

GETTING STARTED WITH US KIDS GOLF

LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

There are many reasons to why we are losing junior golfers, and the biggest one has to be the EXPECTATION from the children too much too early

BY EDMUND TAN



As golf instructors and parents, if we want to grow, teach and retain junior golfers, we'll have to understand why kids want to play sports. Usually it's because it's fun – they get to play with friends, they fit in and they're good at it. Kids will never want to play sports that are not fun, something they're forced to play or not good at. Too much pressure on these kids will also dissuade them and then they develop a deep fear of failure. So, we always have to be looking for their interest points in learning and enjoying a sport, in this case, golf. Often this means spending less time on golfing drills for other activities that keep their fire burning.



My suggestion is mix other sports with golf. We should be focusing on building the kid to be a great ATHELTE first and then a great golfer. This is important because junior golf is changing with the modern lifestyle. Kids today are not moving as much in the playground anymore due to modern technology such as laptops and tablets, therefore they are not as agile or coordinated as before, which will hurt them in any sports they may play, not just golf. With the Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) gained from other sports such as agility, hand-eye coordination, speed and balance, the child is able to pick up golf easier and would be more likely to excel compared to a child without these skills.

Let's refer to the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) as the 'was on, wax off'

routine from the movie *The Karate Kid*. The teacher, Miyagi San, orders the young student, Daniel, to practice daily activities that seem like chores. When he finally had the opportunity to perform, Daniel was already equipped and able to call upon the skills he needed without him even realising it. The objective of LTAD is the same, to equip junior golfers with FMS – and then they'll have all the right tools to perform golf-specific movements.

Studies have proven that it will take a person more than 10 years to become an expert in the game and play at the highest level, so there's no hurry to turn your kid into a champion in six months' time. Even though every parent wants their child to be a prodigy, it's not easy to keep a child in the game for 10 years, therefore it's more

important to keep the child's interest growing and avoid possible burnout.

So don't be afraid to have some fun and take a few detours along the way. Don't ever think that spending time playing other sports is a waste of time or could hurt your child's golf game because it won't.

I cannot say it enough, grow the child FIRST and that will grow the child's interest in the game. Find their connections and their points of entry and help them enjoy the game. **PG**



Edmund Tan is a Mizuno Golf School and Titleist Performance Institute certified instructor based at Golf House Academy, Cinta Sayang Resort. He may be reached at edmundtangolf@gmail.com or +6012-312-1966. For more info, visit www.golfhouseacademy.com.