

Wellington Golf Player Pathway

Introduction to Golf

Most youngsters are introduced to the great game of golf through family members or their friends at school. This may evolve from just hitting a ball around a park to trying out golf at a golf driving range, on the practice fairway or on the golf course proper. Many schools offer a programme, KiwiGolf, which introduces children to the basic principles of golf. The enthusiasm and encouragement of family and friends is usually the means by which most youngsters gain their understanding of the game and by which they become 'hooked' on the game, often for the rest of their lives.

Golf Club Junior Programmes

Many Golf Clubs have a Junior Programme often encouraged by an enthusiastic Junior Convenor and his or her committee members which often include family members and leading players at the Club. These volunteer helpers can be 'coached to coach' through the **Junior Plus Programme** which will give them a basic understanding of golf coaching that can then be passed on to the youngsters. There are a series of grades available to teach the fundamentals of golf. At many Clubs Juniors can enter their own competitions and all will be able to gain their handicap.

Regional Development Coaching

From the beginner grades of Junior Plus the work done by the volunteer coaches can be advanced by using Professional coaches under a scheme devised as a levy scheme. Each adult golfer is levied just \$2 which is used to allow the junior golfers to develop their skills at a more advanced level. The money raised by this levy is used for the Junior members pro rata to the number of adults who contributed at each Golf Club. Coaching is conducted on an area basis by a local professional so whether Clubs have their own professional or not the Juniors will all receive coaching to an appropriate standard.

Junior Interclub

Within the Wellington District most Clubs enter teams in the District Junior Interclub competitions. The competitions are regionally based in an attempt to reduce travel and involve competitive play between Clubs on two levels: Junior Pennants which is played at 'home and away' using handicaps and the higher level Watt Cup which is played without handicaps ('off the stick'). If Clubs do not have enough Juniors to fill a team then composite teams from two Clubs can be formed.

Golf Club Interclub

Most Clubs in the Wellington District enter teams in the weekend Interclub competitions. The competitions are in two categories both with 10 players per team: 10 grades which involve play over 18-holes and 3 grades for elite players over 36-holes. All these competitions are played "off the stick" but by virtue of the range of grades are suited to a range of player ability whilst aimed at the player of above-average skill.

Age-group Squad Coaching

For younger players who show particular promise within their own Club or at District events, assessment days and various coaching levels there is a further series of coaching available. Clubs are asked to nominate talented players who may benefit from a higher level of coaching within a group format run on age-group criteria. This is a more concentrated type of coaching for especially talented youngsters.

WGA Junior Golf Academy

Wellington is fortunate to have an Academy (funded by Pelorus Trust, and equipped by Srixon Sports) for which 12 elite players in the District are selected. This year there are 10 boys and 2 girls who make up this elite group; they are selected for their potential and for the ability that they demonstrate at coaching, interclub competitions and at tournaments. They are provided with tuition both on a personal level but also in a group format to allow them to improve their game to take advantage of their potential and to learn in a more formal environment.

District Representation

As players show potential and actual playing ability at coaching, interclub competitions and tournaments they are able to be selected for representative events on the Wellington District calendar. Initially that is likely to be at a 'selection' event, then at Junior (age-group) level and finally at the Senior level for provincial fixtures. This is seen as a progression from representing the Club with distinction to representing the District and just like any form of competition can be used to measure a player's ability against his or her peers.

NZ Titleist Academy

The next level that a talented player may aspire to is selection in the elite High Performance Academy. Eighteen young men and 12 young women from around the country are supported through the Academy to take part in tournaments and coaching schools.

New Zealand Selection

The ultimate aim for an amateur player in New Zealand is to represent their country in international competition. New Zealand is represented in a number of age-group and full international events which culminate in the Eisenhower Cup for men and the Espirito Santos Trophy for women as the pinnacles of World Amateur teams Championships.