



Case study – Ranfurly Castle Golf Club, Junior Club of the Year

The challenges

When Michael McCabe took on the Ranfurly Castle's Junior Convenor role in 2006 there were less than 15 juniors playing regularly at the club.

Juniors had not been given ample opportunities to play in competitions. There had been many years when the club had been "in the wilderness, winning nothing at all".

The solutions

The club established a three year strategy to ensure the junior section was being run effectively and successfully. Ambitious plans needed a structured approach.

The juniors were allowed to form a committee of seven, empowering them to make decisions. Their feedback was passed through the Junior Convenor for his presentation to the Board of Directors.

The Junior Convenor's role was developed by appointing three deputies, all volunteers within the club, to take individual responsibility for junior golf development, the junior team and administration. Acting as the hub for information, the Junior Convenor would feed back on all three areas to the Board of Directors.

By training Level 1 coaches it would be ideally placed to attract these local school children for coaching on its nine hole course adjacent to the main course. By opening up the coaching to non-members, the club could attract young members who might otherwise have gone to play elsewhere.

The starting point was to roll out clubgolf Stage 1 coaching to 8-12 year olds. This was accomplished after 11 club members became qualified coaches on the Level 1 course. To maintain continuity and interest the club's assistant professional, as part of his own training, leads these children through the next stage of the programme.

At the same time Ranfurly Castle juniors were encouraged to enter competitions, with the emphasis on enjoyment.

To encourage junior integration the Board, in 2008, allowed juniors with single figure handicaps to compete in most of the adult competitions. Eight juniors are now eligible to compete alongside the club's full members.

In recognition of the junior section's success the Board, in 2008, decided to increase the one official Junior medal per month to two, and hold extra competitions during quieter periods. As well as giving the juniors more time for competition this had the added benefit of making the course busier and increasing useage of the clubhouse.

The club had identified its nine hole course as the ideal facility to make the game more accessible to the local community. Large improvements to the course were planned and the club was prepared to make a financial commitment to ensure it happened. A grant was awarded by the Lottery Fund in the sum of £25,000. This project is ongoing.

Meanwhile the main course has a measured Blue Tee course for those with handicaps higher than 36, allowing those juniors progressing through clubgolf coaching appropriate and manageable access to the golf course.

To integrate and give juniors a sense of belonging, the club asked them to volunteer to help seed divots during the season. As a thank you the club staged a golf themed quiz night. Twenty two juniors volunteered and performed an excellent job.

The outcomes

The club sees juniors as its life blood for future years and much progress has been made in properly integrating them into the club.

The club's junior boys beat title holders, Greenock GC in the final of The Newton Shield, the junior area team championships for Renfrewshire Golf Union, a feat they last accomplished in 1994. The club feels this is a direct result of the clubgolf coaching given by its 12 Level 1 coaches and the club professional.

Prior to competing for the Newton Shield the junior boys took on a Captains Elect team, comprising two professionals and eight members with handicaps between three and nine. Playing from the medal tees, the juniors won 8-2.

Of the 31 boys selected for Renfrewshire Golf Union's 2008 coaching squads, six of them were from Ranfurly Castle Golf Club. Of the nine juniors selected for the SGU's 2008 Coaching Academy Squad, five are from Ranfurly Castle Golf Club.

In 2008 the junior team secured a two year sponsorship deal with local business, Brookfield Electrical Group, which helped fund team kit and travel to competitions in the Renfrewshire area.

In March 2009 Ranfurly Castle was crowned Junior Club of the Year after a close race with five other shortlisted clubs.

Individual player achievements

Fourteen year old Rory McKinnon, one of the club's younger juniors, won the Dunfermline Building Society Junior Masters at Gleneagles in 2008

Sam Binning enjoyed a phenomenal 2008. Now aged 18 he began 2008 playing off a handicap of 2 and ended it at +2. Notable achievements were: French Boys Championship, last 16; McEvoy Trophy, seventh; Scottish Boys Strokeplay, second; Scottish Area Team Championship, a member of the Renfrewshire team which finished second; Renfrewshire Men's Order of Merit, sixth; member of Scotland team in the Home Internationals; member of Renfrewshire Boys' Team; member Year 4 SGU Academy.

Sam's younger brother, Jamie, also performed well throughout 2008. Notable achievements were: Elderslie Boys Open, winner; St Andrews Boys Open, semi-finalist; member of Renfrewshire Boys Team; member Year 3 SGU Academy.

Sam and Jamie's younger brother, Tom (14), also did well. He is a member of both the Renfrewshire Boys Team and Year 1 SGU Academy.

Natasha Quyum (15) was selected by the SLGA for its Scottish Junior Performance Training Squad. In 2008 Natasha: was Vice Captain of the West of Scotland Girls Golfing Association; trained with Renfrewshire Ladies County Team; won the West of Scotland Girls Medal Final; was selected to represent the West of Scotland Girls Team at the SLGA Inter-divisional matches at Balumbie Castle; with her playing partner won the Jean McCulloch 4somes Trophy at West Kilbride; was part of the West of Scotland Girls team which beat East Girls for the Mhari McKay Trophy. Natasha's handicap dropped from nine to seven last season.

