

## Carolinas Section PGA BEST PRACTICE | PGA Junior League Golf

### How To Start And Build A PGA JLG Team And What It Can Mean To Your Junior Golf Program

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#### The Dunes Golf and Beach Club

Moving into our fourth year as a participating club in the PGA Junior League here at The Dunes Golf and Beach Club, I can still remember the uncertainty of what was to come in my first year. However over the past few years we have successfully filled the roster fairly easy due to the strength of our junior program and the support from our membership. What I would recommend to any PGA Professional who is “on the fence” of starting a team is to hop right over that fence and go *all in*. The PGA Junior League is one of the **best** programs the PGA offers in my opinion. It is not only a great program for the juniors to grow in, but is a great source of lesson income for the professional too.

Here are a few of my opinions on how to start a team for a first time coach, how to continue to build the number of players on your team and most importantly what the PGA JLG can mean to your current junior golf program.

### How to Start a PGA Junior League Golf Team

For any first time coach, like I said in my introduction – put any reservation to the side and confidently go all in with this program. The idea of running a team, coordinating practices and matches, dealing with different parent-junior relationships and so much more can seem daunting and make you uneasy. But I have found if you are able to do these three things, you will have great success:

#### ***Communicate –***

I have found that the communication in this league is a HUGE factor to your success. With having 10-12 juniors participating in the matches and practices, effectively communicating with the parents constantly is key. Using email, group text or an app based communication allows you to get notices of rosters for matches, attendance for practices and notifications of weather delays or cancellations. Unfortunately, the PGAJLG is not as simple as recreation sports where a coach can coordinate a team at the last minute if a player is a no show, in PGAJLG rosters must be filled out prior to the match to ensure that two players are paired together to go against another team for that match. So effectively communicating attendance levels is key for successful matches. Also, knowing how many juniors will be showing up to practices is vital to ensure that all safety precautions are meant with proper staffing levels.

#### ***Organize –***

Just like anything, good organizational skills will help lead you to success in PGAJLG. Over the years I have built a good excel worksheet that allows me to track the junior’s participation in practice and matches (both as a teammate and as a player), their results in the matches and other important elements. Being able to go back and ensure that each junior is being paired with a new teammate or what holes they played in each match will help prepare you for any questions from parents. Also, being able to look at the information year over year, you will be able to make adjustments to keep the success of your team moving up.

#### ***Passion –***

Obviously if you are entertaining the idea of running a PGAJLG team your passion for golf is high, but make sure that your passion for Junior Golf is high too. The goal of the PGAJLG is to get all level players a chance to play on a golf team and get a taste of tournament golf. Double check your passion and your **patience** levels before getting into this. Some of the best moments of my career in Junior Golf have come from the unsuspecting junior having that magical moment out on the course.

Also some of the most trying moments in my career have come in PGAJLG with juniors fearing to hit the first tee shot or not being able to do something correctly.

Additionally, it's also wonderful to see the diversity in the playing levels and how the stronger players develop a new passion for the game in helping mentor the beginner to intermediate players, making this a great position to step toward becoming that high school golf team captain!

### How to Continue to Build the Number of Players on Your Team

For the coaches who have successfully made it through their first year, you will either begin to receive phone calls about new juniors joining the team or will be able to market your team to your existing database.

The way I have found my roster numbers continuing to grow year in and year out is by using social media with past photos, videos and other materials. Also, the word of mouth by parents and juniors is a wonderful tool to help build the team. Throughout the year at The Dunes Golf and Beach Club we hold junior clinics that are available to current team members and those interested in the team for the upcoming summer.

These clinics not only benefit the players currently on the team by building friendships, trust and a better understanding of each ones game but it also builds their leadership skills in introducing the new players to the team, letting them know how the matches work and helping coach them through the process as well. Hosting the year-long clinics also brings in great lesson revenue and in whole makes the season much more enjoyable with team chemistry already in place.

### What the PGAJLG Can Mean to Your Current Junior Golf Program

The PGAJLG team has an opportunity to mean more to your current junior golf program than anything out there. Throughout the year having a database of 10-12 junior golfers participating in clinics, private lessons, club events and other special events can bring in a substantial amount of lesson income for the professional. Our average PGAJLG golfer totaled \$1,375 in lesson income 2016. Not a bad number when multiplied out by 12!

The value of the program truly benefits both the golfer and the professional.

Get out there and benefit while growing the game!