



JUNIORS: FRINTON – AGAINST THE NATIONAL TREND

R W Attrill describes how Frinton Golf Club actively encourages Juniors.

Secretary At Work: March 2001 *(reviewed October 2011)*

In November 2000 Frinton Golf Club reached a landmark, unlikely to be matched by many Clubs nation-wide, the Junior Membership of the Club passed a phenomenal 100, including 20 girls!

This achievement is all the more creditable when one considers that half Frinton's catchment area is in the North Sea and that the Town itself, despite the much publicised recent acquisition of a pub, has a rather staid Edwardian image.

How then has Frinton achieved such success with its Juniors and what can be learnt from the Club's experience?

An important factor has been the Club's Short Course, 2734 yards with a Par of 58, made up of seven par threes and two par fours, the longest being 247 yards. The course has the same greens and has changed little since it was laid out in 1913. It has been the nursery for hundreds of golfers and the proving ground for achieving a certain degree of competence, before moving on to the main course, which was established in 1895.

Equally essential to the success of any coaching scheme is the instructor and the Club are indeed fortunate to have as their professional Peter Taggart, a well respected teacher, who has an excellent rapport with children having three youngsters of his own. Peter holds classes (up to a maximum of 16 children in each group) for junior beginners on Saturday afternoons, throughout the year. This has been so successful that his assistant, Tom Hide, is now also teaching the under 10 group. At this stage very few of the children are Members, the lessons are open to all comers and not just the children of Members, this has attracted non-golfing families to the game.

One of the Club's concerns was the fact that existing tuition schemes, such as those provided by the Golf Foundation through PGA Professionals, worked well in that they introduced children to the game, but often left them stranded when it came to joining a Club. However at Frinton, if they show the right aptitude and progress, they can become Juniors Members, but have to be proposed by a current Member. This rarely presents a problem as the Junior Organisers (Alan Rushbridge, an ex police sergeant, who runs the Juniors with Long Course handicaps and Mrs Jo Lawrence, the Short Course players, with and without handicaps), have the back up of willing volunteers. Having attained Membership, the Junior golfer is further assisted by a graduated

subscription scheme, this means that the full subscription is not payable until the Member reaches the age of 29.

Attracting Girls into the game is always difficult, even if they are the daughters of Members. The Club's first approach was to offer FREE lessons to girls at the local mixed Comprehensive, both at the School and the Club. This, disappointingly, even with the full co-operation of the Headmaster and PE teacher, drew a complete blank. Undeterred the next step was to select one or two girls, whom in turn were encouraged to invite a friend or two along, again for a FREE lesson, followed by refreshments in the clubhouse. Slowly but surely more girls became involved until now there are 20 Junior girl Members, under the age of 16. A write-up/diary entry in the School Magazine did no harm either!

None of this would have been possible without money!

The Background

In 1997 Iain Quick, a former Captain of Essex, a Past Captain and Member of the Club for many years, approached the Committee with an idea to raise funds for Juniors. He had witnessed the problems faced by amateurs throughout the County, whose parents had to make considerable sacrifices to allow their children to play golf at County level and higher.

The Club established the Arthur Havers Junior Bursary in memory of a great golfer and gentleman. Arthur Havers won The Open Championship at Troon in 1923, was a Ryder Cup player and was the professional at Frinton Golf Club from 1956-1964.

The Bursary is administered by five Trustees. Under its Declaration of Trust it is designed to promote and increase 'the awareness and appreciation of the game of golf among Members and Junior Members of the Club' and 'improving and progressing the standard of the younger Members of the Club within the boundaries of amateur status as defined by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews'.

The Bursary provides funds for the many coaching groups, entrance fees for Junior Open competitions, as well as paying for transport to matches etc. This year it provided a trip for 35 Juniors to visit the practice day for The English Open at The Forest of Arden. Funds are raised by an annual competition, and many Members make individual donations, knowing that this supports the future of the Club. Currently the Fund stands at some £5,000.

Without the Arthur Havers Bursary the additional coaching groups would not be possible and whilst the Club cannot yet boast a Rebecca Hudson or a Paul Casey, there is still time...

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