

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

ROYAL HOBART GOLF CLUB, TASMANIA

*Providing relevant participation opportunities
for girls to teenagers to women*

The Club:

Royal Hobart Golf Club (GC) was founded in 1916 and is known as Tasmania's premier members' club. The 18-hole championship course is situated a half-hour drive east of Hobart city and has a General Manager, PGA Professional, a trainee Professional and Community Instructor onsite. Club membership sits at 951, with 25% female.

Local Demographic:

- Population: 222,356
- Median age: 40 (national average 38)
- Children aged 0-14 years: 18% of the population (average 18.7%)
- People aged 65+ years: 17.8% (average 15.8%)
- People born in Australia: 79.8% (average 66.7%)
- Full-time workers: 53.2% of the population (average 57.7%)
- Part-time workers: 35.2% (average 30.4%)
- Median household weekly income: \$1,234 (average \$1,438)

Background:

It is imperative that golf offers age, gender and ability appropriate entry level and participation pathway opportunities throughout a person's lifespan.

All major sports in Australia offer adolescent girls the opportunity to play with and against other girls of similar ages, life stages and developmental abilities. In golf, however, there is a shortage of offerings for adolescent girls.

Golf Australia's Vision 2025 strategy has identified that golf needs to introduce and retain more women and girls in golf. This can be done by

offering innovative, inspiring, needs based, and age and gender appropriate programs and pathways, and access to quality coaching.

Teen Golf is therefore being developed to:

- Fill a gap in the participation pathway for beginning teenage girls in golf;
- Allows golf to enter the highly competitive female adolescent sports participation market; and,
- Begins to shift the positioning of golf towards being a sport for a more diverse community.

Teen Golf has been piloted at numerous venues throughout Australia in 2019. The program will be evaluated and adjusted accordingly before its expansion as part of GA's Vision 2025 strategy.

The Story:

Community Instructor and ALPG and Symetra Tour player Courtney Docking does not shy away from a challenge.



When I was their age, I was often the only girl in class. It can be difficult feeling like the odd one out but by running these girls and teen girls' classes, they can all enjoy learning together."

In April 2018, at 36 weeks pregnant, she followed her husband, PGA Professional Matt Docking from the Gold Coast to establish a new life in Hobart.

"The opportunity for Matt to run his own business within the Royal Hobart GC was too good to resist, so we made the move," Courtney said.



Teen Golf participants enjoy making new friends and learning the game

Eighteen months on, Courtney's family of four - including two girls aged one and two - is now settled so Courtney has started her next endeavour - getting more girls, teenagers and women playing golf.

"My motivation to encourage girls to start golf comes from my own experience. When I was their age, I was often the only girl in class. It can be difficult feeling like the odd one out but by running these girls and teen girls' classes, they can all enjoy learning golf together."

In July 2019, Courtney, who had gained her Community Instructor accreditation three years earlier, joined her husband at Royal Hobart GC and started running numerous programs for women and girls including MyGolf Girls, Teen Golf and beginner women's clinics.

Challenges and Solutions:

Ask a non-golfer in your local community if they think they can learn golf at your club. Often the answer will be "no". A common perception is that you need to be a member and already know how to play golf before you enter the gates of a golf club, especially ones with the 'Royal' moniker.

This, coupled with another common perception that golf is a sport for older men, can make getting more women and girls playing golf a challenge.

"Playing on tour myself, I am aware that getting more women and girls playing can be a challenge - so this is something I have always wanted to do," Courtney said.

"It is important to provide relevant participation opportunities for girls through to teenagers and through to women. Up until recently we had not been doing this. Teen Golf and MyGolf Girls were something new – the club had never had anything like it before, so this was exciting.

"The hardest part I have found when starting a new program and engaging a non-traditional target market is putting yourself out there.

"You will always be unsure if you will get a response, but you need to give it a go. Even if you only attract one or two girls in the beginning, that is an extra couple of girls that didn't know golf before you started.



It is important to provide relevant participation opportunities for girls through to teenagers and through to women.

"When Matt and I started at Royal Hobart, there were only two girls playing. We persisted and soon attracted nine new girls to our MyGolf Girls program and eight teenage girls to Teen Golf. This shows that there generally is an interest by girls in golf, and that we just need to provide relevant opportunities for them to give it a go!

"Now, after running MyGolf Girls for four months, we have an average of 12 girls playing each week."

The club's MyGolf Girls program runs at 2pm each Saturday, followed by TeenGolf at 3:00pm.

"This works well as it creates a fun atmosphere at the club. We often combine the start and end of each session, so girls interact and play together. It is good for the younger girls to see the teenage girls playing as this is a common age for girls to drop out of sport."

With some positive momentum in the female development space, Courtney then started a 5-week beginner women's clinic. "We attracted 10 participants, many of whom were friends or wives of members.



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"We are now starting to get the girls and women from our various clinics out on course. Knowing there is quite a leap between beginner clinics and club membership, we are offering clinic graduates the opportunity to come down on a casual basis each Sunday, pay a small fee and learn how to play on-course. We have modified the course to make it shorter and offer equipment loans for free.

"We have also put forward some ideas to the club board on different beginner memberships we would like to introduce.

"At this stage, our clinic participants do not have to be members to participate in our Sunday 6-hole program. However, with over half of the girls and women now having purchased new clubs, they seem keen to continue with their golf, so we need to work towards offering a relevant membership for them".

Learning:

- Run relevant programs for specific target groups:
 - Women are often looking to get to know other beginner golfers so make sessions interactive and provide a social aspect, such as coffee and cake at the end of each session
 - Teen Golf provides age & gender appropriate participation opportunities for teenage girls in golf

- Games-based learning works well with children. Information on how to run games-based sessions are provided in the MyGolf manual.
- Adopt a “whole-of-club” approach. The pro shop has worked closely and collaboratively with the club and General Manager to ensure the success of these programs.
- Tap into relevant community events, e.g. International Women’s and Girls Day, Mother’s Day or breast cancer awareness days to run female-specific events and programs.
- Promote within your club to recruit wives, partners, daughters and granddaughters of members. Also promote externally through social media and local post-box flyer drops.

- Have a resilient attitude - don’t be deterred if there are smaller numbers at the start – this will build over time.
- Girls can tend to be more comfortable with a female figure, so engage a fun and friendly women at your club to become a Community Instructor.

Sign-up to Golf Australia’s national participation programs - including Get into Golf, MyGolf and the Community Golf Instructor program via www.golf.org.au

Community Instructor

