



RUNNING A JUNIOR SECTION

This is based on a paper given by Mr A F P Abraham, President of the Yorkshire Golf Union at the EGU Seminar held on Junior Golf at Woodhall Spa in October 1998.

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Over recent years, many golfing organisations have gained the impression that there are fewer boys and far fewer girls playing the game. Surveys published by the Golf Foundation support this view and give cause for alarm. Between 1991 and 1997 the number of players under 25 in British Clubs dropped from 18% to 14% of the total, while the percentage over 55 rose from 21% to 30% over the same period.

While there is no confirmation that these figures accurately reflect what is happening in Yorkshire, it is suspected that they do. Too many young people who have inclinations to take up golf are not given encouragement and they become disillusioned and leave the game. For the long-term health of the game this problem has to be addressed.

Lack of junior golfers is a much-discussed matter. It is obvious that many Clubs have plenty of junior members, but very few have junior golfers who participate in teams and competitions. With this in mind the County Union is offering this paper as a guide to Clubs, outlining its recommendations for the encouragement of juniors and the development of excellent players.

Many Clubs already have flourishing boys Junior Sections. It should be stressed that these suggestions are merely guidelines to assist and it is hoped that Clubs will tailor the suggestions to suit their own circumstances. However, if Clubs accept junior membership it should follow that the principle of actively encouraging those members to become competent golfers and useful Club members is also accepted.

Ideas and suggestions for these proposals have come from more than one source. They rely heavily on the work of the Yorkshire Union of Golf Clubs, the Junior Organiser of the Leeds & District Union of Golf Clubs with assistance from of Sand Moor Golf Club, a Club which could perhaps be held as a role model for the successful development of Junior golf.

The Club

A successful Junior section is very much dependant on the Club Committee or Board of Directors having a positive attitude towards Junior golf, together with the appropriate organisational structure and procedures in place. The basis of this structure is the Junior Organiser, who is the fulcrum in the success or failure of a Junior section and, therefore, it is important that the correct person is chosen.

He or she should be appointed for at least a three-year period in order to provide continuity and the Club may consider paying an honorarium along with travelling and other expenses.

He or she should be responsible for all Junior activities within the Club and, of course be answerable to the Committee or Board of Directors. He need not, however, necessarily be a member of either. It is recommended that the position be advertised within the Club, giving a definition of duties and responsibilities in order that parameters are laid down accurately and that the position is not merely taken over for a year by, for example, the past Captain as part of the obligations of that post.

There are often Senior members who are ideally suited to take up the post and have the time to do so.

It is suggested that Juniors be issued with a Membership Card containing rules and regulations governing the use of the clubhouse, dress, etiquette, safety, handicaps, playing restrictions, booking times, competitions and other rules of the Club.

With the above organisational structure in place it is felt that Junior members would be better prepared to become an integral part of the Club and participate in the Club activities available to them.

Junior Committee

It is recommended that a Junior Committee be formed under the Chairmanship of the Junior Organiser and, depending on the size of the section, could consist of:

1. **JUNIOR ORGANISER** (as discussed above and also see guidance notes at the end of this section).
2. **JUNIOR LIAISON OFFICER** - A member of the Club Committee or Board of Directors who would attend the Junior Committee meetings as a representative of the Committee and at the same time represent the interests of the Junior section at meetings of the Club Committee.
3. **TWO OTHER CLUB MEMBERS** (perhaps one a lady) - In a thriving Junior section it may be necessary to delegate duties in order that all aspects are dealt with efficiently. For example, transport to other Clubs; arranging and running competitions; arranging coaching with the Club Professional and the Golf Foundation; managing the finances of the section; raising funds; maintaining discipline; advice on the Rules, etiquette; helping to host visiting Clubs. In addition, having two such members on the committee helps to provide a balanced view at meetings.
4. **THE CLUB PROFESSIONAL** - It is important to develop close links with the Professional who should be invited to attend whenever coaching and professional conduct, Rules etc are discussed. Many Professionals are willing to give their time freely and are keen to be involved in helping the Juniors.
5. **JUNIOR REPRESENTATION** - Depending on the size of the section, the Junior Captain at least and perhaps the Vice-Captain could be members of the committee. Team selection should be heavily influenced by the views of the Junior Captain. It is important

that the Juniors themselves are made to feel that they are an integral part of the organisation, with the right to participate in the decision making.

