

A JUNIOR PROGRAM THAT LASTS ALL YEAR

by

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REALIZING THE NEED to stimulate the interest of junior golfers, the New Orleans Golf Association launched a junior program in 1951, consisting of six tournaments. The response was not very gratifying, with only 45 to 50 boys participating. This same program was continued in 1952 and 1953, with results that became more and more discouraging. No new faces were appearing. Participation dropped to around 32 at each tournament.

The discouraging results did not justify the time and money necessary for continuance of the program. The NOGA Board of Governors was faced with the decision of discontinuing the junior program or finding out why it had failed.

A Chairman of Junior Golf was appointed. He realized it was necessary to build interest among boys who had never played golf before. It appeared that the high and junior high schools offered the best opportunity for this promotional work.

The Junior Chairman discussed his plans with the officers, members of the board and the professional of each golf club, directors of athletics for public, parochial and private schools, representatives of press, radio and television, and prominent business men. It was found that all would cooperate. Each golf club appointed a Chairman of Junior Golf for the club and as a working member of the NOGA Junior Committee.

From this nucleus the organization was formed. Two men were chosen as vice-chairmen, and each was made responsible for two major programs. The remaining eight men were appointed chairmen of sub-committees. In addition to these 10 men, 38 other golfers agreed to help.

At a meeting of the entire Junior Committee, a comprehensive program was agreed upon. An organization chart, a complete detail of functions of each sub-committee and a list of the entire committee, with addresses and telephone numbers, was given to each man.

After each sub-committee had laid its plans, a meeting of the working committee (the two vice-chairmen and chairmen of the eight sub-committees) was called. The representative of each golf club was requested to have his club donate \$100 toward the junior program, confirm the dates set for junior tournaments to be held at his club, and obtain permission for juniors to play without charge on certain designated days.

A program was printed in the form of posters and mailing pieces, announcing the dates of all tournaments, a Father and Son Banquet, the day of the week each golf course was open without charge to the juniors, the dates of 30 golf clinics, and names and telephone numbers of every man on the Junior Committee. Two posters were placed in the locker room and on the main bulletin board at each golf club, junior high school and high school in the city.

Key To Success

The key to our success was found in this program. Contacts were made with the principals and the coaches of the 34 high and junior high schools. The program was explained and a request was made to put on a golf clinic at their schools. It was difficult to "sell" the idea to some schools, but half of the battle was won when the Director of Athletics for the School Board was in complete accord with what we were attempting.

Six teams, each consisting of a professional and an outstanding amateur, were organized from the Junior Committee, and each team conducted clinics at six schools. Portable nets were purchased, and the clinics covered golf etiquette, major rules of golf, how to hit various shots, and the announcement of the Junior Program. The juniors were permitted to hit the ball several times, and then each boy interested was asked to sign his name, address, telephone number, date of birth and grade in school. This procedure produced the names of 500 boys to whom the printed program was sent.

The Interscholastic Meet became known as the Joe Gumbel Tournament in memory of the man who gave so much time to the promotion of golf and the advancement of youth in New Orleans.

Competition For Everybody

The Interscholastic Meet was a huge success. More than 100 boys participated. It was conducted as follows:

1. Two separate divisions according to grades; no one boy could play in both. The Junior High School Division was made up of boys in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. The High School Division was composed of boys in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades.

2. Schools having both junior and high school grades were permitted entries in each division. Seventh, eighth and ninth-grade boys were permitted in the High School Division for team play.

3. Each school could enter as many contestants in each division as desired.

4. Eighteen holes of stroke play were held on a Saturday morning in April, and 18 holes on the next Saturday morning.

5. The four boys having the lowest medal scores for 36 holes from each school in each division were designated as the team from that school. The team having the lowest combined score was the winner.

6. All participants were then placed in flights of 16 in each division, and match play was conducted the following two Saturday mornings and Sunday afternoons.

A Winter Program consisted of a Father and Son Banquet in October, a blind hole handicap tournament the day after Thanksgiving, and a 36-hole medal handicap between Christmas and New Year's. Merchandise gift certificates were awarded.

Father and Son Banquet

Each boy who participated in any NOGA Junior event during the year was invited, with his father or guardian, to be guests of NOGA at a Father and Son Banquet. Two hundred ninety junior golfers and their fathers enjoyed one of the finest banquets we have ever had. There were moving pictures, in color, of the boys at the Interscholastic Meet and the City Junior Championship.

Many factors contributed to success of the junior program, but none were more important than proper supervision at tournaments, record-keeping, and use of the telephone in reminding each boy of tournaments.

The program has required much time and energy, but the results have been rewarding. Two hundred thirty-five boys have participated, at ages ranging from 8 to 18. We had fewer than 50 Junior Golfers at the beginning of 1954, and we now have close to 300. Of the 25 boys who played in every tournament, only two failed to win a trophy. Another 25 boys played in every tournament except one.

We are proud of the fine youngsters who have taken part. Not one "incident" occurred, and their sportsmanship is a pleasure to see. There was only one default in the full seven flights in the City Junior Championship—and that boy phoned in to say he was ill. A copy of golf rules and etiquette has been given to each boy and they are now very rule-conscious.

It is a privilege to watch the progress these boys are making, not only in improvement of their game but also in self-control, courtesy and perseverance. There is no sport more worthy of leadership, no sport where early training and participation bring such lasting enjoyment.