

COMPETITION

CALENDARS

A guide for creating effective schedules for junior golfers in Ontario



Presented by
Golf Performance Coaches



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THE BIG PICTURE

Playing competitive golf is really fun

The purpose of this small book is to provide clear guidance to parents of junior aged athletes who play golf. In order to set a proper tone for the book, we thought it would be a good idea to describe our viewpoint(s) on competitive golf and its role in the lives of young people.

Playing golf is a glorious privilege. The ability to spend days and weeks immersed in the game of golf is one of the best things we can wish on anyone. For a typical junior aged golfer, the summer days are filled with holes and holes of camaraderie and scenery that is really hard to find in any other sport. To be able to also seek out personal excellence, or mastery, of the game of golf also provides a great benefit to those who play. We see this in our players to varying degrees of intensity, however one constant theme for the junior players we've met is that they are trying to seek out excellence in a challenging sport. The goal of competition is to test our abilities in an environment filled with excitement and consequence.

Young players turn to competitive events because they would like to test their abilities against a mixture of forces - their own self-beliefs, the other players in the field, and the golf course they set upon to play. Playing in competitions is a really neat way to discover things about you as a person and as an athlete, and the vagaries of competitive golf seem to be unique in the experiences it can force us to face. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves of why we're drawn to these competitive events in the first place. We see situations where focus shifts from long term to short term - where we overlook the harm we might be doing in search of a more instant gratification, be that order of merit points or good scores. We are trying to develop great people - people who happen to love playing golf - and we must keep our focus fixed on this big picture. In the long term, we hope to provide environments for our kids where they can learn about themselves, play games outside with friends, and possibly seek out excellence in the game.

Doesn't that sound like an awesome environment?



THE GOAL

The Purpose of this Book

Before you read on, we'd like to clarify a few ideas that we explore in detail through the book. The landscape of junior competitive golf in Ontario is pretty robust, and at times it would seem quite complicated. It can, in the early days at least, feel somewhat daunting.

This manual is designed for those people who may be confused by the multiple options available to their son or daughter. We hope to provide clear and practical advice that is drawn from the many years of experience we have in building competitive schedules for players of all abilities. We have consulted with hundreds of families over the years and we would like to share the “best practices” we’ve witnessed over this time.

This particular book envisions the situation of families of junior golfers aged roughly 13-17 years of age. There are, of course, many junior players who sit either below or above this age range, but in order to tighten the presentation we will focus particularly on the ages of a 13-17 year old living in Ontario. In the hopes of being specific, we have tried to provide examples that are similar to real experiences. As a result, the tone of this manual will also lean towards boys rather than girls, and the reason for this is that the boys landscape is several times more complicated than the girls one, simply by force of numbers. Because so many boys are playing, the number of available events is more scarce than it is on the girls’ side. The large number of junior boys in this age range also makes it relevant for us to target this “majority” of the players involved in making competition schedules.

There is very practical advice for all families of competitive golfers in this manual, and so even if your demographic sits somewhere outside the direct focus of this book, you will still draw lots of useful information. It is important to begin managing well in advance of the competitive phase. Beyond the obvious pitfalls of missing deadlines, overlooking good events, or overloading your schedule, a poorly managed schedule can also wreak havoc on athletic performance – causing undo stress on athletes which can hinder their skills.

We have divided the book into 4 key sections which answer the questions we keep hearing from the families we work with. We will look into ideas around how much competition to do, what type of competition to do, how to plan this all out, and why are we doing this in the first place. We hope you enjoy the reading.

VOLUME OF SCHEDULE

How Many Competitions Should One Do?

Over-competing means under-training

Playing in more events does not increase your odds of getting good results. In fact, one of the surest ways to SLOW the rate of skill development in young athletes is to expose them to too high a high frequency of competitions at a young age. Over-competing has the double effect of putting too much psychological load on a young developing players while also forcing this same player to neglect the technical and physical skill development (practice) that he/she so desperately needs at this age.

