



Junior Program Teaches Kids to Help Themselves

By JOEY REY

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At Griffith Park, Los Angeles, I started playing golf. By the time I was 16 I had blazing enthusiasm for the game but there were only a couple of events in which I could play. There was a lot of baseball and football competition, and when a lad is 16 competition is what he wants. Golf was slighted. We had to use our imaginations for tough competitive rounds. Many's the time other boys and I pretended we were playing in the National Open but our imaginations didn't give us the seasoning we needed to develop our games. And then we were at an age when we could have made great use of competitive experience.

At Griffith Park then—and now—there was a sign "No children under 14 years of age allowed on the golf course." That's the condition at most courses—public and private.

The Griffith Park rule was broken during Easter vacation last year when we took a foursome of 6, 7, 8 and 9 year-old youngsters to Los Angeles to compete against older boys and girls at Griffith. These youngsters of ours were selected for the "team" because of their general behavior as golfers, their observance of golf etiquette and their ability to play golf.

This foursome consisted of Mimi Wollenberger, 6; Freddie Pfyffer, 7; Bobby Secundo, 8 and Mitch Secundo, 9. They were chosen from among 100 youngsters under 11 years of age that we have been working with at Pasatiempo. You may have seen some of our youngsters in a Pathe News Short and you'll possibly see our 7, 8 and 9 year-old girls in another movie short soon to be made.

The exhibition match at Griffith Park

(1.) This was Joey Rey's first class of youngsters; four years ago. All of them now are helping with the junior program. They're called Captains, perform up to the responsibility. (2.) Fred Haas, Sr., watches one of Rey's proteges take a good cut at the ball. From the pleased look on Rey (kneeling) the kid must have got A for the shot. (3.) Smart promotion in getting the adults interested in a Hole-in-One contest the junior club conducts to finance trips to junior tournaments. (4.) Joey has his star pupil, Mimi Wollenberger (6 years old) show her swing to maidens in the class he and his wife, Ginger, run weekly at Holy Cross school.

was a significant event in the progress of junior golf to me because of Griffith Park having been the cradle of the game for me, but to the four youngsters it probably was much greater history. They appeared on a TV show, attended their first radio show, and appeared in clinics at two courses. Mrs. Ray and I were proud but not surprised at the perfect manner in which these children conducted themselves on that schedule, and the way these Pasatiempo youngsters behave at all times in their golf activities.

Behavior Is Highest

Those four who went to Los Angeles were chosen more because of their behavior than because of their excellent golf, considering their ages. Behavior means more to us than a good golf swing. I think that in junior teaching the factor of recognizing and rewarding conduct that shows the game at its finest, is something that is going to win a whole lot more adult support for junior golf programs.

The junior programs are the most important activity in golf today with the bag cart greatly diminishing caddy replacements on whom golf formerly depended for its continued growth. Cost of the game at private clubs rules out most younger people. Considerably more than half of all rounds of golf a year now are played on public and semi-public courses. The average age of members at typical metropolitan district private clubs is at the point where the future of these clubs now demands serious consideration and more foresight than the situation probably will get from older members who don't want kids "cluttering up the courses."

Juniors Vital to Pro Golf

Consequently the professionals either have to give a great deal of thought and time to junior golf or risk a gloomy future.

There has been a very successful pattern for junior golf developed in California. The Junior associations formed by the PGA sections of Southern California and Northern California have progressed rapidly. The Southern California PGA junior association, originated and brought along by George Lake, Joe Robinson, Bud Oakley and their colleagues, has its coun-

terpart in the Northern California PGA junior association to which Eddie Duino, Pat Mahoney, Pat Markovich, Tom Fry, Pat Patten, Dewey Longworth and others of our group have given much attention. Here in our own community, the Monterey Bay area, which we enjoy hearing called "the golf capital of the world," we have a very active junior association which has the vigorous and highly valuable guidance of such as Peter Hay, Cam Puget, Eddie Duino, Francis Brown, Mrs. Lawson Little and Mrs. Louis Lengfield. This association invites anyone interested in junior golf to have a voice on the Board.

Entries in our junior tournaments doubled in 1951 over 1950. An entry list of 260 boys is not unusual for our tournaments. Our girls' tourneys are smaller but we hope to have 75 California junior girl golfers in the USGA national girls' championship to be played at the Monterey Peninsula G&CC.

The pros and amateurs who have originated and conducted the junior association work have seen such responsibility and good judgment among the youngsters that it is the hope to be able to turn over most of the duties of the association to the juniors.

Junior Work Year Around

In my own case, junior golf has been developed with possibly more study, time and effort than could be devoted under normal conditions of professional employment. Pasatiempo comes in the resort course category. Four months of the year we are very crowded from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. The other eight months our play is heavy for only two or three hours. This spread of play gives me an opportunity to work on junior programs 12 months a year.

Of course, when rain sets in (as we admit it does in our part of California — and a very superior type of rain, too) the kids are not as enthusiastic about golf as they are in the sunny weather.

So, as I am on the job the year around, I find myself with not much to do a couple of months when the rain makes outdoor schedules uncertain. Therefore I've started some programs in the schools.

We take the first, second, third and fourth grade children once a week for swing classes. Out of some of these groups we pick the better qualified children — those who are well behaved and have a fair amount of coordination — and we take those youngsters to the golf course where we can further their golf education.

I have found it necessary to get high school golfers to help with these classes of the younger kids. The small child is about in the same fix on a golf course as he or she would be in crossing a boule-

vard, and needs education and protection.

The safety factor is paramount in every detail of planning and conducting the classes. Each thing that we do in teaching the youngsters anything about golf is based on the safest way. The primary principle is to teach the youngsters to be careful so they won't get injured or injure others. When you see how the older kids observe this No. 1 Rule when they're helping to teach or supervising the younger ones you are impressed by the way the safety lesson and the responsibility for 100 per cent safety has registered.

As a fair amount of this junior work has to be delegated to the youngsters who have shown aptitude and the right temperament for encouraging their playmates, it is essential that safety be thoroughly and persistently drilled into all the kids until golf safety becomes a habit.

Many professionals, especially those in our part of the country whose opinions I especially prize, and golf salesmen have expressed very high regard for the Pasatiempo junior program and these judgments are a great part of the reward that Mrs. Rey and I enjoy from the work. But what may not be negerally recognized is the grand help we've received from some of the parents. Without the cooperation of fathers and mothers, such as we've had, any junior program, no matter how wisely organized and faithfully and competently conducted, would be a very tough deal for the pro.

And the sports writers and photographers also have done tremendously valuable work in boosting the junior program. They've made it something the kids and their parents are eager to read about. The newspapers, like the pros, are looking to give the kids the habit of being customers in years to come.

Kids Helping Teach

Four years ago I organized my first class of juniors. Now all of these boys and girls are helping to teach younger ones. You can imagine how proud I am of these assistants. Maybe none of them will be a national champion but every one of them will be a golfer of whom the game and the whole country can be as proud as I always will be.

It's work — and a lot of it — these junior programs. Getting the clubs, cutting them down, and making them so the kids of every age have clubs available, in itself is a job to keep a pro shop from having any too much spare time.

But when you see those kids, when they get to be around 14 or 15, go out on a course, the way they handle themselves as gentleman and lady golfers gives you a heart-warming thrill. Then the pro knows that he's done something for the lasting happiness and good characters of kids who were entrusted to his care.