

GIRLS' JUNIOR GOLF IN PHILADELPHIA

by

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GIRLS' JUNIOR GOLF in the Philadelphia district is rapidly becoming of primary interest to parents and junior players alike as a result of increasing activities stemming from organized junior committees in the individual clubs.

As far back as 1924 J. Franklin Meehan, the father of an extremely talented golfing family, organized the Philadelphia Girls' Junior Championship, donating the cup and the prizes. The event was open to all girls under 18 years of age whose parents were members of a club belonging to the Philadelphia Associations. In order to make the play interesting to the entire field, girls under 14 qualified for a Junior-Junior Championship. It was not uncommon to have 5-year-olds enter the tournament. However, should a Junior-Junior so elect, she could play in the older class for the Junior Championship.

In the first Championship each girl was presented a medal on which was inscribed "My First Tournament" and the player's name and the date. A similar award is still being given each year to a new player.

As the girls passed the eligibility age, Mr. Meehan wrote them a personal letter of regret for the tournament's loss and wished them success in their adult golfing careers.

Inter-City Match

In order to inject additional interest into the youngsters' golf, Mr. Meehan suggested a junior inter-city team match with New York. This was immediately accepted, and, with the interest and cooperation of Mrs. Frank Enos, of the Metropolitan district, who presented a lovely cup for the event, a proper agreement was drawn and the first match held in 1934. These matches are still a highlight of our Philadelphia junior golf.

HANDICAPS FOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Effective in 1955, handicaps submitted by amateurs as a basis for eligibility for the Amateur and Open Championships must have been computed in accordance with USGA Golf Handicap System for Men (1953 edition). Either basic or current handicaps will be acceptable.

While the USGA has long maintained a handicap qualification as a basis for eligibility of amateurs in these Championships, it has not previously specified the method by which these handicaps should be computed.

In 1938, following Mr. Meehan's death, the responsibility of continuing the Junior Championship and the junior inter-city team match was assumed by the Women's Golf Association of Philadelphia. The Championship Cup was inscribed as a memorial to Mr. Meehan.

In 1934 the Association scheduled an annual Mother and Daughter Championship which now draws a large and interested field. Prizes are awarded for gross and net scores in various Junior age groups.

With an ever-increasing desire for more and better junior golf, the Women's Golf Association of Philadelphia in 1951 appointed Mrs. Daniel Krick, a member of the Executive Committee, as General Chairman of Junior Activities. This proved to be a big step in the right direction. Mrs. Krick's great interest and tireless efforts resulted in a closely knit junior group.

Clubs were asked to appoint a Chairman of Junior Golf. We have found that one of the most successful methods of organizing the junior programs at the individual clubs is the appointment of a husband-and-wife team as Chairmen of

Junior Golf. They in turn appoint an assisting committee also composed of husband-and-wife combinations. In this way better relationship with the members has resulted.

Often a club will have its golfing juniors hold their own election of a Chairman and Co-Chairman to serve under the adults. It has proved most satisfactory to include both boys and girls in all activities, organizational as well as competitive. The Women's Golf Association of Philadelphia each year holds meetings of the Chairmen of Junior Golf, one in the spring and one in the fall, at which time an opportunity is given the chairmen for the exchange of ideas and discussion of plans at the different clubs.

Emphasis on Conduct

This adult direction inspired even more interest among the young players, and it was not long before clubs in certain areas held informal team matches with neighboring clubs. Age groups were varied according to the youngsters available. Nine holes was the usual tournament. The entertaining club usually treated the teams to lunch and often, if the club had a swimming pool, the players stayed on for a swim. During the summer special junior open days were held at several of the clubs as well as weekly tournaments at their own clubs.

Emphasis is placed on proper conduct on the golf course and knowledge and practice of the Rules and etiquette of golf. The Rules books supplied are very interestingly illustrated, which make them easily understood. The result has been good sportsmanship, much of it learned through association with one another. The junior matches are informal, yet serious.

The outcome of ideas exchanged among the Chairmen of Junior Golf has been the introduction of many beneficial plans at the various clubs. Many clubs use a point system such as the following:

- 2 points for playing in a tournament
- 3 points for winning a tournament

- 2 points for second place
- 1 point for third place
- 2 points for winning a putting contest

Handicaps usually are determined by the three best nine-hole scores to be registered with the chairman. It is necessary to obtain a handicap before one may enter a tournament. Most of the clubs maintain a ringer board for nine and eighteen holes, according to the age group, all ringer scores to be attested. Monthly pitching and putting contests are held and junior golf clinics are given at many clubs, with instructions in woods, irons and putting by members of the committee followed by four- and nine-hole tournaments. There are regular weekly tournaments scheduled covering four, nine or eighteen holes according to the age group, interspersed with mixed foursomes, mother - and - daughter, father-and-son, adult-child and club junior championships. Often a club will hold a junior opening day tournament followed by a picnic, and a closing day dinner, with the awarding of prizes, including a prize for the most improved golfer during the season.

All junior activities are planned on a day and at a time convenient to each individual member club's program. Clubs have made their own arrangements as far as expenses are concerned. Some charge a small fee ranging from \$2 to \$10 which might include weekly group lessons from the club pro. Others make special junior allotments or simply receive donations from their members.

It has been found satisfactory to issue a printed program of the various activities for the juniors, listing tournament dates, prize awards and pertinent information pertaining to rules, etiquette and sportsmanship.

As we all know, it is pleasant to possess skill at golf, but golf's chief contribution is knowing correct behavior, fine sportsmanship and the joy of keen competition. Giving the children this opportunity at an early age is a reward in itself.