For almost all players under the age of 18, focus should be placed on the technical and physical pillars of performance. Rather than feeling that we must compete all the time to “show our skills”, it is of far greater import for young players to develop their skills in environments of deliberate practice. Remember the big picture – we are really working to develop the best person possible in a few years time. A short-sighted approach to scheduling would overlook the big picture in favor of trying to “get results”, and this strategy often leads to a player under-performing, and always leads to a player neglecting the valuable hours of training required to master these complex skills.

Over-competing and under-training is the norm in many sports, and it has been a topic of much research in athletics as a whole. Heavy loads of competition have consistently proven to increase instances of burnout, injury, fatigue, etc... Too often we see these symptoms prior to an athlete deciding to leave a sport altogether, or at least to lose their love for the sport in some way. When working with our young players on their calendars, we draw a link between playing in golf competitions and writing exams in school. Imagine a school system that gave you exams nearly every day over a few months, how do you think you would perform?

We argue that the player who plays golf events every week is like a student that writes final exams every week – it’s just a disaster waiting to happen. Not only would our student writing so many exams be unable to prepare properly, but think about the toll this would take on his body and mind, as well as his daily athletic behaviors.

We cannot overstate the importance of finding suitable breaks and periods of recuperation for our players through a competitive season. It is tempting to feel that we must register for everything possible, and in the landscape we live in it would be possible to play a big event nearly every day for all of July and August. It is a great tragedy that most of our players and their families must learn this the hard way! Our advice is for you to identify the major event and be sure to allocate lots of time for rest, recuperation, and practice as you lead into your major events.



THE YEARLY TRAINING PLAN

Your schedule is part of a bigger vision

If we are trying our best to help young athletes perform their best in competition, than competitive junior golfers will hopefully be training in a way which follows some sort of plan. Ideally, the plan is a detailed description of the “what” and “how” of training over a period of time.

In our programs, players construct a yearly training plan with the help of our coaching staff, and in doing this they lay the foundation for all of the work they will be doing in order to perform at their best when it matters most to them.

Obviously, the choice of what events to play and what times of year will play a key role in determining the timing of all of the training goals. In essence, an effective yearly training plan works backwards from the major events that are identified in a calendar year. Most players in Ontario are looking at major events in late July or early August, and then there may be some big events in late May and early June as well. As a result, the work they are doing two, four, even twelve weeks in advance of a major event are specifically designed to

Effective scheduling can make the process of being the best you can be at the right time of year much more likely. Imagine a player who is cognizant of all of the big weeks in his upcoming year, and who can design his training leading up to those events with care and deliberation, complemented by the guidance of trained coaches...And then imagine a player who is rushing from event to event trying to perform well while simultaneously training in reactive way – feeling tired and unprepared for the events that seem to come every week.





PERIODIZATION AND TAPERING

Managing Energy for Competition

Once the major events of a player's schedule are in place, the key is to now work backwards from these events and begin to script out the week of training/rest that will come before these events. One of the key strategies is termed "tapering" – and in our context it refers to the management of the training period immediately before a major tournament.

In most instances, Tapering involves a decrease in volume and intensity in one's training – with a goal of achieving a peak in performance after this period – hopefully during the competition. More scientifically, tapering produces a superior biological state characterized by ideal health, quick adaptability to training, and a very fast rate of recovery. Great performances are more likely to happen if we carefully manage our energy leading into key events.

As an example that is relevant to our landscape here in Ontario, we can imagine the following for the 3 or 4 days leading up to a major event:

- Physical Training: Reduced to thorough warm-ups and cool downs.
- Golf Practice: Elevate the intensity (quality repetitions) and decrease the volume, frequency, and duration of the sessions– spend the majority of your time simulating the psychology of competition.
- Emotions: Work to unload all stress from your life inside and outside the athletic arena. Begin to upload positive imagery and thoughts for competition. Revisit your best performances.
- Rest: Find extra sleep and recovery and ensure that you aren't training if you are fatigued. Find time to be alone and relaxed - whether that be in sleep or meditation.
- Nutrition/Hydration: Consume high quality foods and ensure you maximize water intake. Think of the quality of fuel you are putting into your engine.

