



## HOW TO KEEP GIRLS LOVING GOLF

A practical guide to start or grow girls golf at your club



As part of its commitment to the R&A Women in Golf Charter, the Golf Foundation has put together this guide to help golf clubs develop a thriving junior section for girls. Insight from our work with golf clubs that have a significant number of girls as members /academy players has enabled us to create some useful tips for golf clubs.

A detailed case study of the work at Elsham Golf Club with additional input from Cosby Golf Club demonstrates how a successful girls section can be achieved. We believe this guidance gives golf clubs the 'know how' to increase participation amongst girls and nurture the next generation of female golfers. Any successful club project relies on a whole team effort and the support of a PGA Professional coach. Thanks in this instance to David McNicholas and Dane Duffin from Elsham GC and Darren Jones from Cosby GC, for their help in this work.

The results have seen Elsham GC welcome 39 girls to regular club golf, while Cosby GC enjoyed a highly positive year through its girls group thanks to its '3 F's' thinking – Fun, Family and Funding (creating 12 affiliated members and 8 academy players).

# Elsham GC in Lincolnshire

Elsham GC has grown a successful, busy girls section which now consists of 39 regular players, in over 2 years. Starting by offering golf sessions in local schools, golf was shown to be a fun and social game that girls can enjoy.

## How the Elsham Girls Squad developed

Elsham GC grew its girls section in response to the positive reaction to the introductory golf activity in 3 local secondary schools. This outreach work was funded by grants from the Golf Foundation (£750) and Active Humber (£1500), first awarded in 2017.

The creation of an after school golf club, and a reward of a Love 2 Shop voucher for attendance at 5 golf sessions, soon generated an appetite for golf. The club hosted its first Elsham Girls Open event in 2017, which saw teams of girls from each school compete in a Texas Scramble event at the club. Once there was a key group of girls interested in the sport, the club created a survey to gain insight into what the girls wanted from a golf club. This led to the formation of the Elsham Girls Academy, which girls could join for an introductory offer of £10 which included 4 weeks of coaching, membership of the academy, plus a player pack. More girls

*“ I was so pleased when the girls' squad formed. It gives a platform for girls that are just starting out and helps them to play and practise together so no one is left on their own not knowing what to do etc. To have over 30 girls engaging in golf on a regular basis can only be great for the game of golf and this format seems to work. 3 years ago there were only 4 girls at Elsham, there are now over 30. ”*  
(Parent)

were recruited to golf through the Girls Golf Rocks programme after Elsham held an open day which 38 girls attended.

2 years later the Elsham Girls Academy formed the Elsham Girls Squad, which now has 25 members. Girls have a strong presence in the club's junior section, there are now 40 players, and their involvement has had a positive impact on the golf club in general.

*“ The Golf Foundation work, to inspire, recruit and retain girl golfers is the best initiative I have worked with in my time as a PE teacher (over 15 years). The use of established young pros and the GolfSixes/StreetGolf formats within schools was extremely successful in overcoming the initial stereotypes of golf being "a sport for old men". ”*  
(Teacher)

*“ The sessions inspired girls who had perhaps not found a love of sport until they picked up a golf club. ”*  
(Parent)

## What do the Pros think?

*“ For me, the club's success has come from putting an emphasis on the social side (of golf). We make sure the girls have fun and create a sense of community. The staggered introduction onto the full course works great. GolfSixes events and 9 hole comps from academy tees provide plenty of playing opportunities, creating the perfect pathway for girls to get out and play on the course. ”*

Dane Duffin, Assistant Professional  
Elsham GC

*“ To start a whole new section from scratch takes a great team of professionals, club officials but most importantly great hardworking volunteers. This has given us the foundations to establish the section and importantly, to do it properly. ”*

*The creation of the girls' section has given opportunity to those who may not have had it before. We have encouraged leadership and personal development for all the girls whilst also developing a strong sense of community. ”*

David McNicholas, Head Professional  
Elsham GC

Head over to our [YouTube channel](#) to learn more about how the Elsham Girls Squad developed.

# Insight on how to create a successful girls' section

Here are some of the implementations Elsham GC and Cosby GC put in place to help their girls section to grow.

1

**Coaching** – Girls only coaching sessions were organised and players were invited to bring a friend or a sibling along too. Girls were invited to develop their individual skills with funded 1-2-1 coaching which has proved to be particularly popular.

Cosby GC also funds 1-2-1 coaching sessions by adding a voluntary £2 donation to subs. This has proved to be a very popular initiative with players. The club recognised that girls particularly enjoy playing golf with other girls, so it tries to encourage these opportunities as much as possible.

