

# CHESHIRE COUNTY GOLF PARTNERSHIP

**Press release**

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**For immediate use**

CAPTION: Disley GC receives its High Achiever award (left to right) Ann McCormick (Junior Director), Craig Thomas (Cheshire County Golf Partnership county development officer), Joyce Commins, Rob Potter (Junior Captain) and John Potter (Junior Organiser)

JUNIORS at a golf club in Cheshire are proving to be good buddies to newcomers to the sport.

The 'buddy' scheme has been adopted by Disley Golf Club in a bid to make settling in much more comfortable for young players taking up golf.

It is one of a wide range of junior and beginner friendly initiatives that the south Manchester club has introduced aimed at encouraging more people into both golf and club membership.

Not only has the club been awarded GolfMark, a national seal of approval for facilities which play an important role in the development of the game, but it has reached High Achiever status in recognition of its commitment to make it as easy as possible for people to take up golf.

One of the driving forces behind the project is former lady captain Joyce Commins.

She explains: "The buddy system has proved very successful. The idea is that the junior single figure handicap players take the younger ones out on the course. We team them up in competitions so they all get to play together. The older players have been fantastic and show a lot of patience with those starting out in the sport."

Reflecting on the reasons behind a major overhaul of the club's approach to juniors and beginners, Joyce adds: "The junior section of the club has always been very successful, but then the cost to join was doubled and we started to lose juniors.

"We wanted to look at the reasons why and whether we were offering the right kind of service. We saw GolfMark as being beneficial in its own right in terms of us getting the right duty of care and child protection policies in place.

"High Achiever status means not only do we meet all the necessary criteria for GolfMark, but that we have gone into even more detail, that we have people going out and actively encouraging people into the sport and that there is more integration within the club. We now produce a handbook and have a parents evening to introduce the club to new members.

"If we were going to go for GolfMark, it was something we wanted to do properly."

The club has also cut the cost of joining for juniors, and now operates a tiered price structure ranging from £50 to £110.

“It’s fantastic to see the ones as young as five getting involved – they are so keen to play,” adds Joyce. “We now offer more structured coaching sessions so that we are delivering the right kind of advice and skills for the juniors to develop their golf game.”

The club’s three PGA professionals – who operate under the banner of Competitive Edge – are fully involved in delivering best practice to the players and the on-going efforts to build closer links to local schools and community groups, such as Cubs and Scouts.

Head professional Jamie Goodall and his assistants Scott Jackson and Mark Profitt have helped the job of integrating all sections of the club more closely, along with junior organiser John Potter and the junior committee.

Now juniors with a handicap of 28 or less can take part in the main Saturday competitions regardless of age. There is a special junior prize for handicaps 10-28, while single figure juniors can win outright.

They have their own competitions on a Sunday, when coaching sessions takes place from 1-2pm, and there is a junior roll-up and other competitions for all juniors who are ready to go out on to the course. In addition, half-day coaching sessions are arranged in the school holidays.

The junior section now has regular meetings of its own committee, which includes the junior captain as well as junior organisers and the PGA professionals, and new Junior Director Ann McCormick gives the junior section a voice on the club’s main board.

The club has also established an indoor facility which means short game training and video swing analysis can continue even in the most extreme of weathers.

A new offer for just £20 gives juniors the chance to sample life at the club, receive free four coaching lessons with equipment provided and use of the facilities until they feel ready to join as members and get out and play on the course.

The club is also planning to repeat its successful Open Day of last year while encouraging more girls and ladies into golf will be a top priority for 2012.

“We have come a long way in a short time,” adds Joyce, “and I have been fortunate to have the backing of the Board, who have been very receptive to comments and suggestions. Past President John Aitchson and Past Captain Steve Misell have also been very supportive.

“Every golf club has its challenges at present but we are striving to improve all sections of the club and we are all working together to make the club more open and welcoming. As a result more people are coming to the club and more people want to stay at the club, which means the social side of the club is improving, too. We want people to feel part of Disley Golf Club.”

Says Craig Thomas, county development officer for the Cheshire County Golf Partnership: “Disley has shown a total commitment to turning around its fortunes and establishing an enjoyable pathway into golf, particularly for juniors.

“GolfMark means a parent dropping off their child knows they are in a positive environment with the emphasis on the right care and responsibilities while the success of the individual club members shows the quality of coaching on offer.”

## **Note to editors**

GolfMark is a national scheme that incorporates ClubMark and recognises junior and beginner friendly golf facilities that focus on Coaching and Playing, Club Environment and Child Protection, and Duty of Care, all of which are extremely important to parents and children alike.

GolfMark is an initiative jointly provided by the EGU and EWGA via the England Golf Partnership's 'Whole Sport Plan' for golf and is an integral part of the England Golf Partnership's vision to 'Grow the Game'.

The England Golf Partnership is a collaboration of a number of stakeholders in the sport including England Golf – the new organisation formed by the merger of the English Golf Union and The English Women's Golf Association - the PGA, the Golf Foundation and Sport England.

In Cheshire the partnership is supported by the Cheshire Union of Golf Clubs, the Cheshire County Ladies Golf Association and the Cheshire and North Wales PGA.

For more details of the activities in Cheshire visit [www.cheshiregolfpartnership.com](http://www.cheshiregolfpartnership.com)

For more information on the work of the Cheshire Golf Partnership contact Craig Thomas, County Development Officer, Cheshire County Golf Partnership.

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