

# Case Study

**Aorangi Golf - Introducing Young People  
and Families to Golf**

December 2018



## Introduction

By attracting families to golf, there is the potential to introduce a lot of new players to the game. The structure of the family provides the opportunity to attract and retain three generations with the participation of young people, parents and grandparents. It is also a valuable

opportunity to connect with women who are the primary influencer in the family unit. We recently spoke with Malcolm Wood, Community Golf Manager for Aorangi Golf, to find out more about the growth of family golf in the Aorangi region.

### When you started in your role a couple of years ago, what were your main challenges relating to young people in golf?

When I started in this role in Aorangi, there was the Golf in Schools programme which was giving children a taste of golf but the lack of follow-on programmes and events for the children meant there was no pathway being provided to bring young people into golf. Except for a couple of clubs in the region which were running junior programmes for children in their local community, most clubs were not resourced in terms of volunteers or capability to deliver programmes. This unfortunately created the misperception among young people and families that golf was not an inclusive sport nor welcoming of a new generation of golfers. When we looked at junior membership at clubs in the region, there were essentially no young beginners at clubs who were actively engaged in the game.

### How did you go about addressing these challenges?

Last year, the Mainland Development Team from Aorangi, Canterbury, Tasman and New Zealand Golf, discussed the opportunity to run a pilot Team Golf series for young beginners in each of the regions. We all identified that Team Golf would fill a gap in our delivery at the explorer and learner stage of the pathway and would provide a much-needed opportunity to engage and retain young beginners. Our first Team Golf series in South Canterbury ran from February to April this year with free coaching programmes being run prior to each Team Golf event. I actively promoted it through the schools by engaging with teachers and students at local primary schools to introduce Team Golf.

### How did Family Team Golf come about?

Once the first Team Golf pilot was successfully completed in April, the children and parents were asking what events were available next. The children had enjoyed Team Golf and the introductory coaching, and new friendships had developed along the way. After seeing the success of a Family Team Golf event run by Canterbury Golf, I was keen to trial the concept in Aorangi as a next step to introducing more parents and adult family members to play alongside their children. Initially I rolled out a four-event series with 28 people (adult/child pairing) attending the first event with that number growing to 56 people for the fourth event. It was fantastic to have so many families involved with many participating in all the events held at different golf courses around the region. For our spring series, we have kept the momentum going by offering a mix of Family Team Golf and Team Golf events, and Matt Davis, the Golf Professional at Ashburton Golf Club, has come on board to deliver events in Mid-Canterbury.



### What is the key to running a successful Family Team Golf event?

Family Team Golf is about encouraging young people and adult family members to enjoy golf together. In conjunction with the host golf clubs, I focused on the consistency of experience with an ambrose format, forward tees and relaxed 'It's Okay' rules used for the events. The host clubs added to the atmosphere with a pre-game bbq and some music, and then welcomed participants into the clubhouse after golf with nibbles provided and the bar open. Our family events were about engaging young people and parents but were also a vehicle for changing perceptions of our game and reinforcing the value that golf offers as a sport for all generations.

## What impact has Family Team Golf had on golf in Aorangi?

Attracting more families to golf was the objective of these events but the success of Family Team Golf has also influenced golf clubs in terms how they think about the opportunity to grow participation by focusing on this market. The clubs co-hosting our Family Team Golf events have been motivated by being involved and seeing how to deliver to a fun, social golf experience to a different market segment. Clubs which have previously had little experience delivering these types of events have embraced the concept and this has started to spread to other clubs in the region that have contacted me about being becoming involved. Two clubs have installed a purple course to make their clubs more attractive to young people and adult beginners who are looking for a faster and more rewarding golf experience.

### The Numbers

**22**  
events

14 Team Golf and 8 Family Team Golf events delivered in Aorangi in 2018.

**499**  
participations

64 young people (370 participations) and 36 adult family members (129 participations) participated in one or more events.

**80%**  
new to golf

80% of adult participants were either new to golf or irregular casual golfers (play once or twice a year).



## Conclusion

Increased time constraints in modern life lead many families to pursue shorter and easier to access leisure activities. Parents are the chief factor underpinning a family's likelihood to play golf and a clear set of family motivations impact on what sports parents and their children take part in.

We need to promote the benefits of taking part in golf (such as enjoyment, improved fitness and health, and development of social skills) and provide regular, engaging experiences like Family Team Golf that cater to the needs of young people and families starting out in the game.