



SUFFOLK GOLF UNION

JUNIOR COMMITTEE

Junior Chairman's report for the 2018 AGM

My first year as Chairman has been very enlightening. I have had the benefit of seeing all age groups in action, both in matches and at coaching. There is no doubt that the boys who are selected to represent our county are proud to do so and are very committed to their golf. Similarly, our coaches are totally committed to giving the boys every opportunity to improve their golf. Keith Preston's enthusiasm never diminishes, despite having been our Head Coach for over 25 years. In 2017 Keith was supported at the Under 18 and Under 16 coaching sessions by several different coaches, which brought a freshness and different talents to the sessions. Kelvin Vince and Ben Kerr did great things with the Under 14s. Ben has left the set-up this year as is now head of county coaching in Cambridgeshire. Stuart Robertson and Simon Byford make the Under 12 sessions very enjoyable for the boys who have their introduction to county coaching.

Our team managers also make a huge contribution to the Junior Section. Patrick Spraggs was a great addition to the team having come through the junior ranks with the county to professional level and it is unfortunate that he will be unable to continue this year due to work commitments in the USA. We are therefore looking for a new manager, which can be very rewarding. Jim Harrison is totally committed to the county and regularly 'goes the extra mile'. Ashley Hughes is not an active golfer himself, but his management of the Under 14s and Under 12s is excellent and mention must be made of his two teenage daughters who regularly attend coaching and matches to help with administrative tasks. I am really pleased that my predecessor, Mike Stevenson, has remained involved by helping Ashley and also attending other junior events.

Will Wright has been a fantastic addition to the team as our Junior Secretary. He has taken the burden of arranging matches, transport, accommodation and much more from the managers and the SGU Fixture Secretary. His organisation of the Under 14 Keith Bass Trophy which we hosted at Ufford Park was exceptional and drew praise from the other three counties competing.

Results in 2017 were not great, but junior golf is not just about results. It is also about preparing boys as well as we can for golf in later life, hoping that many will form the backbone of the men's teams in years to come. A look at the names who have represented the men's teams in 2017 will show that the vast majority have come through the junior system.

The Under 18 team performed as well as we could expect in the England Golf South East Group Team Championship which was held at Woodbridge, finishing 6th of the 11 competing counties. They did less well in the Foursomes Team Championship finishing 7th of the 8 competing counties. They were unable to progress to the final of the South East Group League, well beaten by Norfolk and Bedfordshire.

Jim's Under 16 team came within a whisker of qualifying for the final of their South East Group League, narrowly losing to Essex in the final match at Diss. A very

credible performance against a strong county. In the Tom Finn Trophy against Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire several of the first choice players were unavailable, but those that played came up trumps and performed really well to lift the trophy. A great performance. They were third of four counties in the Skevington Trophy.

The Under 14s and Under 12s squads have few matches as their efforts are concentrated on coaching in preparation for progressing to a higher level. However, the Under 14 team went down to Norfolk in a singles match at Halesworth, finished third of four counties in the Skevington Trophy and, after losing two players to illness on the morning of the match, did well to only lose 9 – 6 to Essex. The Under 12s had a nine-hole foursomes fixture with Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, the main purpose being to give the boys from all the counties some experience of playing competitively and playing as a pair. No one can remember the result as it was irrelevant!!

Looking forward, this year is the first of a four-year sponsorship of the Junior section by Culford School. Will Wright negotiated the terms of the agreement on behalf of the county so a huge ‘thank you’ to him and also to Tom Huggins from the school who initiated the contact. It will provide very welcome addition to our funds and I hope it will benefit the school as much as it does the county.

Finally, as I said earlier in this report, junior golf is not just about results it is about developing the boys both as golfers and people. Jim Harrison received the following email from a parent. I have removed their identities -

“I just wanted to pass on my thanks to you all. (My son) and I were excited enough at the prospect of him improving his golf but the winter coaching seems to have given him a whole lot more.

(His) whole life is dedicated to golf. He plays all weekend and I have to have his golf shoes ready by the door and sandwich so he can go straight out and practice every night after school, they’ve even put in a special light for him!! But what he has lacked is confidence in himself and he gives himself such a hard time when he’s anything but improving. It’s a real challenge getting in the heads of teenagers but the difference in my son since the training is huge. He’s writing up his day and positive quotes all the way home in the car and I can see a real change in him and his outlook and he was so inspired after meeting Joe (Cardy) this weekend.

So thank you for all your help and encouragement developing his golf game, but as his mum, thank you mostly for helping him to work towards the best mental attitude to achieve the best out of life on and off the golf course.”

Trevor Mason
Chairman