lofted clubs are introduce (as children get older)
- Pitch shots are introduced
- Posture
- Set-Up

### Week 3 - The Golf Swing

- Posture
- Set-Up
- Position at the top
- Position at the finish
- Full swing concept and weight transfer are introduced

### Week 4 - The Golf Swing

- (Repeat of Week 3)
- Posture
- Set-Up
- Position at the top
- Position at the finish

### Week 5 - The Tournament

- We suggest a Two-Ball format with our Jr-Jr being paired with a senior member or an older Junior. The senior member could be their mother or father.
- Play: Depending on the average age in the group, can be six holes or nine holes.
- Senior player hits off first tee and they hit alternate shots until the ball is holed out
- Options: Tee markers may be moved down the fairway or a short course could be made out of an open area.

### **Class Organization and Safety**

When teaching a Junior-Jr class, one must be organized before heading out to the practice tee. The professional must be concerned with two areas:

1. Safety
2. Keeping the kids as active as possible

The organizational procedures will vary according to the number of children. We have been successful using the following procedure (based on twenty children):

1. Range balls distributed along range in groups.
2. All children meet at a designated area. (Pro-shop, etc.)
3. Clubs are distributed.
4. Group leaves to go to range as a group.
5. No one may swing a club or touch a ball until told to do so.
6. Once at range, all children to sit in a big semicircle
7. Demonstration given at this time.
8. Children are then numbered off and sent to spot where balls are.
9. Pro then takes children through drill as a group. (practice swing only)
10. Kids then hit away. (individual instruction at this time)
11. Balls are usually teed up.
12. When another drill is to be shown, kids are called back to the semicircle.
13. Drill and demonstration are to be kept very brief.
14. Class will last about one hour.
15. Contest held at the end of each class.

- Prizes given out after – shake, hot dogs, chips, etc
- P or 4 kids chosen each class; by end of 4 weeks every child has usually been chosen for a prize.
- Kids taken back to pro shop as a group where parents pick them up.

### **Safety Rules**

1. Spots are spaced out by at least five yards.
2. One must never get out of position while hitting is going on. (To pick up tee, etc.)
3. Kids to stop hitting as a group. (whistle may be used)
4. Balls, tees, instruction, taken to the kids; kids are not to be moving from their spots.
5. Student teacher ratio 1:7

## **2. Junior Instruction**

### First Week

#### Lesson One

- Introduce golf as a "game of a lifetime".
- Introduce swing as a total, rhythmic movement.
- Develop motion.

#### Lesson Two

- Teach grip, stance, aim. (start with middle or short irons.)
- Establish a routine approach to the ball.
- Insist on proper golfing posture – demonstrate how a routine approach automatically sets up the golfer in the desired distance from the ball and establishes ball position in relation to the feet. This should be part of each subsequent lesson or until you are satisfied that good habits of grip and the address position have been soundly established.
- Teach the full swing as a total, rhythmic movement.
- Golf exercises, stressing rhythm, balance controls.
- Hit practice balls.

#### Lesson Three

- Review grip, approach to ball.
- Review exercises – total swing.
- Emphasize air and trajectory.

#### Lesson Four

- Teach the proper transfer of weight.
- Stress proper centering.
- Stress resistive force in feet.
- Stress balance, control and rhythm.

#### Lesson Five

- Develop swing plane and arm position.
- Stress proper take away.
- Work on full shoulder turn and expansion of arc.

## Second Week

### Lesson Six

- Teach release.
- Stress club position.
- Causes and effects.

### Lesson Seven

- Putting – Teach firm wrist and stroke method.
- Demonstration – Exploration of "green" etiquette and rules.
- Introduce putting drills.

### Lesson Eight

- Chipping and pitching.
- Relate wherever possible to previous skill lessons.
- Grip and approach to ball.
- Aim and trajectory.
- Relationship of length of swing to distance.
- Relationship of backswing to follow through.
- Emphasize control and accuracy.
- Develop fundamentals.
- Club Selection.

### Lesson Nine

- Sand Play
- Teach fundamentals.
- Fairway bunkers.
- Greenside bunkers.

### Lesson Ten

- Entire lesson devoted to tests and contests that relate to all the skills.
- Short written test on rules and etiquette.

## **3. Advanced Instruction**

This program is developed for the competitive golfer who has already established himself as a respectable player.

It should take place throughout the season, using a similar program as explained above, however, more detail and more individual attention will be given to each student.

Develop a proper practice and playing schedule for maximum improvement.

## **4. Golf Camps**

Two day camps designed for the younger junior, including as much of the information contained in the lesson program as possible.

Two of these during the summer months will build interest in your junior program.

## **Parent Involvement**

A parent/junior meeting at the beginning of the season is very important. This helps to introduce the younger members to the club and also gives your committee a chance to involve the parents in all parts of your program. This is the time to get a commitment from the parents.

### **Walkers**

All younger juniors (age to be determined by committee) should have a walker. The walker's duties include speed of player, scoring, etiquette and basic rules.

