

Junior Golf in Southern California

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Junior golf is a contribution to youth and to golf as a whole. The realization that it is considerably more than just a healthy and pleasant game for youngsters under 18 is causing increased junior activity in all sections of the country.

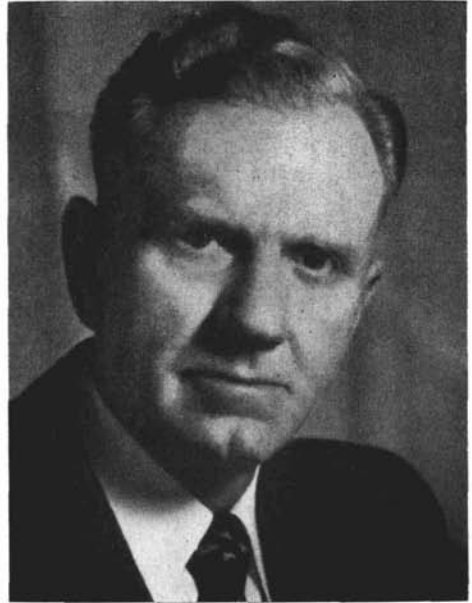
Prior to 1951, junior golf activity in Southern California consisted of several unrelated tournaments and group instruction by individual professionals. Few clubs had programs for their juniors, and some did not permit them on the course. The juniors had no program of their own and for the most part were left to their own devices.

In order to stimulate and place junior golf upon a sound and organized basis, the Junior Golf Association of Southern California was formed in 1951. It was organized, after several years of planning, by the three associations representing golf in this area, the Southern California Golf Association, the Southern California Public Links Golf Association and the Southern California Section of the PGA. Each sponsoring association annually appoints three adult representatives to the Board of Directors, which itself can appoint additional members when advisable. Junior golf thus became an entity and a part of organized golf in Southern California.

Its program is divided into two general phases: To encourage each club and course to initiate a program for its own juniors, and to coordinate and conduct junior competitions.

Club Programs

A well-planned and supervised junior program at a club does not crowd the course or interfere with the enjoyment of the members. Instead, it provides a new interest, and the club will become a place the family also can enjoy. Closer contact with the spirit of youth is also good for aching legs and advancing years.



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Our Junior Association requested each of the approximately sixty clubs and courses in Southern California to consider a program under which its juniors would be given an opportunity to learn and play properly. The splendid junior program of the Virginia Country Club, in Long Beach, Cal., for which its professional, Joe Robinson, was largely responsible, was recommended as a model.

The Virginia Country Club program is supervised by an adult committee. Juniors are given free group instruction on Saturday mornings and, during summer vacation, several times a week. They are restricted to the lesson and practice tee until proficient enough to be permitted on the course during periods designated for their play.

They have their own club organization, elect their own officers, conduct their

meetings, arrange handicaps, collect dues, run tournaments and award prizes. They must observe the rules made by the committee, replace divots, smooth bunkers and at all times be courteous and give precedence to adult members. Their club events consist of match and stroke-play tournaments, sweepstakes and similar competitions. They close their season by entertaining their parents with junior-parent foursomes, followed by a buffet dinner. The program has proved popular and successful.

The operation of junior clubs at public courses presents a different situation, as those courses depend upon fee players and are usually crowded. However, the management will generally extend concessions to the juniors during slack periods.

Numerous clubs and courses in Southern California now have programs for their juniors and others are planning them. Because of varying complexities, every club cannot have identical programs, but each can do something for its juniors.

The PGA, through its Junior Committee, of which Vice-President George Lake is Chairman, has had a policy of giving free group instruction to juniors for a number of years, and the professionals may be counted upon to assist in any junior program.

Supervision

When a junior has progressed sufficiently to enter major junior tournaments, the professional certifies him to the Junior Golf Association. Membership in the Association is required for entrance in tournaments and most junior events in Southern California and is open to boys and girls under 18 whose applications have been accepted by the Board of Directors.

