

Golf: A Child's

We all want our kids to grow up to be healthy, well-mannered and respectful, with a good set of values and internally motivated to succeed. Sometimes life gets in the way of having quality time to teach and mentor valuable life lessons. Don't you wish you could get a helping hand? Wouldn't it be great if you could leave your kids unattended while they are taught how to be an adult? It may surprise you when I say golf is the solution! Golf is more than a game; it is a teacher of life.

From the moment I took my first swing at a local park with my dad at age 6, I was hooked! When the final school bell rang, it was routine to get dressed in the car while mum dropped me at the local golf course. A polo shirt tucked into tailored pants, bright white studded shoes and a cap for sun protection was the attire I would learn to get comfortable in. Excited every day to get better than yesterday, I would play with anyone I could find, regardless of their age or culture. The golf course quickly became my second home. Unknowingly, the environment would contribute to shaping my character and develop a skillset that has been used to advance me in adult life.

Communicating & Networking

Traditionally, golf has been largely considered a white, male-only, rich person's sport. Fortunately, as the game has evolved and the years have passed, this is not the case anymore. Golfing today is often spent in the company of a diverse range of people; consequently, juniors need to develop the skills to be able to adapt, interact, address and properly conduct themselves around adults. On any given day they could find themselves playing with a CEO, a doctor, and local supermarket attendant!

Discipline & Sacrifice

Without the luxury of other supporting team mates, individual sports will always teach you to be self-motivated and accountable for performance, whether it's a success or failure. With golf, there are no set practice sessions; you have to be disciplined to schedule in the hours required to train. Sacrificing the luxuries of watching T.V., partying with friends, playing video games for waking up early for a 6:00 a.m. tee time is a normality.



Respect & Manners

Golf is a 'gentleman's game'. Standard etiquette includes shaking hands to introduce yourself on the tee; no moving or making sounds when someone else is hitting; calling a penalty on yourself if no one else sees the breach; complimenting an opponent on a good shot; taking your hat off and shaking hands with your playing partners whether you win, lose or draw; and presenting yourself professionally, according to strict dress regulations. As for personal conduct, tantrums on the course are unheard of, unlike some sports!

Best Teacher

by Mark Varela

Perseverance

The challenge of never being able to perfect every shot tests your mental strength. Golf teaches you to pick yourself up, reflect, reassess, plan and move forward. Golf, like life, has its highs and lows. Managing your emotions and persevering on the golf course is half the battle!

Travel

High performance golf – even at amateur level - requires tournament play in different cities and countries. For some, travelling to tournaments at young ages develops independence, street smarts and knowledge of other cultures, religions and races.

Golf is a lifestyle, a way of life and unlike most sports, the longevity in the game is infinite. Career opportunities expand past just playing the game, as it presents pathways into roles such as head professionals, general managers, golf coaches, business owners and much more!

Most of us would agree, today's kids need to minimise the distracting effects of the tech world (social media, phones and video games), and learn to socialise in real life. Playing golf is by far the very best way to accomplish that and set your kids up for a prosperous life.

Check out your area as they may offer indoor and outdoor golfing facilities for your child to get started, from as young as 4 years. Large group 'clinics' are ideal for the enjoyment factor and making new friends, while individual lessons offer more customised tuition to cater for your child's specific needs.

Mark Varela is a PGA of Australia-certified golf professional who teaches children and adults of all skill levels at Big Swing Golf Kew. Introducing the game to newcomers and young juniors is his top priority, to help grow the game and Australian talent.

