



Case study – Palacerigg grows junior section from seven to 42 in one season

The challenges

Prior to 2008, Palacerigg GC's junior section had declined from a healthy 35 to just seven.

The clubhouse had not been welcoming to juniors; the junior room had fallen into a state of disrepair.

The solutions

Junior Convenor, Frank Anderson, had already gained the Level 1 coaching qualification through his work with the North Lanarkshire Golf Development Group (NLGDG), established in 2005 to support the development of golf across North Lanarkshire.

The club decided adopting a clubgolf programme would be the most effective way to progress. It already had two Level 1 coaches. Three further coaches, two of them women, then joined the team as qualified Level 1 coaches, helping to convey the message that golf is not just for boys. Two coaches attended a Disability Awareness course, enabling any child to be welcomed into the coaching programme.

The club addressed the issue of a lack of funds by adapting its constitution and establishing a separate junior section, allowing it to access additional funding streams.

It addressed any potential financial barriers by minimising the cost of coaching sessions. The experience of the NLGDG was invaluable in advising on appropriate rates.

A donation of golf clubs from US Kids Golf, via their support for the clubgolf programme, has ensured there is no need for parents to buy equipment and prevented any stigma associated with not owning brand-name clubs.

Materials were bought and work got underway to improve the junior area.

Knowing the NLGDG was working with Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Area Sports Council to promote golf in local primary schools, the club linked into the initiative's festival which attracted over 300 youngsters.

Palacerigg Golf Club coaches attended the festival, handing out flyers about a forthcoming come-and-try day where children could experience golf, and receive coaching, in its natural environment.

Situated within a country park, Palacerigg is not an easy club to access. The club works with local schools to ensure youngsters can either use public transport or share private transport to reach the venue. Strathclyde Passenger Transport's "Dial-a-Bus", supports the NLGDG and clubgolf ethos that every child should be able to attend structured golf coaching, irrespective of their personal financial circumstances.

The outcomes

Forty children attended Palacerigg's come-and-try coaching session. A week later 30 children returned to the club for a sign-up. All 30 signed up as new members to the club's two-year coaching programme. Soon the club's junior membership stood at 42, and included six girls.

With a new, enhanced membership the clubgolf Stage 1 coaching syllabus was delivered to the children. The testament to the coaches and the programme was an attrition rate of just 0.06%, achieved in a coaching season blighted by poor weather.

Keen to ensure that the programme was fit-for-purpose, the club issued questionnaires to participants and parents. They knew they were on track when the biggest complaint they received was the midgets!

A further piece of recognition was Palacerigg's selection as a regional venue for PGA coach education courses for the 2009 season.

Frank believes partnership work was the key to the club's success. Their initial link was with the NLGDG. The Group comprises representatives from North Lanarkshire Leisure Ltd, North Lanarkshire Council, clubgolf, the Professional Golfers' Association, the Lanarkshire Golf Association, golf clubs and schools across North Lanarkshire, Strathclyde Police and the three Sports Councils in North Lanarkshire.

What's next?

Palacerigg GC is working with North Lanarkshire Leisure to improve its junior facilities.

The club has provided £200 to assist with improvements to help make the club as junior-friendly as possible.

The Club has two coaches awaiting a PGA Level 1 Advanced course.

The club is aware of an increase in the number of "car-park" golfers who turn up, play then leave. It wants to bring back the social aspect of the game and openly encourage juniors to use the peripheral facilities the club has to offer.