The application, which requires rather complete information, must be signed by the junior and his parent or guardian and be approved by a PGA professional, who certifies that the junior "has sufficient skill to play and sufficient knowledge of the Rules and etiquette to know how to conduct himself properly and courteously on and around the course."

When an application is accepted, a membership card is issued, signed by the Chairman of the Board and by the professional who approved the applicant. Dues are \$2 a year or portion thereof. Each card expires December 31, unless prior thereto the junior becomes 18, in which case it expires when he reaches that age. Each card shows its expiration date.

Our 1952 membership is approximately 250, but of course many others are participating in club programs but are not yet ready for membership.

The Directors keenly feel a responsibility for the juniors and to golf. Improper conduct is not tolerated and can result in suspension or loss of membership. When a junior is corrected, his father and the professional are usually informed of the matter by letter, which approach quickly remedies most any situation. A membership thus identifies the junior as one who not only has attained a certain degree of proficiency but also as one who plays according to the Rules and as a gentleman.

The affairs of the Junior Association are conducted by the Directors, with the assistance of Junior officers, who are elected annually by the juniors themselves and who attend and take part in the Directors' meetings. Their duties are prescribed by the Directors, and numerous matters are referred to them for decision or recommendation. They also have their own Tournament, Membership and Rules Committees.

The present officers are Tommy Jacobs, President; Eddie Meyerson, Vice-President, and Bob McCallister, Secretary. All are nationally known junior golfers.

From the outset of our program, the Rules of Golf were stressed and strictly enforced. At each tournament every entrant was given a mimeographed list of "cautions" concerning Rules most frequently violated, such as:

Do not touch or improve your line of putt, except to remove loose impediments.

Do not ask another player what club he used or ask any advice except from your caddie.

Hole out all puts in stroke play; none are conceded.

Observe all Rules and enforce all penalties; none may be waived.

Twenty juniors were put on the Rules Committee, each of whom was to call all infractions observed. Thus we had junior referees all over the course. It was no surprise that the juniors suddenly became Rule-conscious and there was a rush for Rule books.

Tournaments

Our tournaments are not conducted by handicap. The flights are determined by qualifying rounds or by age, which we consider more feasible and which has proved very satisfactory. Of course, a club having a junior program usually conducts most of its competitions by the handicaps established there.

Summer vacations are now quite full of junior tournaments. Early in the year the coming events are coordinated and dates assigned. A "Schedule of Junior Tournaments" is issued by the Junior Association, copies of which are sent to clubs and courses and to each junior. The schedule includes junior championships and other major tournaments, numerous junior invitationals and several pro-junior events. There are flights for our junior girls, and in some events flights for the pee-wees.

Some of our tournaments have interesting features:

Southern California Junior Championship: Sixty-four qualify for match play. Thirty-two are in the championship flight, and sixteen in each of two other flights.

California Junior Championship and Team Matches: This five-day event, now in its second year, is co-sponsored by the Junior Association of Northern California. The championship is 72 holes, stroke play, generally over four courses. The team matches consist of foursomes in the morning and singles in the afternoon. Teams of eight from each of the two sponsoring Junior Associations compete

for the state title, our juniors selecting their own team.

Southern California Father-Junior Son Championship: This popular event, now in its fourth year, is held on a Sunday and closes the season. The father and son comprise a team, their combined strokes for 18 holes being the team score. There are two flights, for teams with juniors 15 through 17 and for teams with juniors under 15. There are gross and net prizes. The Calloway system of automatic handicapping is used. The handicap of each competitor is fixed as follows: If his score was par or less, he has no handicap. If it was from one over par to 75, inclusive, his handicap is one-half his worst hole (i.e. the hole on which he took the most strokes). If it was from 76 through 80, his handicap is the number of strokes he took on his worst hole. If it was from 81 through 85, the worst hole plus half the next worst hole. If it was from 86 through 90, the two worst holes, and so on. There is a handicap limit of 30, and the player is given the benefit of a half stroke.

