

Case Study

Young People In Golf

May 2017



Introduction

New Zealand has changed a great deal over the last 10 or 20 years — and so have the ways Kiwis entertain themselves. Adults and children alike now have access to a world of sedentary-based entertainment and other distractions, including video games, the internet and social media. These are all competing for peoples' spare time and sport needs to adapt and evolve. With one in four

young people in New Zealand currently overweight or obese, there is no better time than now to build an understanding within our communities of the value of our game and boost participation in golf. Participating in golf develops skills and good habits that support physical fitness as well as providing the social and fun aspects of being involved in a sport.

Understanding Youth

Engaging young people in golf is important from both a sport and club development perspective. Providing young people with opportunities to engage in golf in a way that will enable them to enjoy the many physical and social benefits it offers, will help develop long-term participants.

The Opportunity to Grow Golf: Youth Participation study conducted in the UK in 2014 provides some valuable insights into what motivates young people to participate in sport and provides an understanding about what would encourage young people to be interested in golf and ultimately take up the game.

Factors Encouraging Youth to Participate in Sport

- **Introduction by parents and/or schools**
The influence of parents and schools play an important role in the uptake of sport among young people. Engaging in a sport in a familiar, supportive environment kindles interest among youth and helps with the development of basic skills. Family and schools were identified as the two main triggers that encouraged young people to start golf.
- **Developing skills at a young age**
Giving young people the opportunity to develop skills at an early age helps them become confident and potentially become participants or competitors in a sport.
- **Accessibility**
Once young people reach their teenage years, sport needs to be accessible. Young people are reliant on their parents to transport them to a venue and in their late teens become responsible for some of the costs of playing a sport meaning it needs to be affordable.
- **Appreciating sport as a spectator**
Many young people engage in sports they watch on television and following specific players or teams and seeing them as sporting heroes or role models is an important factor in encouraging young people to be active in a sport.

Perceptions of Golf

Young people in the study had some stereotypical views of golf. The non-golfers said golf is:

- A slow, boring game that lacks physical exertion
- A game for older men
- Too time consuming

While their first responses about the game were negative, especially among the non-golfers, many respondents also expressed some positive perceptions of golf including:

- It is a game that requires skills and precision
- It is relaxing and enables you to switch off
- You can bond with friends and spend time with family
- It is different to other sports

The perceived culture in golf clubs did not appeal to young people. They believed they would have to control their behaviour in a way that would make them feel uncomfortable. Even the golfers felt that golf clubs were too restrictive and more could be done to create a better social environment for young people.

What Would Encourage Young People to Start Golf

- **Shorter Courses**
9-hole rounds appealed to young people and could be made quicker with tees moved forward.
- **Fast-track learning on basic skills and rules**
Introductory coaching packages that give young people the all-round skills to get started at a basic level relatively quickly rather than committing to a long series of lessons on a practice range.
- **Creating an enjoyable, fun golfing environment**
Top Golf is an example of a golf facility that provides a fun and enjoyable experience for golfers and non-golfers alike. Golf clubs need to think about how they too can make their coaching and playing experiences for young people more fun and social.
- **Casual dress**
Image-conscious young people want to look good and wear clothes they feel comfortable in. A more flexible approach to dress codes may need to be considered to appeal to a younger demographic.
- **Golf games and formats**
Young people expressed an interest in different formats including mini golf and golf skills activities which could potentially be set up on the practice range.
- **Affordable memberships/green fees**
For families and young people, the costs of the game need to be affordable. This can be achieved through offering flexible memberships, pricing and payment plans. Providing equipment or offering affordable rental options also helps young people try the game before making a large financial commitment.

Conclusion

There is genuine interest in our sport among young people but we should be aware that the journey from introducing them to the game and then developing them into golfers can be a long one. As a sport, golf needs to adapt to better fulfil the needs of a younger demographic. We need to make young people aware that golf is affordable and accessible, and create an environment within our clubs that welcomes young people, provides them with a sense of belonging and gives them an opportunity to develop their game.

To find out more about creating an inclusive environment for young people at your club, you can contact the Community Golf team at NZ Golf on 09 485 3230.

Further information:

The Opportunity to Grow Golf: Youth Participation

https://www.golfenvironment.org/assets/0003/3124/syngenta_golf_youth_report_final.pdf

