

Case Study

**How to deliver an engage Futures Event Series.
Russley Golf Club**

April 2019



Introduction

Kiwi kids love sport. We know it enriches their lives, teaches them valuable life skills and builds their determination to succeed. There's a balance to be found between engagement and participation in sport and achieving excellence. Experience shows that if engagement comes first and young people enjoy their experience, then they are more likely to develop a passion for sport.

If we create experiences that make golf fun for kids with a pathway to providing competitive excitement, we'll see an increase in engagement and inspire a lifelong love of the game. Russley Golf Club is a club that has long recognised the importance of attracting kids to our game and its latest initiative, a Futures Twilight Series, is proving to be a winner.

Engaging Young People in Golf.

Russley Golf Club is one of the main golf hubs for young people in the Canterbury region with its focus on providing a pathway into the game for kids of all ages. The introduction of an affordable parent membership category has also attracted a number of parents to join the club to spend quality family time enjoying golf. While the junior coaching programme attracts young people and families to the club, recognition within the wider membership that young people are an integral part of the club's community plays a major role in fostering a welcoming and friendly environment.

The club's programme for children and young people is run by the Russley Golf Learning Centre team led by Head Professional Rodney Yee. The coaching team at Russley are always looking to innovate to deliver a better member and golfer experience and last year they identified a need to provide more organised playing opportunities for young golfers. From this idea, the Russley Twilight Series for young golfers was created and launched in spring with events being run every Monday after school over an 8-week period leading up to Christmas. To maintain the momentum from the success of the first series, a second one was run from February to April this year.

Interview - Rodney Yee and Cameron Barnes

We sat down with Rodney and fellow Russley professional Cameron Barnes to find out more about running an engaging event series for young golfers.

What was your aim for running the Twilight Series?

Rodney – We have been providing coaching programmes for young people to learn golf and work towards achieving their goals. We believed that to take the junior programme to the next level, we needed to provide more organised playing opportunities to motivate young golfers of all abilities to spend more time playing golf and developing competitive excitement.

Can you tell us about the format of the series?

Cameron – We ran a team event over a shortened course for young beginners and an individual 9-hole stableford and gross event from the yellow tees for young players with a handicap. While the individual event provided a competitive environment, the team event was an opportunity for our younger players to develop their skills and confidence on course. For these players, we provided spot prizes for fun on-course challenges like nearest the pin for a chip shot and a longest drive. We also ran a caddy competition on one hole each week to give the parents a chance to give it go and this became very popular.



What are the positive outcomes that have come from running this type of series?

Cameron – The feedback from both the participants and parents has been very positive with many commenting that young players have been excited to be playing the series each Monday and this has been a factor in motivating them to play more golf. We have seen new friendships developed with kids and parents getting to know each other during the series and arranging to meet up for a casual game of golf. A number of young golfers who weren't members participated in the series and after a good experience, we had four new junior members plus a family join the club. We also had four of our junior members who have been part of the most recent series gain their first handicap.

Another good outcome from the series has been the positive involvement of parents walking the course and caddying for their kids. Pace of play was an issue at the beginning of our first series but with gentle reminders from us as the organisers and parents, it improved rapidly as the weeks went on. Experiential learning from being part of the series has also helped young players better understand golf rules and etiquette. Our Board, Committees and the members have been very supportive of the series and we were fortunate to have some fantastic prizes donated by members including a signed Lydia Ko polo shirt and golf ball.

Can you tell us about one of the highlights from the series?

Rodney - With the best five scores from the series counting, the gross competition for our most recent series saw a tie after 8 weeks of play which required a playoff. The two young players involved had to play the 9th hole three times to get a result which created a lot of excitement for our final event. It was an amazing atmosphere with all the other young golfers and parents excitedly gathered around the green to watch the playoff and support the players. What a way to finish a fantastic season of golf!



Conclusion

Giving young people an opportunity to engage in golf in a way that enables them to enjoy the many benefits that the game offers as a sport and social activity is the key to developing long-term participants. It is important to create a sense of belonging by delivering engaging fun experiences that provide an opportunity for young golfers to develop competitive excitement and feel that they are making progress.

Click here to view the video created by Russley Golf Club to promote their Futures Twilight Series.