

Case Study

International Learning

The Nottinghamshire Golf Club
Academy Membership and Pathway to Golf

April 2017



Introduction - The Issue

The Nottinghamshire Golf and Country Club has a strong reputation for offering a great challenge to golfers of all handicaps. Nottingham GC had recently made improvements to the clubhouse and course.

A limited number of youth and adult beginner classes were available and there was little promotion of the programmes offered.

The Challenges

The Nottinghamshire team realised that many of its existing programmes focused coaching on the driving range with little emphasis on progressing beginners on to the course. As an intervention, they created a Pathway to Golf, offering a structured course of tuition with an introduction to the basic skills of the game. A simple three step programme – Try, Learn, Play to ease beginners on to the course. The club realised it needed to understand and answer the concerns of potential golfers. Issues such as accessibility and cost were addressed by PGA Professionals. The Nottinghamshire GC wanted to be a facility that was open to all, whether for golf lessons, visiting societies or Sunday lunch and this was key to the club's overall marketing communications.

The Nottinghamshire GC is a busy venue and its practice facilities were well utilised. Discussions began, involving the green-keeping team to consider what space could be used within the complex to enhance the Academy teaching facilities.

The Solution

The Nottinghamshire GC set up an Academy with a dedicated Coaching Director to encourage participation in the game, both for adults looking to take up the sport and youth who are the next generation of players.

The introduction of monthly Academy golf days provides the opportunity for them to play on the course with friends made through the pathway, under the watchful eye of the teaching professionals. They can also establish their Academy handicap.

On completion of the Pathway, players are invited to join the club as Associate Members. This two-month membership, using dedicated Academy Tees, helps them to build confidence out on the course and also enjoy all the social aspects that are inherent to golf.

The positive response to the launch of the Nottinghamshire Academy has led to investment to create a dedicated 90 yard short game area, complete with bunkers and greens for pitch and chip practice. There are plans that are in place to extend the range to accommodate an indoor swing studio, education room and lounge area for parents and coaches.

Impacts

Since launching Pathway to Golf, The Nottinghamshire hosts seven adult classes and eight junior classes each week, all of which are fully subscribed. Together with the two-month trial membership, this has produced 25 players subscribing to full membership at the club within the first year and has doubled the number of junior members.

The exposure created by The Nottinghamshire Academy has given the club a strong presence within the local community and has a positive effect throughout the whole business, contributing to overall year-on-year growth of 30%.

Conclusion

The Nottinghamshire GC has advice for other clubs who can learn from their journey

- Your club is their club!
- Every department in the club worked together to make golfers feel welcome which has underpinned their success. People may enjoy their lesson but if other areas of the business don't meet expectations, it can put them off.
- Teaching people how to play golf needs to occur within a pathway. We hear many stories of beginners being told

'you're not ready for the course yet'. Imagine if you went to play football and kept being told this. We made time for our academy players to go on the course, to learn and enjoy themselves. This is where they learn the most so, not only is it more fun and enjoyable, but they learn quicker.

This international case study captures learnings from England Golf and we have sought permission to publish for the benefit of the New Zealand golf sector.