Implementing these strategies prior to competition will ensure that the athlete's body and mind are fully ready to handle the demands of the competitive environment and in turn this gives the athlete the best opportunity to succeed. This is just another example of the type of planning that can go into scheduling. Once major events are identified, we can structure the training environments we will surround these events with.

THE QUESTION OF SCHEDULE INTENSITY

What Level of Competition do I do?

For starters, weigh scoring average and competitive experience

Choosing the best events to play in requires equals measures confidence and modesty. To start, take note of what type of scores a player tends to shoot on average. Next, look at the amount of competitive experience a player has.

A common fallacy is that one good round equates to a pattern of good rounds. The fact that one has fired a sub-par round at their home course on a random Thursday afternoon with friends does not mean that the same player will experience this same proficiency when they compete. Be honest about what a player's average score is – a measure of their good and bad. Keeping an accurate handicap is a good place to start with determining your ability level.

We encourage players (and their families) to use a “ladder approach” to building their schedule.

- 1. This means first identifying which rung of the competitive ladder you belong at.**
- 2. Next, you should choose your majors from your appropriate rung,**
- 3. After that, you should also sprinkle-in some events from a rung above and a rung below. So if you are a “level 3” type of player you should also add in a few of the level 2 and level 4 events.**

A glimpse of the level above will prepare you for your future years where you will compete at that level. Invaluable experience can come from these events, but enter them to learn and not necessarily to perform. (You may be surprised at how well you perform in this mindset, by the way.)

Meanwhile, the ones below your abilities will help you develop confidence and have success. A return to the level below allows an athlete to be a “big fish” and to experience the mindset of confidence and courage. An occasional win never hurts and can be tough to glimpse if we only ever play in the biggest events possible.





Which Tours do I Register with? There are so many choices!

The Tours

There are literally hundreds of events offered throughout Ontario in any given summer.

The business of running junior competitions is a healthy one, and many of the tours compete for players in the busy months outside of school. You can divide the types of tours into the following labels:

- Local Events – like Invitationals, Inter-clubs, etc.
- Regional Tours – like the Durham Tour or the Bags tour
- Private Tours – like the Maple Leaf Tour and the Can. Junior Golf Association
- Provincial Events – run by the Golf Association of Ontario
- National Events – run by Golf Canada
- International Events – like the US junior or some big AJGA events



Event Quality

The governing bodies of golf in Canada now consider the rankings of various tours and they have divided the strength of various events into “Categories”. Beginning with category 5 events, a player then navigates himself up the ladder towards the strongest events, called category 1 events. So in this model, the local invitational event near your house is a classic “Category 5”, while the US junior - televised on major US networks - is a “Category 1”. A player receives points depending on his finish at any event, and the number of points is determined by the “Category” that event is at.

Category 5 – Local events

Category 4 – Private Tour Minors / Regional Events / Provincial Qualifiers

Category 3 – Provincial Minor / Private Tour Majors

Category 2 – Provincial Major / National Major

Category 1 – International / Certain National Adult

Age



Another piece to consider is competitive age. The cut off date for ages is August 1st of that calendar year. So as an example, in 2015 if were born before August 1st 2000 you are considered over 15 years old, and if you are born August 2nd or later you are considered to be 14 years old. The age categories are as follows:

Junior – Under 19 years of age

Juvenile – Under 17 years of age

Bantam – Under 15 years of age

Pee Wee – Under 13 years of age



Order of Merit

Almost all of the provincial and national events contribute to a provincial and national “order of merit” (OOM) system. Similar to the fed-ex cup system we see on the PGA tour, the essentials of the OOM is that most events have a points system attached to them, and depending on where you finish you will be allotted a certain number of points. At the end of any season, the players with the most points will gain some benefits – be it selection to teams, early acceptance to events in the future, or simply the pride of being ranked ahead of others.

