

## **Dunfermline Building Society Junior Club of the Year Awards 2007**

In the inaugural year of these awards nominations from fifty golf clubs across Scotland were received by the Scottish Golf Union's judging panel. Six golf clubs were short listed for their efforts in developing junior golf.

North East clubs Alford and Inverurie were selected for final nomination, alongside Turnhouse GC from Edinburgh, Greenock Whinhill, Reay Golf Club in the north of Scotland and Ayrshire club, West Kilbride.

The winning club Alford, announced at the Scottish Golf Dinner in March 2008 received a cheque for £1000, with the five runners-up receiving £300.

The following pages summarise the junior development work at each of these six golf clubs that helped them win their awards.

## **DBS Junior Club of the Year – Alford Golf Club**

Alford GC have taken full advantage of clubgolf to drive forward junior golf in recent years, however it is in their management of their own Junior section, and their pro-active approach to develop junior golf, that they have demonstrated their award winning potential.

Alford's achievements in 2007:

- Improved practice facilities, using Awards For All funding matched by the club
- Built 'introduction to medal golf' into the coaching programme
- Sponsorship (6 junior events)
- Successfully piloted and continue to use Girls Only coaching
- Alford GC member Ryan Gordon was the first golfer to progress through all the stages of clubgolf coaching to be selected to the SGU Academy in Grampian in 2007.

The club has taken the view that there is always room for improvement, and set their own priorities for improving their Junior golf offering in 2007. This led to a number of new initiatives :

1. Children in clubgolf coaching were not playing as much golf as was hoped, so the club introduced medal golf to the coaching programme, and introduced a 4-stage progression using different tees / number of holes played. The result was a four-fold increase in medal rounds played.
2. A good, established coaching programme meant an opportunity to encourage membership, so they introduced a discount, encouraging clubgolf children to join as Junior members.
3. After recognising that many of their new clubgolf recruits come from non-golfing families, Alford have made special efforts to invite parents to the club.

Retaining a focus on objectives Alford have seen these innovations lead to a steady growth in their target membership groups in 2007 (36% increase in the 9-12 age group, and an 80% increase in girls), and also in participation on the course.

Recognition of this good practice has been the key to attracting sponsorship, and the club now have an excellent Junior development programme that is self funding, at the same time generating the participation numbers that secure a healthy future club membership.

### **Inverurie Golf Club**

Having introduced a clubgolf coaching programme in 2006, Inverurie made significant strides in 2007 to develop their junior offering, demonstrating how a strong team within the club, coupled with the initiative to draw on support within the wider community, can achieve results quickly.

Constitutional changes provided the opportunity to attract more girls, whilst two separate Awards For All grants allowed for major improvements to practice facilities. For a club newly embarking on the drive to improve their Junior offering, Inverurie's list of achievements in 2007 is impressive.

New junior tees, a team that now comprises 13 volunteer coaches, much improved practice facilities, a new 'Girls In Golf' programme, and an enthusiasm to learn from existing good practice at neighbouring clubs will ensure continued success for Junior golf at Inverurie.

### **Reay Golf Club**

In one of Scotland's most remote golfing regions, attracting and retaining members is always a challenge, and Reay have used clubgolf as the vehicle to address this issue. Through considerable input from head coach Evan Sutherland, and by leading the formation of the Caithness and North Sutherland Golf Partnership, the club has generated more interest in golf in the region than there has ever been.

Reay provides a perfect example of a club taking full ownership of its own Junior development programme. A competition structure is provided to complement the coaching programme, and to encourage children to progress; the club's three-hole handicap system demonstrates innovation and stands as best practice; and the quality of information provided to young golfers is second to none.

Perhaps most significantly, with the nearest Pro over eighty miles away, the club's head coach has achieved a PGA Level 2 qualification, and provides the leadership so essential to a successful junior programme.

### **West Kilbride Golf Club**

Recognising the challenges in running an effective Junior section, this club put in place a rolling 4-year development plan, under the stewardship of a formal support group, and achieved SGU Junior Charter status in 2007.

The development plan has led to significant changes, including an effective management structure for Junior golf, the introduction of forward tees,

development of links with Ardrossan Academy, the introduction of 'Buddy Evenings', and a new 'Under-13's' Championship.

West Kilbride have not signed up to clubgolf, but have an excellent coaching programme at the heart of their Junior golf activities. Developed by the Support Group and centred around a committed club professional, the programme supports the dual objectives of developing talent and increasing participation.

The club have secured real commitment from participating Juniors, and the results speak for themselves – improved performances in Ayrshire team events, and a marked increase in the number of junior medal rounds played.

Significantly, and with support from Ayrshire Ladies, the club have seen participation amongst girls rise from just three in 2004 to 22 in 2007.

### **Turnhouse Golf Club**

Turnhouse have embraced clubgolf, and demonstrated that a city club, with heavy demands on the course and a full junior membership, can gain real benefit from innovative management, centred around an inclusive junior coaching programme.

With a different theme each year, the junior evening in March has been a catalyst for welcoming new juniors to the club as well as providing a focal point at the start of the season.

The club's band of volunteer PGA Level 1 coaches have been proactive in linking with local primary schools, and as a result can now boast the capital's most accessible junior golf programme. Turnhouse have succeeded in making their juniors feel a real part of the club by taking every opportunity to add value.

2007 saw club pro John Murray get involved with the clubgolf programme, and with support from BAA and sportscotland a major practice facility improvement will allow the club to double its coaching capacity.

More than anything, the appetite for continuous improvement has ensured Turnhouse is a model for others to follow – a theme which runs from care in implementing child protection procedures to ensuring a pathway to County and Area coaching is in place.

An influx of youngsters from local schools will place demands on membership places in the future, but the club see that only as an opportunity.

## **Greenock Whinhill Golf Club**

Whinhill have grasped the opportunity presented by clubgolf with both hands. At a club within one of Scotland's more socially deprived areas, a small team of dedicated volunteers within the club have provided opportunities for significant numbers of children to play a game they may not otherwise have had access to.

Continued improvement to the Junior offering at Whinhill resulted in a successful application for SGU Junior Charter status in 2007.

In return 2007 saw the Whinhill Juniors achieving success on the course, while the junior coaching programme remains central to the club's development plans.

The unstinting efforts of the club, in particular Junior Convener Gary Havlin, have resulted in a full competition structure to complement the coaching programme.

Recognition of the good work at Whinhill is reflected in the long list of local businesses prepared to offer sponsorship, and importantly through those efforts the Junior management team have developed a programme of activity that is sustainable and self-funding.

The club secured sportscotland funding for a significant facility development, in recognition of the opportunities this will generate for young people in a socially deprived area.

With Junior subscriptions at just £30 Whinhill provides tremendous value for money, no accident for a club with a real heart that sees inclusion as its key driver, with success on the golf course a welcome additional benefit.