The Junior Organiser

These notes are designed to help secretaries and committees when they appoint a Junior Organiser and we are grateful to both the Golf Foundation and the Welsh Golf Union on this issue. Great care must be taken these days in appointing a person to this position and every safeguard should be taken before the appointment is finalised.

The person should be under no illusions in what is involved in the job and number of hours that they will have to devote to it. Out of pocket expenses such as travelling, telephone and meals at the club whilst on duty should be provided, but these should be carefully monitored and proper records kept. Subscriptions to the club for Junior members should be paid direct to the office and come under the control of the Secretary.

The main points involving a Junior Organiser are listed as follows:

1. It is important that the Junior Organiser has contact with the Management/Committee of the club. He or she should either attend meetings in an official capacity or be invited along periodically to discuss the Junior section.
2. Most clubs have an elected Junior Committee along with a Junior Captain and the Organiser should chair this meeting.
3. The Professional should be encouraged to be fully involved and provide coaching and golf education sessions.
4. The Organiser should ensure that all new members are given a starter session scheme within the club involving the Professional and also see that they are encouraged to take part in junior events. Parents of new members who are not golfers should be encouraged to become Social Members of the club if that is possible, as this will encourage them to support their children more.
5. The Organiser should ensure that he or she gets support from club members and also act as a buffer should any problems arise.
6. The Organiser must ensure that Juniors respect the privileges and responsibilities of membership and are aware of any restrictions that may apply. It is best to have a card with the basic rules for Juniors printed in addition to the club rules.
7. The Organiser must ensure that sufficient voluntary helpers are available for the successful operation of the junior section.
8. The Organiser must liaise with the Secretary to ensure that sufficient finance is made available to sustain the activities.
9. The Organiser must attempt to know all junior members and before they obtain official CONGU handicaps, maintain handicaps for those who have not yet reached the club.
10. The Organiser must liaise with the Secretary to arrange and administer junior competitions and matches.

11. The Organiser will need to liaise with the County Junior Organiser and fellow Junior Organisers of other clubs.
12. The Organiser must be aware of the Child Protection Act and ensure that adequate child protection policies are in place.

JUNIORS

For the purposes of these recommendations, juniors are those under the age of 18 on 15th January.

Policy on New Junior Members

- ✎ The club should set out the number of junior members they wish to have. The limit should be reviewed annually but it is better to have 70/80 well managed juniors in a club than a larger number which may well be difficult to control.
- ✎ They should be interviewed for membership in the presence of their parents or guardian and also their sponsoring members.
- ✎ The object of the interview should be to tell the new member the standards expected in dress and general behaviour so that they take pride in being a member of the club.
- ✎ It should also be explained that if they become good golfers then they will be expected to take part in the main club events and might well represent the club. When accepted for membership they should be sent a starter pack with the following information: Club Rules & Rules for the Junior Section; Junior handicapping system; coaching and golf education; junior competitions and matches; rules of golf and etiquette; name and address both the Junior Organiser and the Junior Captain.

The English Ladies' Golf Association is very concerned at the shortage of girl juniors. If this is the case at your Club, it is recommended that the junior section be open to both boys and girls. Perhaps three members of the Junior Committee should interview juniors who apply for membership and the Club may wish the Membership Secretary to be present. A parent, guardian or sponsor should accompany the applicant, and in the case of an applicant not known at the Club, references may need to be taken up. Beginners should be told what the game has to offer, what the club can do to help them learn and enjoy the game and what their obligations will be in return. It is also important that the parent, guardian or sponsor should be advised of their responsibilities with regard to the membership. If the Junior is offered membership, he or she should be given a membership card stating the provisions in the Club Rules applicable to Juniors, both on the course and in the clubhouse. Details of Club Officials and the names and addresses of other Juniors should also be included. The card should be renewed annually.

Fees for Junior Membership vary from Club to Club, but generally there is a reduced rate on a sliding scale for age. An alternative to this would be to have a nominal set membership fee, say £10, and charges made on a pay as required system for coaching and playing, thereby spreading the costs for the Junior over the year with no disadvantage to the Club. Municipal Clubs generally have a lower membership fee with "pay and play" and also a season ticket available.