We would caution players from reading too much into this point system – we have found that obsession with this OOM system has led players and their families to “chase points” all around the continent, when the reality is that these points are merely a complement to a competitors resume, and should not be the centre-piece. A good working knowledge of the OOM is useful when planning events, especially as we move up into category 3 and 2 events.

- Future Links Order of Merit (Golf Canada)
<http://golfcanada.ca/national-orders-of-merit/>
- Provincial Order of Merit (GAO)
<https://gao.ca/excelling-performing/order-of-merit-rankings/>

The Qualifiers

For boys in Ontario, most of the major provincial events in Ontario have one-day qualifiers. Take the time to register for suitable qualifying sites but don't try to be too clever here. Find courses you like and make sure that the date fits into your schedule. You will be well served to consider your exam schedule, family plans, as well as taking into account what other events you might be playing in around that time.

Because major events almost always require some form of qualifying, these one day events should be treated seriously – make sure you have enough time to prepare, that you can play one or more practice rounds, and that you are comfortable with your game by the time this date rolls around on your schedule.

US Exposure. Which Tours should I play in the States?

Almost every player I've ever asked the question of "where do you want to be in 3 or 4 years?" answers the same way – "at a US school, hot, great practice facilities, good team, etc..." And so we cannot entertain the theme of scheduling without at least recognizing that our players want to open doors to the NCAA experience south of our border. And so we should address the many competitive experiences that are offered in the US throughout the year.

It's a pity that there aren't as many opportunities in college as there are people who want them, but we'll speak more to that in the appendix. The reality is that playing NCAA golf is a highly competitive "field". One simple piece of advice we would share is for players to target US events that are near the schools that you have interest in attending (or attracting). Coaches and recruiters won't be travelling in Canada, especially for any events under a Category 4, and so it is imperative to travel to them if you hope to garner interest.

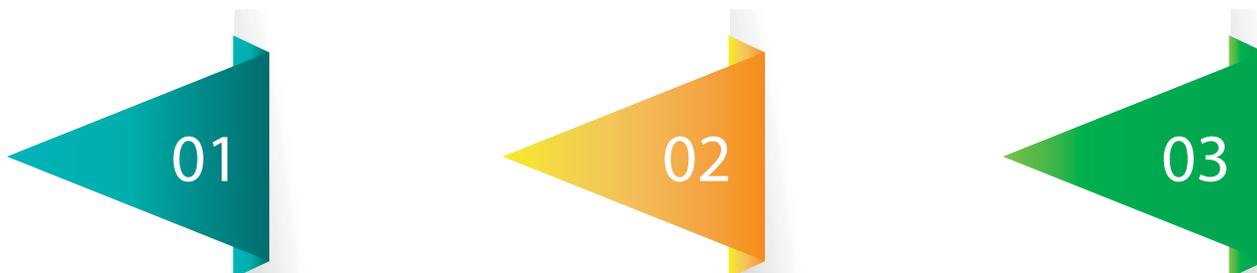


USEFUL RESOURCES

The steps for a typical schedule for a 16 year old boy in Ontario

1. The first step in building a sound competition calendar is to identify 3 or 4 major events. These are events that will have the greatest amount of preparation, and they go into the calendar first. In most cases, these major events will have qualifying procedures to follow – so you'll need to be sure to register for the qualifying events if there are some.
2. The next step is to identify the “minor” events. These can be one rung above or below “where you belong”, or else they are right in your ability level but for any of various reasons will be considered a “minor” event.
3. The last step is to fill in your calendar with “preparatory” events, and these can be added at any time in the season. These are events that easily fit your schedule and can be added or subtracted fairly easily.

And now we have a very solid calendar for this player – which will offer lots of opportunity to learn, enjoy the game, perform, and compete. A player of this age would play about 14-18 competitions in a season – a mixture of majors, minors and preparatory events.



