

Age, gender and ability appropriate entry level and participation pathway opportunities

JOONDALUP RESORT GOLF ACADEMY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Our philosophy is to give children a fun experience



PGA Instructor, Ackzel having some fun with MyGolf Girls

The Club:

The Joondalup Golf Academy runs out of the 27-championship course Joondalup Golf Course and resort. The course is located 28km north of Perth CBD, is public access and has an onsite café, restaurant, hotel and function centre.

Local Demographic:

- Population: 3,641 in Connolly
- Median age: 44 (national average 38)
- Children aged 0-14 years: 16.1% of the population (average 18.7%)
- People aged 65+ years: 14.9% (average 15.8%)

- People born in Australia: 45.3% (average 66.7%)
- Full-time workers: 54.2% of the population (average 57.7%)
- Part-time workers: 34.5% (average 30.4%)
- Median household weekly income: \$2,198 (average \$1,438)

The Story:

Ackzel Donaldson, PGA Professional at Joondalup Resort Golf Academy in Perth, has a happy problem: "Having lots of girls in our MyGolf program, we found ourselves in the position to create all-girls classes."

Ackzel knows the strategy the club is implementing is working and helping to attract new juniors.

The club currently runs two MyGolf Girls programs per week (one for girls aged 5-8, the other for those 9+). Along with a suite of mixed MyGolf programs, and his Junior Academy, coaching juniors now comprises 90% of Ackzel's business.

So how did Joondalup find itself with lots of girls? What prompted the club to set up all-girls programs and what impact has this had on girls' participation?

This case study will provide you with key tips and learnings to help you establish a successful MyGolf Girls program at your club.

Challenges and Solutions:

Like many clubs, Joondalup's junior membership comprises a smaller number of elite players, mainly boys. "We do not have the depth of new entry-level players, especially girls," Ackzel said. "Our course is quite difficult to play, and the price point has also been a deterrent to junior participation in the past."

“People want a soft entry to golf.”

Since starting his club contract just nine months ago, Ackzel and his team have been busy implementing changes to attract more juniors.

The key to their success is attributable to one main strategy – free weekly trial sessions. "People want a soft entry to golf. Parents are hesitant to commit to a full coaching program if they are unsure their child will enjoy it. We want to take away barriers to participation as well as create a fun and vibrant family atmosphere at the club. Therefore, we give children and families the opportunity to come and try our program, firstly at no cost."



A budding young golfer proudly displaying her scorecard

“Our philosophy is to give children a fun experience. We spruce golf up with games, music and prizes.”

Each Saturday morning, Ackzel and an assistant coach run the free "come and try" program for girls and boys aged 5-12. These children have access to five free classes before committing to a paid program.

"Whilst we don't generate an immediate income from the trial program, this has acted as a great business tool in terms of advertising and recruitment," Ackzel said. His return on investment is:

- Attracting 30-40 children per week which creates a fun, family atmosphere around the club
- Seeing the club café is full each Saturday morning
- The pro shop generating more business with parents buying practice range balls for themselves and purchasing junior equipment.



Girls proudly wearing their crazy socks

“In terms of a person’s first impression and experience of our club, this is the perfect scenario!” he beams.

“ I think the key is people are more likely to take the next step as we have already built a relationship with the child and family”

“Our philosophy is to give children a fun experience. We spruce golf up with games, music and prizes. The free trials have created a large base of children that now funnel into paid programs, including many girls.

“I think the key is people are more likely to take the next step as we have already built a relationship with the child and family. They have also spent time at the club and feel comfortable in our environment.”

“ We have seen them open up and be more themselves in the all-girls classes”

Seeing many girls come through the trial program, Ackzel started offering MyGolf girls programs.

“ ...these girls are tending to develop their skills at a higher and quicker rate and are staying longer in our programs”

“We began because it helps keep girls playing - especially with girls aged 10+. We have seen them open up and be more themselves in the all-girls classes. In general, the girls have more in common with each other and develop friendships, plus they tend to have more confidence to give things a go. Compared to a girl who may be the minority in a mixed sex class, these girls are tending to develop their skills at a higher and quicker rate and are staying longer in our programs.

“Now that we have all-girls’ classes on offer, they sell themselves. Word of mouth has been extremely powerful and those girls participating are bringing along their friends.”

The rise in girls' numbers has not just been organic. Ackzel, an energetic and vibrant 30-year-old coach, has ensured the girls (and mixed sex) programs engage and appeal to children.

Along with playing music, singing songs, dancing and joking around with his pupils, Ackzel implements a weekly theme to each class. "Themes we have executed are crazy sock week, beat the parents (where we get the parents to join in on challenges) and 'bring-a-friend' sessions," he said.

"The 'bring-a-friend' works particularly well as it gets children recruiting for us! At our last girls' session, we had the 12 girls bring along 12 of their friends. Suddenly, we had 24 girls playing golf! Our ethos is to show the girls a fun time and provide them with clear information on how they can continue to participate. It is too soon to tell, but I sense we will see some of these girls return."

Learning:

- Think outside the box, go against the grain – we need to try new concepts to grow our game
- The free trial concept has worked very well and can easily be adopted at other clubs
- Spruce up golf. Play music, sing and dance – do whatever you can to build a fun association for kids with golf.
- Engaging a young coach may also be a good way to build a rapport with children. Do this through the Community Instructor program.



High fives all round!

- Offer MyGolf Girls programs. This is definitely a good way to engage and retain girls in golf.
- It is not just the right thing to do, juniors make good business sense. "You can charge \$100 for a one-hour private lesson or have six juniors paying \$30 for the hour. Not to mention the families children bring along," Ackzel says.
- Access MyGolf Girls marketing resources through Golf Australia. Upon activating a MyGolf Girls program via the MyGolf website, your club will have access to posters, brochures, media release template and digital assets.

Learn more about MyGolf Girls at www.golf.org.au