Trophies are awarded during a buffet dinner following the play. This is a highlight of the season for both fathers and sons, and according to most any junior, he would have won had his father performed better. Golf certainly furnishes a common ground for father and son and makes for a delightful and close relationship and understanding between them.

Plans are being considered to schedule interclub junior-team matches this fall, with the teams probably consisting of four members. We also plan to do considerably more for our junior girls. They are becoming more active in golf, and our program should include events for them on a par with those for the boys. Accordingly, we have scheduled our first Southern California Junior Girls' Championship. Their events will be under the direct supervision of Mrs. William H. Millar, who recently became one of our directors and who is also Chairman of the USGA Girls' Junior Committee.

We plan our program to embrace the whole of junior golf, as it should. It is

comprehensive but well supervised, and we know it is sound.

Finances

A tournament provides a terrific incentive to a junior and is a very important event in his young life. To win one is a big achievement, and to qualify for and go to the USGA Junior Amateur Championship is just about the end of his junior rainbow.

Assisting in defraying the expenses of our qualifiers is considered a proper part of our program. I have more than once seen a junior who, after qualifying and thus reaching the door to his goal, had to announce he was unable to go because of lack of funds. It is not a pretty picture. I think golf should take care of its juniors. The necessarily small dues and entry fees collected from them cannot possibly carry our program.

Golf is called upon to raise money for all sorts of causes, and although they may be worthy, many of them are entirely unrelated to golf. In one instance, it was to outfit a football team. A junior program, being an integral part of golf, should be among the things to which clubs annually contribute.

Most golfers will gladly assist in raising a junior-golf fund if their club or course gives them the opportunity. Once a year the Southern California clubs and courses are requested to afford their members or players such an opportunity, and the fine response shows increasing interest in and appreciation of junior golf.

No uniform method of raising funds is yet recommended or used. Some clubs solicit contributions of not to exceed \$1 each from their members. Others conduct tournaments, and still others sell bag tags. Palos Verdes Golf Club, whose fine professional, Bud Oakley, is idolized by its juniors, adopted the method of once a year adding an extra 50 cents to the bill of each member as a voluntary contribution to junior golf. That there was not one dissent is a tribute to that club. Each club retains a portion of the money it

raised for its own junior purposes. The balance is sent to the Junior Golf Association for the over-all program.

The Benefits

Our juniors have established an enviable competitive record. Tommy Jacobs is the California Junior Champion and the USGA Junior Amateur Champion. Arlene Brooks is the USGA Junior Girls' Champion. Our junior team holds the California team title.

While we are extremely proud of these accomplishments, we are equally proud of the fine youngsters who comprise our membership. They are wonderful, and their performance and conduct on the course is a credit to golf.

Their natural and spontaneous sportsmanship is a pleasure to see. I have often seen a junior on the practice tee just before a match, trying to help his opponent overcome some fault. It is common to see winner and loser walk arm in arm to the clubhouse, the loser insisting on caddying for the winner in the next match. Juniors disdain to accept a win by default and insist an opponent be given a chance when he is late. They are reticent to call a penalty on another, preferring merely to caution him, but readily call penalty strokes on themselves for something which no one else saw.

I have been a close observer of junior golf for a long time, and I know it is more beneficial than idleness. I have watched boys from their first junior tournament until their last and seen them develop self-reliance, self-control, courage, perseverance, courtesy and utter contempt for dishonesty.

When a boy is 18, it is time for him to plan and concentrate upon his future. He is then through with junior golf. He has had a grand experience which he will always remember and has made many friends whom he will always keep. He has learned to play in a manner which is a credit to the game, but in addition he has learned lessons which will aid him all his life. His time has not been wasted, and both he and golf have benefited.