

Dollar making golf a game for the community

March 2011

Dollar Golf Club, which grew its junior membership by 40 percent last season, is planning to take golf to the local community this year.

The club had in the words of its junior convenor, Donald Malcolm “lost a generation as a result of doing things the old way” before a remarkable turnaround last year. Everyone at the club is supporting a modern approach in conjunction with the national junior programme clubgolf, which saw the junior membership grow by 40 percent to 60 in 2010.

“It was amazing; we started our coaching programme with one child, ended with 30 and more children became members as a result,” said Mr Malcolm, who explained the club had introduced new, affordable membership categories to appeal to children and families, and a clubgolf coaching programme.



Dollar GC's junior convenor Donald Malcolm and fellow clubgolf volunteer coach children last summer, by Rob Eyton-Jones

To prepare for the new season the club has trained and developed its volunteer coaching team as a part of a plan to bring in more juniors from the local community.

“A lot of our children last year come from afar and so this year we aim to capture the local ones,” said Mr Malcolm.

“We are making a consolidated effort to grow membership from Dollar Academy and to get the P5s from Strathdevon School. The local Active Schools Co-ordinator, Boushra Oussellam, is contacting the parents to get it going, making it very simple for me to get this moving.”

Mr Malcolm hopes that 16 new children will join his clubgolf Stage 1 coaching starting with the first Coaching Taster on Monday 28th March at 4.30pm. In addition there are plans to have another 20 juniors at other stages of the programme.

To ensure a 1:4 coach-pupil ratio the club has expanded its qualified volunteer coach team to 10 after sending a further two members on clubgolf's two day Level 1 training course with the PGA (details of the next Level 1 course in the footer*).

Lacking a resident pro, Dollar has along with other central Scotland clubs, been part of a mentoring and support programme led by Callendar pro, Allan Martin.

“Thanks to Allan Martin the programme that we have put together is quite structured,” said Mr Malcolm. “He ran an excellent workshop for volunteer coaches at Dollar Academy this week and when the season starts he is going to watch us coaching children and indicate how we can improve. To have that ability to talk to him is very helpful.”

A second strand of Dollar's plan is to help juniors become better players. Superimposing two nine hole Par 3s on its course last year encouraged youngsters to play, helping four players to earn a handicap - a good start according to Mr Malcolm, but not enough.

"We weren't getting enough golfers used to competition, filling in cards or recording their scores properly," he said.

"If we can encourage more improving players to routinely compete which then gives them the idea that they need to get handicaps, then that's good."

There's a new optimism at Dollar, linked to a loosening of its old rules and a change of attitude towards Juniors.

"We've worked on the constitution and our biggest breakthrough is to let juniors with a handicap play with adults in our adult competitions," said Club Captain, Dug Bradley.

"It used to be quite strict here and a junior had to have a single figure handicap before they were allowed to play with the adults.

"Fortunately there has been an enormous change in the way we engage with Juniors and we are broadening the base of adults who can play with and encourage them.

"To some extent that is breaking a bit of a tradition. A lot of the adults remember being treated rather poorly as youngsters, however this is changing. We have a really good open door with Dollar Golf Club Council being completely behind this initiative."

*clubgolf's next PGA level 1 course in Central will take place from 14-15 May at Forthview Golf Academy, Airth. The closing date for applications is 1st April. If you are interested in finding out more about this course and how to become a volunteer clubgolf coach, please contact Mandy Martin, clubgolf's Central Regional Manager on 07956 540587.