



**St Peter's Golf Academy
& Riverside Golf Club**

**CASE STUDY:
INNOVATIVE WAYS TO GENERATE JUNIOR
MEMBERS**

OVERVIEW

Reon Sayer, a coach at the Golf Academy at St Peter's School in Cambridge, wanted to establish a direct connection between The Golf Academy and the Riverside Golf Club for new and current junior golfers joining their programmes.

The Golf Academy wanted to create a seamless transition or pathway from the driving range and practice facilities to a 6 hole beginner course then on to a proper course and club environment at Riverside GC. "A lot of pupils come through our St Peters Golf Academy and hit balls on the driving range but don't fall in love with the game until they have played on a golf course," said Sayer. "They don't develop that love for the game until they have played on a proper course and start to see their scores improve."

Sayer said that most young kids are only ever introduced to playing golf by their Mum and Dad

but if their parents have never played golf before then they will never have this experience. The former NZ Eisenhower rep said the key to the transition was ensuring the first experience of a golf course was a positive one.

"The Golf Club environment can be a really intimidating place for young people and they need to feel welcome and comfortable to enjoy that environment. All it takes is for these juniors to come across the wrong person at a golf club and they are put off for life.

"While there are a lot of good people out there in our golf clubs there are unfortunately also a lot of people who don't have a lot of time for the junior golfers and can make their golf experience quite unpleasant. We wanted to change that and ensure the kids felt like they belonged."

CHALLENGES



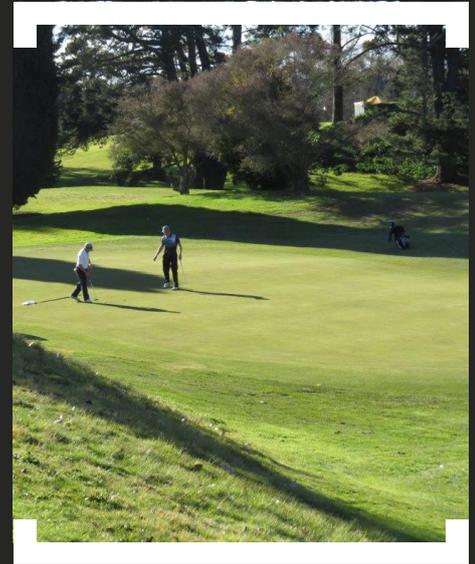
JUNIOR GOLFERS

Certain members' views of junior golfers, especially beginner juniors who are looking for fun not pages of rules.



AVAILABILITY OF THE COURSE

Availability of the course: Block tee times for bigger junior groups were needed.



COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The course development of the 6 hole beginner course at The Golf Academy at St Peter's School, Cambridge. This required financial and time investment.

SOLUTION

St Peter's Golf Academy focused on preparing their juniors for two things before they stepped onto the Riverside GC.

1. Learning to play the game
2. Learning the etiquette of the game

Learning to play the game was done in an incremental fashion to make the transition less intimidating.

The transition to be able to learn the skill of golf on the driving range, progress to the 6 hole course at St Peters to the 18 hole golf course at Riverside GC was invaluable.

"Junior beginners could learn to be competent players before being introduced to the Riverside Golf Club and they turned up to the club with a lot more confidence."

Regular Saturday morning sessions eased the nerves of the players as they turned up in groups to get used to the golf environment. The junior golfers played Ambrose to take the focus off performance.

"We took the pressure off them playing well right from the start. With Ambrose, they are just having a hit with their mates and there is not that sense of competition."

Sayer managed the transition by always being there for new players' first experience of the golf course.

"We wanted to make sure that every person who came to the course didn't feel under pressure and would go home feeling positive about the experience."

The second part of the introduction was etiquette so the juniors fitted into the club and didn't affect the flow of golfers on the course.

"We can sit down and talk about golf etiquette in the classroom all we like but there is nothing like being out on the course and talking through the different scenarios and learning it practically. Doing this on the 6 hole course was a great way to explain it practically."

Etiquette covered things like not walking across people's lines, where to leave your golf bag, when to play first off the tee etc.

"We talked through correct answers and responses for juniors to use whenever confronted by adults on course for any particular situation or reason."

There was a maximum of 3 players in a group to help with the speed of play.

JUNIOR TEES
CREATED

30+
JUNIOR
MEMBERSHIP

↑
INTEREST

↑
KNOWLEDGE

RESULTS

Junior tees on the Narrows Course were created and maintained to a high standard by senior pupils who were encouraged to give back to the game by the Golf Academy. "It was great to be able to give back."

More than 30 pupils from The Golf Academy at St Peter's School, Cambridge now hold junior memberships at Riverside G.C and play on a regular basis with members and their own junior group.

Successful integration of junior golfers to the golf course environment and increased interest in the programme.

A good group of juniors were equipped with the knowledge of etiquette, basic rules and an ability to play the game in a way that did not affect the flow of the golf course or impact other members.

KEY LEARNING LESSONS

"It is imperative that coaching programmes like our own have direct links to junior friendly golf clubs," said Sayer. "Junior golfers must always enjoy their time at the golf course, whatever that takes, make it happen. It only takes one bad experience to turn them away from the game forever."

Golf is a game of learned behaviour and learned skills. "What most golfers forget is we all started in the same way. We all turned up to a golf course feeling nervous and uncomfortable. The key thing to engage junior golfers is to make it a positive experience and help them feel like they belong. Then they have the chance to fall in love with the game and then you have members for life. "With the right planning in place the game can grow. Adult and junior members can co-exist while enjoyment is had by all.

"Young golfers are obviously a huge part of the future of the golf. The more young people we can engage with the game at a young age the better off the game will be in the long term." Build relationships with the right people and be open to suggestions. A key to the success of this programme was the relationship with the Riverside GC and giving something back. "The senior students getting out to the course to maintain the junior tees was a nice way to give something back to the club and showed that all of the golfers at St Peter's were invested in this initiative. It has to be a two-way process." The effort to include young golfers



CONCLUSION / SUMMARY

in the golf club needs to be authentic. "Young golfers pick up on things. They notice if their tees are a token effort or at the same quality as the rest of the course. The club needs to make a consistent effort to deliver that experience for these players."

The Golf Academy at St Peter's was delighted with the results of the programme and believe that it is just at the tip of the iceberg.

"It is very early days with this initiative and we are excited about the potential of this to introduce a lot of young people to golf. Golf may not be these students first choice sport – they may play rugby or cricket as their first sport – but it is important to engage young people with the game and teach them the basic skills early on. "Golf is an important game to be able to play later in life in social or business settings and this program enables young golfers to have an easy transition into golf and build that love of the game." Growth in the game of golf is beneficial to all. "Junior golfers must always enjoy their time at the golf course, whatever it takes, make it happen. It only takes one bad experience to turn them away from the game forever. "The first experience for a young person at a golf course is vitally important to whether that person will be willing to take the game up in the long term or not."



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