It is recommended that discounted rates for Junior membership should be extended throughout student years. Years at University and College are a time when many golfers are forced to give up the game because finances are stretched and they are expected to pay for membership both at home and at College. It is important that their interest in golf is helped to survive this period.

Introduction to the Game

The Junior should not be allowed onto the course until the Junior Organiser and his committee considers he or she is sufficiently proficient. New Junior members should attend an introductory session where the Junior Organiser, on the advice of the Club Professional, can ascertain their abilities and advise accordingly. If the Junior is an absolute beginner, a probationary non-membership period may be appropriate until an acceptable standard is reached.

New Juniors must be involved in coaching and playing while their interest is keen.

They should take part in organised coaching at the start of the year, hopefully subsidised by the Club and the Golf Foundation if necessary. The Junior would be expected to attend a full course of lessons during which time he/she would be expected to practise independently on the practice ground in order to achieve a reasonable level of competence by the end of the coaching. It is important that ALL new Juniors go through this early learning stage and not allowed to drift into the game by haphazard routes.

At the end of the coaching sessions, it is likely that the Junior will have reached a standard sufficient for him/her to be allowed to play on the course. Competitions, especially for the new and high handicap Juniors, should be organised throughout the season in order to monitor progress, educate on conduct and marking of scorecards. This will allow a handicap to be allocated and adjusted. The Junior Organiser should arrange tee times and for any new Junior member to be supervised and looked after. Junior members who do not have parents at the Club and whose sponsor is not readily available may, for an initial period, be attached to a parent of another Junior so that a circle of friends and playing companions can be established.

By this time the junior should be coming absorbed into the Club as an active member and the direct responsibility of the Junior Organiser will be diminishing. However, the latter should still be regarded as the focal point within the Club and as a source of advice and will continue to encourage the Junior to be involved in matches and competitions and to monitor his/her progress.

The new LGU handicap system allows girls to have officially recognised handicaps of up to 45. The maximum CONGU handicap is 28. Many Clubs however allow boys to have domestic handicaps in excess of 28, often up to 36. In Clubs where boys and girls are competing together in Junior events there may be some merit in allowing younger boys to have domestic handicaps up to the same level as girls. However, if boys are allowed handicaps in excess of 28, they must understand that these are not official handicaps, which can be used at other Clubs.

(1. See footnote)

After the first year, if the Junior has not produced a level of competence which results in a handicap, his/her case should be investigated, an interview arranged with the Junior and his

parent or sponsor and a decision taken as to whether further coaching sessions should be arranged. It is suggested that if the junior has not progressed to a handicap after two years the membership should be reviewed. If this action infringes Club Rules, the first two years of Junior Membership should be used as a probationary period.

Coaching

It is important that the coaching is done by a qualified professional on an organised basis with records kept of all Juniors on coaching schemes and their progress. The Junior Organiser should make arrangements for coaching through a professional and also for regular practice sessions.

Juniors with exceptional talent can be identified through such a scheme and the Junior Organiser and the Professional should be prepared to arrange further coaching, and, where appropriate to the District and County Unions.

It is strongly recommended that the Club registers with the Golf Foundation. As well as providing assistance with the funding of coaching, the Foundation has a Merit Award Scheme, which recognises stages of progress, an incentive for the pupil to aim to achieve improvement. The Weetabix Age Group Championship and an Inter-Schools' Championship is also organised by the Golf Foundation to provide Juniors with the chance to play in National Championships against people of their own age. The Foundation also provides advisory literature.

It is important that Juniors contribute towards the cost of lessons and a nominal charge for a course of six to twelve lessons would encourage the Junior to complete the full course of lessons. With help from the Foundation and with advantageous terms from the Club Professional, the Club itself would have to bear little of the cost.

Coaching would be on a regular weekly basis and it is important that groups are arranged so that Juniors of similar standards are coached together. Sessions covering mixed abilities are not a good idea.

It is important that regular group practice sessions are held, particularly in the areas of the short game and putting. There are many ways of making these sessions interesting and competitive.

Junior Section

When Juniors have obtained an official handicap they should be encouraged to participate in Club competitions. Some restrictions will be necessary. In particular, Juniors should play with an adult member in Club competitions. This is a safeguard as much for themselves as for the other members.