Player identifies core provincial and national events - his majors

- Canadian Junior Boys
- Ontario Junior Boys
- Ontario Juvenile Boys
- CN Future Links event(s)

Identify minor events to complement the majors

- US Junior Boys qualifier
- Ontario Junior Match Play
- AJGA event in Ontario

And then finally - add the preparatory events from various sources

- Durham Tour or a regional tour
- MJT and CJGA
- Club commitments
- Some US events in the fall season



This type of schedule will ensure that this player:

- Improves their skills,
- Enjoys the game,
- Earns some order of merit points
- Attracts some exposure for US colleges/build competitive resume

GPC Planning Document

Here is an example of a scheduling template we like to use with our families. Across the top we have columns for dates, event name, location, and course. We also include some columns for travel distance, hotel requirements, whether there's a qualifier, when the practice round will be done, and the estimated costs. With all this in mind, a player and there family can begin to appreciate the scope of the schedule and how it will affect other aspects of the family life (like exams, vacations, siblings, etc.)



2015 Competitive Calendar

Name _____

Dates	Event name	Class of Event	Course	KM's from home	Hotel (Y/N)	Qualifier (Y/N)	Practice Round Date(s)	Est. \$\$\$
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And here's an example of one that's been filled out a little bit:

2015 Competitive Calendar

Name _____

Dates	Event name	Class of Event	Course	KM's from home	Hotel (Y/N)	Qualifier (Y/N)	Practice Round Date(s)	Est. \$\$\$
April								
21-22	Warm Up Event	Preparatory	Burningbush	100	N			
28	Spring Classic Qualifier	Minor	Bushwood	75				
May								
10-11	Tour Qualifier	Minor	Timbuktoo CC	60	N			
17-19	Spring Classic	Major	Wooden Sticks	75	N	Y	10-May	
17-18	Durham Tour Event	Preparatory	Timbuktoo CC	50				
24-27	Future Links Ontario	Major	Pebble Sands	150			15-May	
June								
5	Durham Tour Event	Preparatory	Timbuktoo CC	50				
13-14	Durham Tour Event	Preparatory	Timbuktoo CC	50				
20	US Junior Qualifier	Minor	Detroit CC	500				
School Exams								
	Durham Tour Event	Preparatory	Timbuktoo CC	50				
July								
4-7	Future Links Quebec	Minor		300				
5-6	Durham Tour Event	Preparatory	Timbuktoo CC	50				
12-13	Durham Tour Event	Preparatory	Timbuktoo CC	50				
17-20	Ontario Junior	Major	Sudbury GC	350	4	Y	16-Jul	
19-20	Durham Tour Event	Preparatory	Timbuktoo CC	50				
August								
2-6	Canadian Junior	Major		200		Y	01-Aug	
0-11	Durham Tour Event	Preparatory	Timbuktoo CC	50				
21-24	Ontario Juvenile	Major	Deerhurst Highlands	250	3	Y	20-Aug	
September								
	School Event	Preparatory		50				
October								
"10	OFFSA's	Minor		150	N			
22-23	FCWT Notre Dame event	Minor		750	2			

Note - in certain areas this player has a plan A and plan B - in case one event doesn't work out they can then opt for plan B. this is an important concept when playing lots of qualifiers (which may not pan out)

Budgeting. The Cost of Competitive Golf

Depending on the amount of travel and the level of competition, the costs of playing competitive golf is significant, and should not be glossed over. I don't mean to scare anyone away here, but an elite junior player between the ages of 15 and 18 may want to budget about \$15000 - \$20000 for their year in competitive golf. This would cover their coaching, equipment, memberships, tournament fees, and travel costs. In some cases it will be even more, but there are also ways for making this work on as frugal a budget as possible. Even for less serious players, say someone who plays just 12 events and all in Ontario - we can still get over \$5000 in a summer pretty quickly:



A few years ago we asked our families to note their spending as it related to competitive golf, and from the totals we can draw up the following budget as an average:

A Classic Competitive Golf Budget

3000-5000 kilometers – \$1500
2 hotel rooms – \$250
Entry Fees – \$2000
Equipment – \$500
Food – \$500
Coaching – \$1000

Our best advice to families that are just starting out into this landscape is to seek out reputable regional tours to join for the season. This way you get lots of events, you're provided with a safe and friendly environment for developing your game, and you can get a pretty full schedule for well below the costs associated with the other private tours. We often advise our players to consider joining regional tours to cut costs and play more. For example, a tour like the Durham Tour costs around \$500 for the season and players play in 10+ very well run events.

