



Developing a youth program

Many adult players report having first played croquet when they were young. If your region or club is interested in establishing a youth program, the following notes from Casterton Croquet Club may be useful. Do contribute notes on your experiences to expand this resource!

Early in 2016 the National Director Under 21 Croquet organised a national youth Golf Croquet tournament as a step towards preparing for the World Under 21 GC Championships to be held in Melbourne in early 2017. If you have energetic young players this may be of interest to them. For details, contact Jacky McDonald, National Director Under 21 Croquet, ACA – ndu21c@croquet-australia.com.au, tel (02) 4930 0733, or mob 0409 246 294.

The Casterton initiative

Casterton is a small rural town in SW Victoria, population 1764 (2011 census).

Ellie Norris of Casterton CC writes:

Following are the criteria we used to establish Junior Croquet. We have had to “tweak” things a bit along the way because it is still a work in progress and we had no guidelines. However, as we have now established Junior Croquet here we can’t be doing too much wrong!

1. Everyone in the Club has to be committed to the programme. However it does need a leader. After suggesting it at a meeting last year, I had unanimous support.
2. Establish a sub- committee whose recommendations can be reported back to the members as it is important everyone knows what is happening.
3. Arrange for enough members to have Working With Children Certificates because on any given Junior Croquet morning (in Casterton it is Sat. at 10am/11.30am) you need sufficient senior members to supervise and coach. Apart from me (I am there every Saturday) we use a rotation of members for this purpose.
4. Establish a strategy within the club that will automatically on an annual basis recruit new Junior players. This is done by dovetailing in or piggybacking (so to speak) with and on existing Government/ Local Council/ Community programmes. By doing this you are able to raise the profile of the club and also the Club has more credibility. For example: The State Government’s ACTIVE APRIL programme (more info on google)/local Council’s SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVITY PROGRAMME.
5. At a sub-committee meeting I produced an Objective called ‘LET’S TALK CROQUET’ which I could use to present to the principals of the primary schools.
This Strategy contained : Club information/Playing times/Cost/Membership details etc. This will be different from one club to another of course but I felt it important that Junior Croquet had to be affordable and if the Senior Member’s green fees had to subsidise Junior Croquet in the short term I viewed it as an investment for the future of the Club.

At that meeting I also suggested that it was important for us to find a sponsor and to that end I contacted our local FOODWORKS store. They came on board and we now have set up a weekly Golf Croquet Game where scores are registered. Initially this was for all the Juniors

but the boys have progressed significantly and we now have two competitions. One sponsored by Foodworks and the second (girls) the Club pays for. Each month one boy and one girl receive a \$25 Voucher for Best Player of the Month and \$10 voucher for Runner Up. I felt we needed this to keep the youngsters interested.

We also applied for a Glenelg Shire Council grant for \$500 to go towards advertising and promoting Junior Croquet. We were successful and subsequently produced an A4 "Flyer" and also some advertisements prior to the launch date of 18 October 2014.

I approached both the primary schools and asked them to participate in ACTIVE APRIL. The students spend one hour (numbers dictate this is done over 2 days) learning the basics of croquet. Most of our members are there on the day to lend a hand. As well as a couple of teachers. Importantly though it also has to be fun.

In my correspondence to the schools I also advised them that the Club would be involved in the Council's School Holiday Programme.

This participation gives the Club a higher profile and more credibility....not only with the schools but also the local newspaper, media etc.

In the 2 weeks prior the launch of Junior Croquet we also did a letterbox drop, plastered the A4 flyers on community boards and in shop windows. This together with our advertising etc. helped enormously to create the interest we intended .

I feel it is important to keep the Junior players interested and was lucky enough to have Eric O'Donnell available for some coaching. Having Robert Fletcher visit too provided enormous interest in the community. As well as Golf croquet, the Juniors are now learning Aussie Croquet.

I write up the Junior Croquet Competition results on a weekly basis and the local newspaper prints this in the Sports Wrap Up. All good publicity. The editor/photographer also visits regularly to take photos. If he doesn't turn up, I take photos and email them to him.....just in case he has some space available!

AM I EXHAUSTED..... ???? Pretty much, but very excited with the results.
We have also put this strategy in place for Senior recruiting.

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