

DAN WALDOCH

At Tom O'Leary Golf Course, Bismarck, North Dakota. The entire Sheila Schafer Junior Links layout. The third hole is in the center of the photo. Number 1 is on the left. Number 2 tee is near the two trees in the background, with the green on the right.

Facilities for Junior Golf

by **JAMES M. LATHAM**
 Director, Great Lakes Region, USGA Green Section

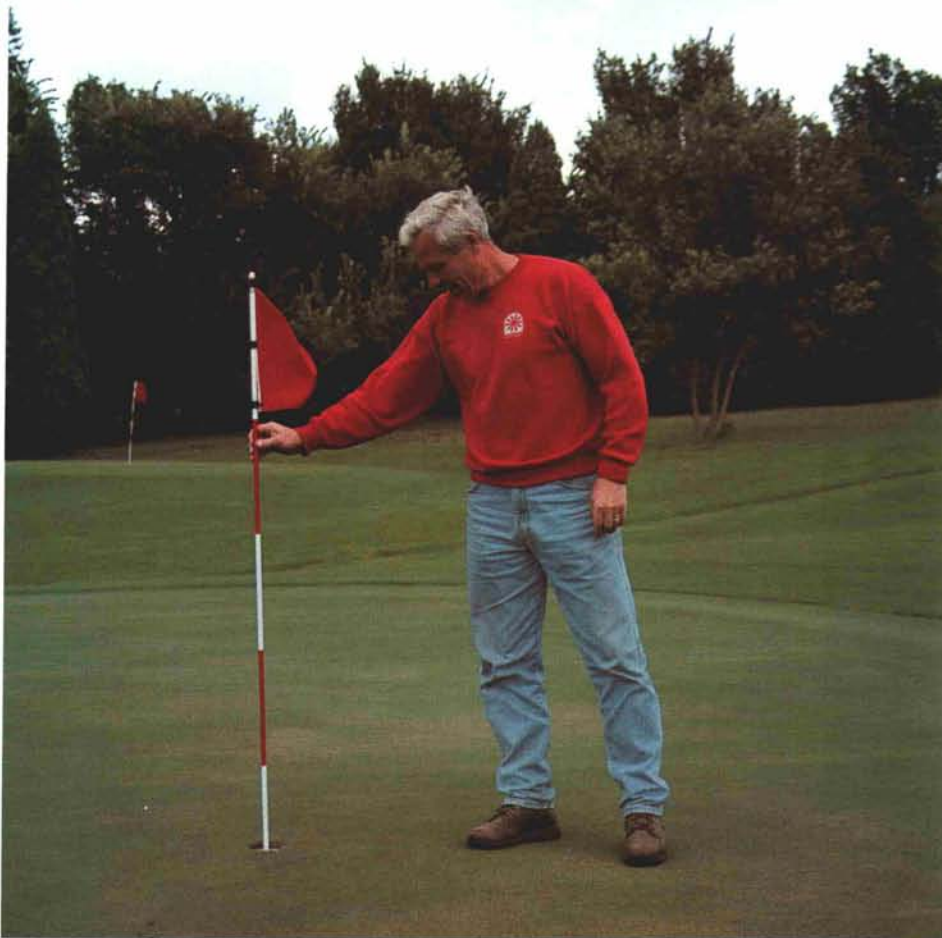
JUNIOR GOLF PROGRAMS are given high priority throughout the world of golf, since it is the natural means of preserving the sport for the future. Most are programs that are operated on a local, state, or regional basis, with some support from the \$185,000 budgeted by the USGA for special junior golf programs. These are note-

worthy undertakings, but most have one major flaw — a lack of readily available playing facilities. Yes, juniors are given priority on some half-days at some courses or clubs, while adults complain about losing *their* playing time. It must also be somewhat intimidating for a six-year-old to tackle an adult-size golf course, even from the forward tees.

Some organizations have recognized this shortcoming and have taken the appropriate steps to provide a real golf experience for young people, on a scale that fits their size and skill level. The design and construction can be plain or fancy and are often the creation of the golf course superintendent working with a junior golf committee or organi-



(Above) Contestants, scorers, and gallery become deeply involved in these competitions—just like the grownups. (Left) Superintendent Charles Busche shows a downsized flagstick. Benches and ball washer stands on every tee are also made to measure for the players.



zation. Construction costs are minimal because play pressure is lower and player demands are less exacting than on the big course. The maintenance requirements add little to existing budgets, and these special holes also can double as personnel training and/or product evaluation facilities.

The Sheila Shafer Junior Links, Bismarck, North Dakota

This three-hole course was dedicated on June 19, 1993, to fill the needs of beginning Junior golfers age 12 and under. It occupies an acre or so of parks department land adjoining the Tom O'Leary Golf Course (municipal), and is under the direction of Dan Waldoch, golf operations manager, and Chuck Busche, the golf course superintendent at Tom O'Leary. Funds for construction were raised by the Dakota Junior Golf Association through an annual golf tournament and the generosity of the lady for whom the course is named. DJGA also supports the junior golf instruction and tournament program in the Bismarck-Mandan area and is trying to reach other communities in southwestern North Dakota.

All features of this course are scaled down.



(Above) The Junior Practice Area at Oak Park Country Club receives the same high level of maintenance as the adults' area. This target green, practice bunker, and chipping area are just behind the practice tees. (Right) The target green and bunker are in the foreground, with the practice tee setup and range beyond. This area serves as the skeet range during the non-golf season.