2

**Social Activities** – Elsham developed a strong sense of community by focusing on the social side of golf. There were a number of girls' only practice sessions and events added to the club calendar. These included a Monthly Order of Merit, interclub matches, and a girls GolfSixes League team was created. Trophies were awarded to the winners, and if there were mixed matches, a trophy was presented to both the winning boy and girl. To improve cohesion with the Elsham Women's section the club arranged Women & Girls Pairs matches to give the girls multiple opportunities to compete. Similarly, girls have integrated into the wider Junior Section through the club's Junior Ryder Cup, Elsham Junior League Team, Mixed Junior Pairs, Social events and Junior Competitions.

Cosby GC focuses heavily on family involvement. Parents and grandparents regularly volunteer to help and support all the juniors, not just their own family members.

3

**Sense of Belonging** – Team building activities outside of golf enhanced the community spirit of the group. The squad even decided to fundraise for itself and raised an impressive £5K. This funded equipment, practice resources, clothing, transport to matches, refreshments and helped to break down any cost barriers to participation. Fundraising has become an intrinsic focus for the girls as they continue to generate funds to help maintain the activities that are now in place. The Elsham Girls Squad also organised a Launch Party and integrated with the wider Junior Section. Events such as a Christmas Junior Get Together, Autumn Bowling and an Easter Family Scramble have benefitted the girls and improved cohesion between the club sections.

4

**Leadership** – Encourage leadership and personal development. A Girls Committee was formed with Squad Captain, Vice-Captain and Squad Manager positions to help empower girl golfers and give them a greater voice at the golf club. Traditionally, the Junior Club Captain is often selected on the length of time playing at the club and on their ability/achievements. Inadvertently, as the girls were reasonably new to the club, this meant they were less likely to access this role. The positions of Girls' Squad Captain, Vice-Captain, Girls Golf Rocks Ambassadors and a 'Buddy' system have provided girls with the opportunity to become Leaders within the golf club, whilst also encouraging more Leadership positions for the juniors as a whole. A Girls Squad Presentation was included in the Women's Annual Presentation and AGM evening to cement the Squad's status at the golf club.

Cosby GC's Lady Captain is supportive of all the juniors at the club and has encouraged the girls to play in Ladies' competitions. In 2021 Cosby will have a female Junior Club Captain.

5

**Communication** – Social media was effectively used to keep parents and players informed. A WhatsApp Group, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages were all used to promote the many activities taking place and to celebrate the group's successes.

Cosby GC keeps in touch with its members by sending a weekly report and junior members are kept connected through a WhatsApp group. The system proved invaluable during lockdown. PGA Pro Darren videoed weekly challenges which were immediately taken up by juniors and their families. There were leaderboards which were strongly competed for. The fun, hilarity, success and failure of everyone's efforts were shared through videos and the bond between families and the club was strengthened. The Lady Captain got involved in the challenges which prompted 4 of the Mums joining her for the Girls On Tour initiative.



6

**Policies** – Creating a Girls Committee with a voice to the other club sections and club welfare officer allowed any potential grievances to be aired and dealt with promptly. Sharing out Roles and Responsibilities has enabled the Girls Squad to flourish and continue developing.

7

**Access to the Course** – Adapt/adjust club Handicap System – Academy handicaps were provided when girls were unable to play at the required level to access red tee handicaps. Using shorter tees and alternative formats (not just Stablefords but also used Matchplay, Pairs and Team events, Texas Scramble, Betterball formats) ensured there were regular playing opportunities all year round.

## Top Tips for Success

- 1 Make it social**  
Organise opportunities on and off the course to make the club feel like a fun and friendly place to be.
- 2 Non-judgmental**  
Relax dress codes and look at ways your club can make girls feel encouraged to play and welcomed at your facility.
- 3 Give girls a voice and a choice**  
Find out what they want and when they want to play. Encourage the girls to lead.
- 4 Emotional rewards**  
Reward progress, award trophies for success and to encourage participation and motivation.

For more ideas on how to keep girls loving golf see our **8 Principles for Success** guide to best practice and for further information on our work as a charity visit [www.golf-foundation.org](http://www.golf-foundation.org).

Images: Chris Vaughan

*“Golf is a great sport for everyone. We have worked so hard to build our Junior Girls’ section over the last few years. This is all a great credit to our golf club and could not have been achieved without the drive/enthusiasm of Peggy and Carolyn our Junior Organisers.”*

Darren Jones, Head PGA Professional  
Cosby GC



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