### **Highly Competitive**

Develop a competitive program that will interest your better junior players. Typical competitive events are as follows:

1. Inter-Club
2. Inter-City
3. City, Provincial and National events
4. 54 Hole Medal Play Club Championship
5. Pro-Am
6. Beat the Pro
7. Net Best Ball
8. Team Stableford

### **Weekly Participation**

This is an extremely important area at the club level. This goal is to develop an interesting program for the junior that is fun filled and will encourage them to come out and participate. It is absolutely necessary to have JUNIOR DAY. Junior Day – A period of time set aside on a certain day for juniors only, to run their weekly events. Here are some suggestions for competitions for the less serious junior golfers:

1. Senior-Junior
2. Parent-Junior
3. Alternate Shot
4. Scramble
5. Scotch 4-Ball
6. 3-Club
7. String Day
8. Worst Ball

### **Team Competition**

The ability to develop friendships amongst your juniors will have a tremendous effect of how popular your program becomes. All juniors, especially the junior girls will be more likely to come to the golf course if they have a friend to play with. Team competitions help develop these friendships. A lot of the above competitions can be organized as team events.

#### **• Interclub**

If there is not one already organized in your city, organize one yourself. This type of competition encourages team spirit and helps build friendships. If you are from a small town with only one golf club, organize an interclub with clubs in the area.

- Intercity

Develop some intercity rivalry and add to your club unity and spirit. Juniors love to travel and play new golf courses.

- City Events

Encourage your juniors to enter these events. This type of competition can at times be the spark that some juniors need to become keen, committed golfers. It is very important to have a schedule of city events posted on your junior bulletin board.

- Provincial and National Events

Provincial and National Events These events are going to appeal to your Level 4 golfer. As above, these events must be prominently posted on your junior bulletin board. Many clubs have a program that provides assistance for deserving junior members who want to attend a National Tournament. Funds for this can be raised in different way, such as sponsorships or junior fund raising ideas.

- Instructional Program

There should be some sort of recognition and various awards presented during your instructional program. These awards should not be costly, however, recognition of some sort is always greatly appreciated.

- Tournaments

Prizes and Awards will be presented at all club tournaments. There should be an organized format for the presentation of these prizes. The organization of the presentation goes a long way in elevating the importance of the prize or award.

- Participation and Improvement

Participation and Improvement A Junior Windup Dinner and Award presentation is an excellent time and place to present participation and improvement awards. If your club can develop the Junior Windup Dinner into a high class event that parent attend and juniors look forward to attending, you will be able to leave the juniors and parents with an excellent overall impression of your complete Junior Program.

- Recording of Handicaps

Handicaps are an integral part of running your junior program. We would strongly advise that an adult junior committee member be in charge of junior handicaps. Because handicaps are now computerized, there are going to be a number of younger juniors unable to record their scores. Also, juniors, if playing in competitive events, are required to have a handicap card signed by the handicap chairman. Juniors should be required to hand in all score cards and the handicap chairman should be required to update and post all handicaps every 2 weeks.

- Extended Handicaps

These are very important for several reasons. Not only will these enable you to award prizes to the younger and inexperienced golfer, they will also allow the groups to measure their own improvement rate.

- Communication Network

This is an extremely important part of your junior program. The key is a central area - a junior room - where all information will be posted. The junior room should have proper bulletin boards so that it is able to fulfill its prime purpose as an information center.

- Newsletters

The Club newsletter should have a separate highlighted area for junior news. If possible, a separate junior newsletter is a good idea. A comprehensive information handout that includes schedules, and explanation of tournaments and all general information that pertains to all the different levels should be distributed to the parents and juniors. An example is attached.

- Telephone

Your telephone committee should consist of the members of your Junior Committee. The juniors on the committee should compile an accurate list of juniors in all four levels. There will be different events that pertain to different levels, consequently, cutting down on the number of telephone calls that you need to make. Constant reminders through the telephone, creates and retains interest in your program.

- Media Coverage

Developing a good rapport with the media will help your program in many ways. If you can get the media to cover upcoming events, this will help with general communication. If they will print or announce the tournament results, this will help create more interest from your junior section. All the careful planning of junior programs will fail unless the Board of Directors and the Club support junior golf. Many clubs have been shortsighted in the many restrictions in playing time they have imposed on their juniors. Many courses, because of memberships that are too eager, are facing heavy criticism from their membership over a lack of available tee times. The first place they look to solve this problem is at the junior membership, where very little revenue is obtained. In the long term, this will greatly affect the growth of golf. In your position as the golf professional, it is up to you to protect the available hours of play for your junior golfers. If you feel there is a problem in this area, then you should develop some support from influential members to protect junior rights. Many clubs bend over backwards for their junior programs and are facing a difficult problem over a lack of playing time for their overall membership. If your junior program is well organized and your juniors well educated, you will have less of a problem retaining a fair allotment of playing time for them.