

# Case Study

She Loves Golf Twilight and Get into Golf Membership at Taupo Golf Club



# Introduction

**She Loves Golf aims to create enjoyable and social experiences for women of all ages to inspire a love for golf.**

The biggest opportunity we have to engage and retain women in golf is to offer multiple connected opportunities that support women to transition from an initial introductory experience to their ongoing engagement in the game.

We know this because golf can be quite an intimidating sport for women due to the perceived level of ability required to play. Therefore, providing opportunities that are beginner-friendly and enable women to develop at their own pace is key. Golf New Zealand research has highlighted that:

### The top thing that would encourage more women to play golf <sup>1</sup>



Regular pay as you play events (e.g., twilight)

### Support for women who are new to the game should include



Shorter formats



Social environments



Opportunities that focus on the development of basic skills and confidence on-course



Shorter, tailored membership options

<sup>1</sup>Golf New Zealand, 2020, Women Non-member Participants Survey

# Taupo Timeline She Loves Golf



### A partnership to increase women's golf participation at Taupo Golf Club

Following a successful women's golf have-a-go session facilitated by Sport Waikato's This is ME® in 2019, Golf New Zealand and This is ME® identified an opportunity to work together with PGA Professional Renee Fowler and Taupo Golf Club with the aim of exploring the next phase of women's golfing opportunities in Taupo.



### Challenging traditional ways of thinking about learning

To inform their thinking the group moved away from just considering traditional introductory coaching programmes and explored the benefits of shorter format on-course play, both to the participants and the opportunity this presented for the club.

Cutting through golf clubs' traditional mindsets and getting members to embrace a different and diverse way of playing the sport was a key challenge to overcome. PGA Professional, Renee Fowler has come through those traditions and so felt confident to question and challenge and have discussions with key people.

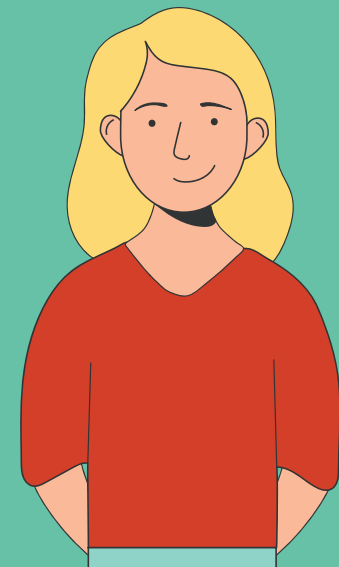
*"You need to be bold enough to have the discussions about doing things differently and to support people to see what the advantage of the approach is."*

Golf has, at times, created a habit of trying to get people to master the skill before they go on course and forgets to put the learning into context. Golf New Zealand's Participation Programmes Coordinator, believes that we need to look at how learning takes place.

*"Beginners are seeking opportunities to learn, and golf is not learnt through aimlessly hitting buckets of balls, it is done through exploration and practical application. It can be problematic for a beginner to learn a skill in isolation because it has no connection with getting them ready to play on the golf course."*

*A series of organised beginner-friendly on-course playing experiences can rebalance this approach by enabling women to learn through play and take the next steps towards ongoing engagement in the game. This approach can have the added benefit of driving more women to take up coaching lessons as they have already caught the bug on course and want to improve their skills."*

**- Golf New Zealand Participation Programmes Coordinator**





# Creating a pathway

## to support ongoing participation

Representatives from Golf New Zealand, This is ME and Taupo Golf Club worked together to secure support and facilities and promote a 4-week She Loves Golf Twilight series. **The key premise was 4-holes with 4 friends, played in an Ambrose format.**

Marketing was created by Golf New Zealand's design team and distributed on social media and by the local This is ME® Working Group in Taupo (flyer distribution, social media posts, word of mouth).

A pay-for-play model was adopted with Golf New Zealand providing some seed funding to reduce the cost barrier for women to get involved. Each event in the series cost the participant \$10 and some equipment was available if they did not have access to their own. There was also no requirement to commit to the series - in fact, teams often included a new member each week.

The club decided to run the She Loves Golf Twilight alongside the traditional club twilight series, which encouraged word of mouth and contributed to the addition of new participants each week. This also provided an opportunity for the women to meet in the clubhouse for a drink and prize-giving afterwards.

Three sets of four hole playing loops with forward tees were created at the facility, which as a sizable 36-hole golf course provided plenty of room for the women to participate without disturbing other golfers.

Following the She Loves Golf Twilight series, Taupo Golf Club created a **\$100 Get into Golf membership offering consisting of 10 x 9 holes and 10 x buckets of range balls.** This offer built on the work of the series to provide women with continued access and opportunities to play beyond traditional membership which can often be a step too far.

The idea of women's only tee times was also raised to remove barriers associated with ability and time, and potential pressure from members. Renee also offered coaching opportunities for the women should they wish to continue through the winter and a women's beginner Facebook group has been established.

Another series is in the planning phase with the aim to begin in November. A few women have put their hand up to help drive ongoing opportunities for women's golf in Taupo.

# Impact of the Twilight series



## Key results of the series

40

different women attended over the four weeks

9

Women took advantage of the \$100 membership offered by Taupo Golf Club

32

of the women who took part were new to golf

↑

The participation numbers for this series exceeded the golf club's regular twilight offering

*"It was a great series and I would definitely recommend it to friends. The casual nature made everyone feel comfortable and the format was great for beginners."*

- Participant





### Participation experience

Participants used the series to spend time with their friends and to try something new in a casual environment and noted how much fun they all had. One team decided to dress up for each session of the 4 weeks, and on the final night all teams were encouraged to dress up and a prize was awarded for "best dressed".



### Coach reflections

Renee noticed significant improvement over the 4-weeks and noted that the women began to look like people who played golf. Her creative approach to the series, which saw her integrate traditional concepts as soft learning (e.g. prizes for different achieving different aspects of the game each week), meant that the women learned and improved without traditional, dedicated training. A focus was placed on participation and understanding the game, rather than winning, and this proved beneficial to the women that participated and grew their love of the sport.



# Key learnings

## For how to create beginner-friendly learn and play experiences

The running of such events requires the support of volunteers; however, it was important that any helpers didn't create additional barriers by having a traditional mindset, and instead embrace the format and approach that supports a beginner-friendly learning experience.

The on-course learning environment should be relaxed and beginner-friendly, and provide forward tees, extended tee time intervals and shorter formats to help those who are just starting out. Like learning anything new everything is initially very unfamiliar. Coaches/facilitators need to recognize this by providing help when help is needed but being careful not to direct the learning. Using games to facilitate the learning, gives participants the time to practice and refine the solution.

It is also important not to rush the women to become members and to encourage ways for them to participate without the commitment of membership.

Renee has the following advice for other golf clubs, *"Don't rush them, they don't have to be members straight away, it might take three, four or five years, and that's ok. They might not become a member until they retire, or they may never become a member."*

**In summary, the number of participants that took part over the 4-week series signals:**



The need for ongoing opportunities



The success of the shorter format on-course play to introduce women to the game



The need for more inclusive and welcoming environments for women to participate in golf