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Growing the game

Increasing the fun factor

Golf is inherently fun for most of us, right? Golfers enjoy the game for different reasons: some because of its challenge, others for the camaraderie one can enjoy with friends. For some it might be the competitive encounters, or because it is an outdoor activity that provides exercise. Some enjoy the chance to get away and be on their own for a while.

But it is true that golf can require a good bit of time to play and demands a certain level of skills in order to succeed. The cost of playing can be a barrier, and lack of accessible facilities is another. And so the golf industry has been pushing to come up with ways to entice more people to play the game and have more fun on the course. Programs like ‘Tee it Forward’ provide some answers and considerations, but don’t concentrate much on the lighter side of things.

If golf isn’t enjoyable, why play? So I came up with a few ways to spark some interest at your club or facility. Hopefully we can create a little more excitement for the game and provide some unique experiences that most folks have never enjoyed before. So let your traditional guards down and consider, just for a moment, how these and other activities can be integrated.

1. On special days, junior outings or during certain events, set the course up in unusual ways and invent your own rules. Shorten holes awkwardly, create new tee locations, do the unexpected—but explain ahead of time it is just for fun!
2. Occasionally cut a few cups with an eight inch diameter—just for the fun of it! You might just see a few more chip-ins and certainly more putts holed.
3. Take your most difficult green and place two or three different pin locations. Give players choice!
4. Promote a Family Derby Night—pair up families as teams for a six hole alternate shot challenge. Grill out some hot dogs and award some fun prizes!
5. Hold an Annual Kids Day with a putting tournament, teaching clinic, short playing outing with parent caddies, and a family cookout to follow. This could be expanded into a weeklong Kids Camp, involving other activities such as tennis, swimming, fishing and other activities.
6. Hold a Couples—Only 70s Night twilight event with gaudy golf attire—maybe follow it up with a disco darty!
7. At the end of the season, feature ‘Superintendent’s Revenge Day’. The superintendent gets to set the course up in any way he pleases—a nice way to let your super take a few jabs at the players after a long season.
8. Schedule a special ‘Bring a Guest to the Course Week’, not to be confused with a member/guest tournament. Provide a special guest rate promotion with a shirt/logo balls/sandwich and round of golf to introduce them to the facility and maybe to the game for the first time.
9. Have a hickory golf outing! Hire a specialized outfitter to supply players with clubs/balls and play your (shortened) course like the old timers would. Encourage players to dress in period apparel and take a group black and white photo to commemorate the day.
10. Don’t keep score. Just play for fun. You’ll be surprised what you see, what you hear, how much more you laugh and smile and how much more relaxing golf can be. And if you’re going to play a competitive game, play matchplay—it’s faster and certainly less of a grind than having to play and count every single stroke. ●



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