The Scorecard

Hole	Yards	Par
1	65	3
2	57	3
3	60	3

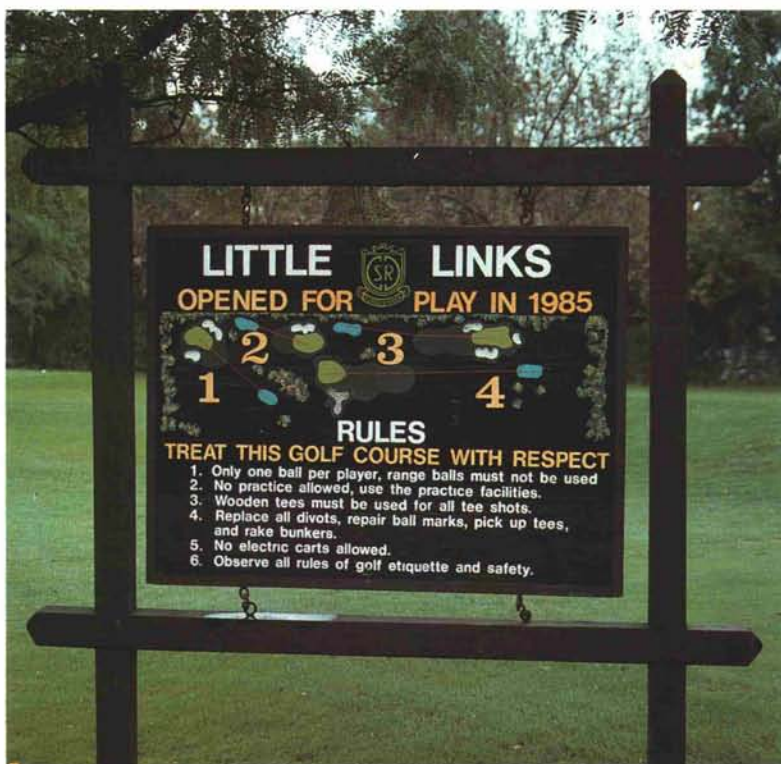
Even the flagsticks, ball washer stands, and benches on every hole are sized to fit the younger set. The greens average about 2,000 square feet. Maintenance costs are included in the budget for the big course.

The course gets about 50 rounds per day, with tournaments drawing 100 to 120 per event. Competitions vary according to age groups: 8 and under, 3 holes; 9 to 12, 6 holes; and 13 to 17, 9 holes. Juniors also may play the regular course at reduced rates. Adults may play the Junior Links, but *only* when accompanied by a junior golfer.





(Top) This youngster has already learned to carry a rake into the bunker with him. The golfers in these programs are often better informed on etiquette and care of the course than their older counterparts. (Left) Sunset Ridge Country Club, Northbrook, Illinois.



Oak Park Country Club, Elmwood Park, Illinois

Not every club or course in a metropolitan setting has the available space for a junior course. Oak Park is one, but they did recognize the needs of juniors and provided a special area for their practice. It is separated from the primary practice tee by shrubbery and provides full range facilities, including a bunker and chipping area to a target green. Superintendent Al Fierst ensures that this area is maintained with the same degree of care as the primary practice range and,

during the spring and fall when schools are in session, sees adults using the area when they want a bit of solitude.

The Junior Links at Sunset Ridge Country Club, Northbrook, Illinois

This rather elaborate four-hole course was built in 1985 on a few acres of surplus property adjacent to the practice range and a parking lot. The construction budget was about \$20,000, with maintenance costs included in the general operating budget of

the golf course. The bunkered greens range from 650 square feet to 1,400 square feet, plus the collars. Fairways are being converted to bentgrass, giving this course the same playing surfaces as the big course.

Juniors use the end of the single practice tee near their facility and have a bunker near their fourth green for practicing either fairway or greenside sand shots. A small practice green is set aside for young golfers at the opposite end of the practice tee, near the clubhouse.

Golf course superintendent Dennis Wilson has developed an innovative maintenance technique for the Junior Links. All of the day-to-day operations — mowing, cup changing, bunker raking, etc. — are performed by turf management student interns, after they become familiar with the procedures and equipment. Specialized work such as spraying is done by licensed full-time employees, assisted by the intern. There are few better learning experiences available for future superintendents.

The Scorecard

Hole	Par	Yards	Hdcp
1	3	60	3
2	3	45	4
3	3	115	1
4	3	125	2

The Greenshire — Par 3, Waukegan Park District, Waukegan, Illinois

The City of Waukegan does not have a junior course, per se, but it does have a good par-3 course that is reserved for junior play only on Mondays. It is available to juniors and their families at all other times. This is a free-standing, 50-acre course maintained by the staff of the Bonnie Brook Golf Course, a few miles away, under the direction of golf course superintendent Dave Beno.

There are about 150 kids aged 7-11 in this program, which has six events over the summer. There are girls' and boys' divisions: the 7- to 8-year-olds play 4 holes; the 9-year-olds, 7 holes; and the 11- to 12-year-olds, 9 holes. The 12- to 17-year-olds in the junior program play at Bonnie Brook.

The potential for instruction at these facilities is unlimited because of their exclusivity. What better opportunity exists for beginners to learn the importance of proper ball mark repair, divot replacement, and sand raking than on their own course, unspoiled by the bad habits of some adults? By the same token, the level of maintenance on these courses must remain high as an indication that youngsters are very important members of the ageless family of golfers.