



Junior golfers practise at the Royal Calcutta Golf Club. Picture by Santosh Ghosh

Parent club for kid tee off

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Move over soccer and hockey moms, golf moms (and dads) are here. They want their kids to have Phil Mickelson's touch and Tiger Woods's self-belief, and they have come together to help the children line up the perfect putt.

Waking up to the potential of golf as a lucrative career option, parents of junior golfers have formed a unique network among themselves to provide an adequate support system so that their wards can focus on getting it right on the greens.

The Albatross, a voluntary organisation, was set up to "promote competitive golf among Juniors", points out city-based P.K. Madappa, a founder-member whose 11-year-old son Viraj is an exciting prospect on the junior circuit.

"The idea is to provide them with better exposure through more tournament

play. We have already managed to catalyse 10 junior meets across the country," points out Viraj's mother Vidya, who gave up a cushy career as a chartered accountant to travel with her son to tournaments around the country.

The Albatross held its 11th junior tourney at the Tollygunge Club recently. "Our goal is to have at least 20 meets pan-India every year. It would give our children the competitive edge and help them conquer stage fright," says Pooja Sehgal, another golf mom and a schoolteacher.

Her son Kshitij has been training at the Royal Calcutta Golf Club (RCGC) since he was five, and the Sehgals are encouraging him to take up golf as a career. The novel self-sponsored club is planning to take care of every single detail outside the course to help propel these kids towards a pro career. With about 40 members from all over the country, it

has also organised National Insurance Company cover for the golf kids against injuries, loss or damage.

"We have tied up with Optimist, a non-profit body in the US that organises junior golf tournaments, to give our children more opportunity to compete. We also have indirect association with junior programmes in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia," points out Rajiv Talwar, a Supreme Court advocate whose son Saptak plays the junior circuit.

The resource pool being created will include medical inputs, physical training, psycho-analysis and counselling, besides people skills, including handling the media. Registration and membership is free and the member parents are all networked on the Internet. The Albatross website uploads on-course exploits of all the kids to "create excitement".

Parents of the kibbutz have taken the initiative to

help organise more one-day competitions like the Tolly edition featuring top-ranking juniors, such as Ashbeer Singh Saini and talented local caddy boy Tutul Ali. "This way, they don't miss too much of school and yet, such one-day meets are fiercely competitive, like T20 cricket, and the youngsters must be at their sharpest to make a mark," observes Rakesh Chadha, a golf parent from Delhi and part of the commune.

How much of parents' involvement is too much? A word of caution is sounded by Indrajit Bhalotia, the chief coach and director of Pro-touch Golf Academy, a leading nursery in town honing budding talent: "The kids don't need too much interference, they just need emotional support from their parents. At times, parents can be a touch too pushy and that could kill a child's appetite for the game, leading to burnout."