



Case study – Making juniors a priority at Powfoot Golf Club

The challenges

As a result of Powfoot's popularity with club members and visitors alike tee times are at a premium making it difficult for children to get on the course at the times they want. Not having proper practice facilities was another hindrance to children.

Younger golfers and new members found the junior rates costly. Because of the massive jump from the Chipper section to full Junior membership, parents were reluctant to join in case the children did not want to play.

The club does not have a resident PGA Professional.

The junior section had averaged 65-70 children for some years but like other clubs Powfoot was keen to encourage more youth.

The club had only one playing junior girl.

Not having proper practice facilities was a hindrance.

The solutions

In 2008 the club devised a programme to give juniors new opportunities to develop their talent, realise their potential and, for those that have high ambitions, support them in reaching local, district and international level.

To achieve its ambitious targets the club needed the support of its adult members.

Realising the club's future lies with the young, its older members were delighted to see progress being made in the junior ranks. Many members donated bags, trollies, balls, tees and waterproof clothes to the juniors.

Recruiting helpers, volunteers and coaches became the club's top priority. The club succeeded in engaging the services of 16 adult members who completed the Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport course.

Five members, who had previously shown interest in working with juniors, became qualified volunteer coaches after taking part in the Level 1 training course. This training was jointly funded from Dumfries & Galloway Education budget, club funds, and the South West of Scotland Junior Golf Partnership, with a substantial discount accessed through clubgolf.

The local primary school held the perfect target audience for Powfoot's clubgolf coaching programme. PE staff and Active Schools co-ordinators already delivered firstclubgolf, with younger children using "Tri Golf" equipment, and the older ones "Golf Xtreme". Through the "Fit for Girls" initiative a golf programme was also provided for Primary 7 girls.

Many local schools held firstclubgolf festivals which volunteers and coaches from Powfoot Golf Club attended to give their time and expertise.

These in school golf initiatives raised awareness of golf and helped generate substantial interest in the club's clubgolf programme.

Seizing the opportunity the club provided worked closely with Active Schools staff to build school-club links, and promoted its first class facilities and structured golf coaching pathway to every youngster in the immediate locality. Its clubgolf programme was offered to all local juniors of all levels of abilities and was in full swing in 2008.

The outcomes

Thanks to good planning and communication the golf club fully bought into the objectives set out for developing its Junior section.

The challenge of finding times for the juniors to play on a highly popular course, with an abundance of members and visitors, was overcome by close liaison between club management and the junior section.

Time was made available for juniors during allotted members' times. With full support of the adults, juniors were given access to the back five holes on Saturday mornings between 8 and 9.45am, before the first "prime time" adult golfers reached that part of the course. On a Sunday afternoon juniors were given exclusive use of the first tee between 1.30 and 2pm.

To overcome the challenge of not having a resident Pro to coach the higher stages of the club golf programme, the club approached the Professional at Dumfries and County Golf Club. He was delighted to help and offered the support of his assistant. Now in a position to offer club golf coaching between Stages 1 and 3, the club engaged the Assistant Pro's services for two hours every Saturday morning for five months.

The junior section approached the club's management committee to suggest a graduated fee system. The committee agreed to a sliding scale according to age: £30 a year for young members beginning the game (the "Chippers"); £76 a year for under 13s; £86 a year for children up to the age of 15; and £96 a year for children up to the age of 18. Pre-handicap players pay £1 a week for coaching and £1 a week for competition. Children with handicaps pay £2 a week for competition.

Driving range balls were made available free of charge to the volunteers, coaches and the assistant Pro for use by the juniors. The club decided to give juniors exclusive use of the driving range between 8 and 10am on Saturday mornings.

The club took in 20 new junior members in 2008.

The club now has five full junior girls and 10 in the younger chipper section.

As a result of setting up the Chipper membership to encourage primary children, 16 of the group have joined as full members in 2009 and 35 new local beginners have joined to experience the game as Chippers.

Player achievements

Katie McCracken (15) made it into the Scottish U21 training squad and won the U15 handicap trophy in the Scottish Girls Championships at Powfoot.

Scott Wightman and Decklyne McClure both made the South of Scotland U18 Team. Wightman and McClure won their first rounds of the Scottish Boys Championships at Southernness. Wightman won the regional Rotary title, earning a place in the finals at Torwoodlee.

Powfoot's U16's team won the Dumfriesshire Championships.

Powfoot's junior team competed in the Dumfriesshire Junior League, finishing as runners up after completing the 2008 season unbeaten.

Seven young Powfoot Chippers lifted trophies at the flag day for non handicap golfers at Hoddum.

Duncan McNeil won the Wee Wonders qualifier at North Berwick and represented Powfoot in the finals.



