

PGA Professionals' Best Practices: Developing Players

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Dan Shelden on Developing Players: Utilize Rotating Stations With Juniors



Dan Shelden, the 2020 Illinois PGA Section Youth Player Development Award winner, is the PGA Director of Instruction at Ruth Lake Country Club and Journey to Better Golf, in Westmont, Illinois.

Dan Shelden on the importance of utilizing rotating stations with juniors:

Several years ago I found a new source of winter income. The “Journey 2 Better” was developed by Mike Carbray, the Director of Instruction at Butterfield Country Club. It began in the winter of 2010 and he introduced me to it in 2014. (Side benefit: the “Journey 2 Better” studio is in a perfect location for the two of us as it is right in the middle of between each club we teach at during the summer.) We started to run the “Journey 2 Better” Academy rotational class in 2016. Each class will meet for 90 minutes; 45 minutes will be devoted to swing fundamentals. We will always start our classes with some sort of physical activity. Our focus is on agility, balance, and coordination, as well as speed. We will give individuals drills to work on during this time, but also give them the freedom to work on an area they feel needs improvement. The second half of the class will involve a “mission of the day” skills test and competition that will help to enforce the aspects of the game they practiced in the first half of the class. The juniors will work both independently and as a team to accomplish the given mission. They will also compete against all the other classes that will come in during the day. The competitive environment helps create team camaraderie but also instills the individual drive that’s needed to play competitive golf.



Dan Shelden on the business impact of utilizing rotating stations with juniors:

The cost of the program is \$300 per month with a total of 20 class sessions. The sessions start at the beginning of November and last until the end of March. We have make-up classes throughout the year for those that miss classes along the way. We group the kids based on age and have six to seven kids per session. The age group starts between five to six years old and will go up throughout high school. Luckily, we have had junior golfers participate multiple years in a row. As we put in our mission statement, our goal is to develop a lifelong love for the game in an environment that is motivating, inspiring and fun and I think we do a great job of that. We are currently in our eighth season of the “Journey 2 Better” classes. With the influx of junior golfers over the years, we now run classes on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. We originally started with about 30–34 kids and today we have around 100 junior golfers participating in the “Journey 2 Better” program, improving themselves each winter.

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