



Case study – Strategic planning proves key at Stranraer Golf Club

The challenges

As part of its strategic planning for 2008, the club's junior section identified areas of significant importance including: the need to attract new juniors and sustain those from 2007; a large and growing number of juniors with handicaps in the 36 and above range to have coaching from a PGA Pro; insufficient girl members; a need for more competition opportunities. These were prioritised into eight key objectives.

The solutions

In preparation for the 2008 season members responsible for the club's junior section created a Strategic Plan for the year. Its start point was the Scottish Government's guidelines on how sport can contribute to local and national outcomes.

There is a strong correlation between the club's 2008 objectives and the factors considered important to the future of junior golf in Scotland. These are:

Accessibility. The plan sought to target new and existing members by: attracting children aged seven and over living in the Rhins area for clubgolf Stage 1 and 2 coaching; sustaining participation in golfers aged 18 through Stage 3 coaching; increasing participation from 'hard to reach' groups, in particular girls and children with disabilities.

Welcoming environment. The club planned to develop as a 'community hub', bringing parents, children, extended family members and other adults together.

Community interaction. The club planned to develop its already strong links with Stranraer Academy and its associated primary schools by meeting teachers and ensuring they were represented on the Junior Committee. Additionally they committed to supporting the 'Community Sports Leader Award' and providing access to its course for the annual schools competition.

Structured coaching programmes: The club planned to improve technical performance levels in its golfers aged 18 and under through clubgolf Stage 2 and 3 coaching. The local PGA professional would be utilised and talent identification procedures, which would facilitate access to local and regional coaching pathways, created.

Provision of facilities: To meet its strategic objectives the club identified resources required. These included providing funding for PGA coaching, transport to events, golf equipment, access to the course and creation of 9, 12 and 18 hole playing opportunities for every junior to enjoy the challenge of golf at a level relating to their own stage of development.

The outcomes

By creating a development plan with clearly defined objectives, responsibilities, success criteria and achievements, the club had 'tangible results and evidence' that indicated how the Junior Section had benefited.

None of its targets were easy to achieve and detailed planning was essential to meet them. Yet the club achieved the majority of the objectives in its 2008 Strategic Plan.

Of particular note is the club's success in attracting an increasing number of girls and children with disabilities. The numbers of girl members (being coached at all three Stages) doubled from 12 in 2007 to 24 in 2008. Five children with disabilities were members and received coaching at all three Stages.

Twenty seven new juniors joined the club and 29 returned from 2007. The expanding junior membership resulted in over 100 under 18 year olds participating in and enjoying golf at Stranraer GC in 2008.

Nineteen juniors progressed from clubgolf Stage 2 coaching to playing in competitions on the course. Between 50 and 55 juniors played 9, 12 or 18 holes on a regular basis. Some competed in local and regional competitions, namely the Tom Lehman at Troon and the Southerness Junior Competition.

Two girl members were invited to the SLGA Talent Identification day at Stirling. Two juniors attended regional coaching, six attended local coaching.

By allocating funds to PGA Professional coaching, the club created a successful mechanism where its juniors were given free PGA coaching from a local professional during school holidays.

Success was also achieved in providing coaching for juniors each week at Stages 1, 2 & 3. This was done by producing a formal coaching plan at the start of the 2008 season.

Junior Convenors made regular contact with the local schools; 45 pupils played in the Schools competition (June); 'Community Sports Leader Award' provision was put in place.

A further member qualified as a Level 1 coach and joined the club's coaching team. The solution to having large numbers of children attending the club's Stage 1 and 2 sessions at particular times of the year was for all three coaches to attend, thus keeping numbers at an acceptable ratio.

The combination of the poor weather and large groups of children posed a challenge. All three coaches are resourceful and coped well, turning potential negative experiences into positive ones. On such evenings juniors enjoyed team and group based activities. They left these sessions eager to return for more the following week.

The club's Parents' Night was well attended. The club restaurant was patronised by parents and other adults on Junior (Friday) evenings and during competitions.

What's next?

Having large groups of juniors 'taking over' the club every Friday evening between April and October has created a demand for more adult volunteers. There is a strategic objective to meet this demand in 2009.

The club now plans to target the parents of participating children, perhaps to do more than just support junior evenings. Stranraer GC recognises there may also be opportunities to attract new members from this large group.