The Handicap Committee should bear in mind the speed with which Juniors sometimes improve and be prepared to use Clause 19 when appropriate.

Many Clubs have restrictions on times when Juniors are allowed to play. These should be not so extensive that they are, in effect, forbidden to play at some times of the year.

Regulations regarding entry to clubhouses are a matter for individual Clubs, but the licensing laws do not permit the serving of alcohol to those under the age of 18, nor are they allowed to play gaming machines. Generally speaking, well-behaved Junior members should be allowed in all areas of the Clubhouse. While some Clubs are able to provide a separate Junior room, this does not allow Juniors to benefit from mixing with older members and they may, therefore, tend to feel isolated and supervision becomes more difficult.

These rules and regulations should be included in the Membership Card given to the Junior at the start of the season, along with regulations governing the use of the Clubhouse, Rules of Dress, Rules of Golf and Etiquette. As mentioned previously, the Golf Foundation has literature to help in this area.

Regular meetings of all Juniors should be held as these foster a feeling of participation, thereby producing a more vigorous section. They will also provide the opportunity to give details of events, team selection announcements, competition arrangements and to deal with complaints and other matters of discipline.

The Junior organiser will arrange competitions within the Junior Section but should also arrange fixtures with other sections of the club - Rabbits, Seniors, Ladies, for example - thus allowing the Juniors and the rest of the club members to become more acquainted. One idea is to have a Texas Scramble with a member of Juniors, Rabbits, Tigers and Ladies forming each team.

The Juniors should be expected to help with various duties required on Invitation Days and Open Days (eg ball spotting) and should be encouraged to support and act as caddies to the Scratch Team or other club team on match days.

Competitions outside the club are many and varied. County Unions and Area Authorities strongly support Juniors by running a Junior League, Junior Knock-out or Individual and Team Championships. The Junior Organiser should ensure that Juniors have the opportunity to play in these fixtures and competitions. Most Counties hold Championships at Youths, Under 18 and Under 16 levels and also play Inter-County Boys' Matches. Most County Ladies' Associations hold Championships at Under 18 level and play Inter-County Matches. At National level, there is a Girls' Under 18 Championship and Boys have Under 18, Under 16 and Under 14 Championships. The County and District Unions are always pleased to have recommendations about promising Juniors.

There are many other competitions sponsored by industry and commerce of which the Junior Organiser will be aware. Where appropriate entry should be recommended, but care should be taken to find out and advise the player whether the competition is a qualifying one for handicap purposes. The National or County Unions are able to advise on this point. Of course, there is no reason why players should not play in non qualifying events, but players must not count scores for handicap purposes.

The Junior Organiser should keep an up-to-date record of Juniors' achievements and representative appearances made. The computerised handicap record is a most useful tool! Of course, regular coaching and practice become more important than ever when the Junior becomes a Category One player.

Club Member

With a Junior Section as outlined, producing well mannered and disciplined young people involved in the activities of the Club, the average member will quickly appreciate the consideration that has been given to introducing Juniors into the Club and the benefits of having a Junior Section. When favourable Junior results start to come there will develop a sense of wanting to identify with the Juniors who are having success for the Club. This will help dispel some of the misconceptions about Junior golf which exists in many of our clubs at the present time.

Conclusion

The Club should ensure that it is represented at Meetings of Junior Administrators held within the County and the District Union. These provide opportunities to exchange ideas beneficial to the promotion of Junior Golf. The majority of golfers play for social reasons. If the Juniors have had the correct grounding and introduction, the game will be much more enjoyable for them in later years. This can only bring benefit to the game in general.

1. Footnote:

Since 1st February 2004, please refer to the CONGU Handicapping System Handbook, Appendix K – Handicaps for Juniors - concerning the introduction of a ratified handicap system for both boys and girls.

Children in Golf (updated April 2008)

This has been produced under the umbrella of the NSPCC.

The new Children in Golf Guidelines became available, as of the 1st March 2008, and is available via www.childreningolf.org

- ✎ Downloaded free of charge in PDF format.
- ✎ Purchased in a hard copy format for £5.00
see <http://www.childreningolf.org/downloads.asp> (

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