APPENDIX

THE WHY

These are people who play golf, not golfers who are people

Before we go on here, and get to work on developing our understanding around the concept of competition schedules for junior golfers, I think its important to stop for a moment and consider an important question – Why do we want our children to play competitive golf?

Is it that we want them to “make it” to the highest echelons of competitive golf ?– a place where a very small minority of the most talented players in the world make a good living, and where thousands more players – all of them incredible talents themselves but somehow just missing something to bring them into that super elite group – are struggling to rub two dimes together, travelling from hotel to hotel, with impossible stress on their relationships and support groups?



Is it that we want them to experience the NCAA experience south of the border? Again where only a very small minority are truly living the experience we imagine when we close our eyes and picture a great campus with great professors in a warm climate with a great golf course or two. Meanwhile, hundreds of other young men and women are thrown into strange lands surrounded by strange people, and in so many cases return home disillusioned and unhappy?

Or is it that we want them to explore a path of mastery? Support them as they learn what it takes to work to be excellent at something? Fully aware of the impossible odds stacked against ever truly “making it” but confident that the journey towards this improbable beacon is really what its all about. Don’t we want our children to gain valuable experiences that will help them in their future lives and which will simultaneously provide them happiness? Isn’t this all about providing environments where a young athlete can return home after an event and derive the self-satisfaction of knowing that they have given all that they can?



At the end of the day, the goal of any parent is surely to maximize the happiness and fulfillment in his child’s life, and we sometimes need to remind ourselves of this fact when we are working to build the ideal competitive calendar. Kids play sports because its fun. There’s no other reason. As a child moves on through years of training in a particular sport, he will either yearn to compete and be the best she can be, or else they will glimpse the rigors of competition and opt to play the game rather on their own terms. One does not have to be the best at golf to derive the many benefits that the game offers to young, developing athletes. Competitions do offer a critical component of a young athletes experience of the game, and the building of a suitable competition calendar should be a major focus of any training plan.

The question of where you’re going with all of this is, of course, a big one. The purpose of playing competitive events is usually pretty consistent, but we cannot assume that every player will share a similar goal for his or her golfing life. While the great majority of young players we meet do share a common vision (they see themselves at a US college) there are many good reasons to play competitive golf and not all of them are as a means to an end.



Why does my child play worse in tournaments?

Especially in the early days, you can usually add a few strokes from a player's AVERAGE when they shift into competitive mode.

It is a logical necessity that your season will be made up of very good rounds and very bad rounds. You will have a worst round and a best round. As easy as this may be to read, it is incredibly difficult in practice, and we often see a competitive season resembling the most elaborate of roller coasters as young athletes are forced to cope with the vagaries of competitive sport.

We encourage our players to embrace this reality and to explore the possibility of unlocking their best rounds. On good days we see who we can be, on the less good days we must work to better understand ourselves and prepare to be better next time. Instead, athletes are encouraged to approach each season of events from a perspective of balance.

Identify your own Majors, Minors, and Preparatory events

- To the young – get experience in various ways – see what it's like in your future, start preparing for your exams
- To the Older Players – build your competitive resume – look for scoring average and strength of field
- Order of Merit System – needs to be considered
- Remember to make plan B and C if you don't get into the ones you want

Too many players are obsessed with performance and work from a false assumption that you can be your best every time. But if you think about this, has there ever been an athlete (or person) that is always at their best? It is the very definition of impossibility.

The US Scholarship

“I want to play at a US School in a warm climate”

The dream of US college golf is ubiquitous, however we must pause to consider the likelihood of this goal. Even further, shouldn't we be asking what this goal is all about anyway? Is it possible that our young athletes are merely being enticed by the allure and marketing of the NCAA institution? Do they really know what they are asking for when they say they want to play in the south US? Is anywhere south good enough?

The reality is that there are a finite number of opportunities to play in the US at a good school with a good team and a good home course. While there are nearly 1200 NCAA school options for a young male golfer, which might mean as many as 12000 roster spots on a university or college team, the reality is that there is intense competition for these spots.

For the 12000 spots there are hundreds of thousands of hopefuls from all over the world. Then off those 12000 spots we can be certain that players returning for another year or two will hold 75% of them. This leaves about 3000 spots a year for a young man to earn.

And then if we are searching for scholarships to attend these schools, then these opportunities are truly reserved for the very best athletes in any region. 3000 roster spots is reduced heavily to about 1000 spots with a substantial scholarship, now the odds are really getting tight. The reality is, that while many young men are hoping to get a scholarship to an American university or college for golf, the odds are really not that good at all.



The American Junior Golf Association (AJGA)

The AJGA is really the golf standard for junior competitions in North America. Outside of the National Championships in the US and Canada, the AJGA is the most prestigious and challenging tour that an aspiring junior golfer can participate in.

- Uses Performance Based Entry (PBE) to determine field of players in each event
- Members can play a maximum of five Open and/or Junior All-Star Series tournaments per AJGA season.
- You do not need to be a member of the AJGA to compete in a qualifier
- Players with the highest number of Performance Stars will have priority over players with fewer Performance Stars



*Developing Golf's
Next Generation*





In 2015, the average score to qualify into Open tournaments was: Boys - 75.4; Girls - 77.6. The average score to finish in the top 50% of the AJGA Qualifier field and earn a Performance Star was: Boys - 78.3; Girls - 80.6.

The AJGA recognizes the older junior players and accords them a few more “stars” than younger competitors, just for signing up. This gives them an edge into fields that may be difficult to find a spot in. Players receive the following “Performance Stars” through membership registration:

- Purchase or Renew AJGA Membership = 1
- High School Sophomore / Senior = 2
- High School Junior = 3

Qualifiers

The AJGA Qualifier Series is one of the main ways players get their start with the AJGA.

Typically held the day prior to AJGA Open and ACDS Junior All-Star Series tournaments, 18-hole AJGA Qualifiers give players an opportunity to "play their way in" to each coinciding tournament and earn PBE status for a future event.

- Players should begin to accumulate stars through participation in AJGA one-day qualifiers
- Approximately 10% of the AJGA Qualifier field will qualify into the actual Tournament.
- If you qualify for a given event you do not need to be a AJGA member to compete. Please note that you will be subject to a small fee (\$30) for not being a member.

Golf Performance Centre Preview Series

The Golf Performance Center Preview Series is designed specifically for AJGA members who have not yet been accepted to an AJGA tournament. This series offers members the opportunity to start building Performance Based Entry status before application deadlines arrive for summer Open and ACDS Junior All-Star Series events.

Open Events

Open tournaments are for AJGA members who are 12-18 years old. Players with the highest earned Performance Based Entry status (number of stars) as of the application deadline will gain entry into the event. Performance Stars are earned depending on your finish position – the top half of every field will receive one or a few stars depending on how they place. There's a full listing of the Stars reward system on the AJGA site.

The Costs

- AJGA Junior Membership = \$215
- Qualifier = \$95 US
(Non-AJGA members \$120)
- Open Event = \$290 US

TRAVEL! HOTEL! FOOD! DAYS OFF WORK!

Are there other tours and tournaments that provide good exposure in the US?

In terms of Canadian events that garner attention from US coaches, only the National championships and a few provincial events will really mean anything to them. Coaches are siphoning through literally hundreds of events, and there are so many great events within 100 miles of their campus that they will rarely spend much time combing the Canadian junior tour results.

In the US, selected events on the Golf Week Tour, FCWT, and CJGA provide AJGA Performance Stars and are held in high esteem by college coaches and recruiters. IN our experience these are a good way to get started.

"The best way to get started with the AJGA is to play in the Junior All-Star series if you are 12-15 years old. If you are older than 15, then playing in Pre-Season events will give you the best chance at building your status"

CANADIAN AJGA PARENT



GolfWeek Junior Tour

A good feeder system into the AJGA events, these Golf-Week events can garner exemptions and invitations in to big events and certainly come onto the “radar” of college coaches, especially for events in the areas near their College or University. These are very well run events which will give our Canadian players the “aura” they are interested in for competitive golf abroad.

The logo for GolfWeek, with "GOLF" in black and "WEEK" in yellow, both in a bold, sans-serif font.

Future Collegiate Worldwide Tour (FCWT)

Probably the best place to start for US events is on this tour – they offer a number of events in the shoulder seasons of our busy summers, and it’s a good practice to target a few of their fall events (at Notre Dame, Duke, Purdue, etc.) to get a feel for the experience of going south to play in exposure events. These events also tie very nicely to informal campus visits and learning about what a university campus feels like. Outside of those tours, there are another 10-15 tours that run through the US all year – there really is no shortage of opportunities in this regard. The key is to target events that are close enough to home or else close to locations you’d like to go to school.





Much like a young athlete intent on making the NHL or NFL, supporters (parents, coaches) of this dream we must make sure that we understand the long odds and that we prepare the plan B, even as the athlete pursues the plan A. Like the farmers driving out to the promised land in the Grapes of Wrath, my own experience of this US college phenomenon is replete with as many stories of heartbreak and disillusionment as there are positive, fulfilling, stories. For every player that heads south and is happy, another returns in disbelief. The promise of perpetual golf, fame, and fun at a US college is rarely what it is made up to be, especially in relation to the idealistic minds of our teenagers.

But just because love sometimes leads to heartbreak are we to do away with love altogether? Of course not. In fact, if this dream of playing in the US is so appealing, we are well served to acknowledge this phenomenon and simply prepare our young athletes for the possibilities this entails. And between us, isn't the real benefit from all of this that our son or daughter is waking up each day inspired to seek out excellence in their particular endeavour, and that they go about this with passion and determination. Isn't there more to this than the pot of gold (scholarship) at the end of the rainbow?

The Return on Investment

Concluding Remarks

To sum up the previous section on US colleges, it's a balance of playing events to get good scores while also having exceptional marks. If you aren't among the very best players in Canada already, then you need to have exceptional grades and be able to shoot around par in competition. The formula we share with our players is to have marks above 85 and a scoring average below 75. I can't stress enough the importance of having exceptional grades, and of course this will in turn impact the planning of a competitive calendar (your exams essentially become a "major") that we've just gone through in great detail.

Beyond that, there are many great programs now in Canada. Athletes can attend schools in communities that they are familiar with in many cases with lots of their friends from high school. They can pursue an excellent education in fields that interest them. And all the while, they can compete in golf events in very strong fields made up of the very best talent in Canada. It's a wonder, as I write this, that this option isn't nearly as interesting to our kids as the US scholarship one...But between us, it sure sounds like a nice return on our investment, no?

So if the thousands of hours and dollars invested through the teenage years do not lead to a lucrative scholarship at a great school in a warm climate, then why are we doing this? What does one get out of this whole process anyway? The answer is complicated.





Firstly, athletes who compete in golf benefit from the many charms of the game. They play outside all day every day. They play with friends. They work hard on their skills and see them develop over time.

Secondly, athletes who compete in golf learn to respect others and learn to deal with people much older and much younger than them. They learn to follow rules and they see what happens to people who don't. They learn to play games in a fair and equitable way.

Thirdly, athletes who compete in golf draw all of the benefits of competitive sport. The camaraderie, the struggle, the perseverance and the joy. Young golfers learn that being perfect is absurd, but that working as hard as you can in any situation will always earn respect. Young golfers learn that life can be tough, but in the end your attitude will determine your level of success.

Lastly, athletes who compete in golf learn skills that will be with them for life – either when they raise their family or when they climb to great heights in their profession or work. Or both. Golf is one of the most unique and fulfilling sports that one can involve themselves in, and the benefits – the returns on the investment – never stop.

Thanks for reading our little book – be sure to let us know what you think...