



All the winners on the Albatross tour pose with their trophies.

## Soaring ambition

The country's junior golfers have a lot to thank the good old cup of tea. Had their parents not exchanged views over the hot beverage on a Sunday afternoon last year, the idea of having a new tour for juniors may probably not have taken shape. But as it finally turned out, the discussion that began with not having enough opportunities for junior golf in the country grew into a full-fledged association that has taken it upon itself to organize tournaments for junior golfers.

Christened 'Albatross' — "as a reminder to keep the standard of the game high" (in golfing jargon, an albatross translates into a double eagle, or a three-under par on a hole) — the tour acts as another platform for juniors to showcase their potential, in addition to the

Indian Golf Union's junior/sub junior tour.

"There are numerous talented kids playing golf in Delhi and the NCR region and the IGU's junior tour cannot afford to have a field bigger than 120 for its tournaments. We felt the need to have a tour that would cater to the needs of these juniors at a more local level so that they are exposed to more opportunities," says Rajiv Talwar, coordinator of the Albatross tour.

The IGU, on its part, has given a thumbs-up to the circuit and talks are on to bring the Albatross tour under its aegis. "There is a similar tour for juniors down south which has been a great success. We are looking to make the Albatross a feeder tour for the main IGU events in the northern region," says Wg. Cdr. Satish

Aparajit, Secretary General of the IGU.

The idea has gained momentum with parents of more than 100 children having signed up with the association. Players from Ludhiana, Chandigarh, Patiala, Ambala, Jodhpur and Jaipur have also evinced interest in being part of the tour. "We are overwhelmed with the response we've received. We have had to turn down players because we can't fit everyone in," informs Talwar.

So high are the parents on enthusiasm that they have donned the hats of event managers and also put together a website ([www.albatross.co.in](http://www.albatross.co.in)) which offers online registration and provides information such as tee times and results.

Managing tournaments involves money, and in the

## Parents have doubled up as event managers on the tour.

absence of sponsors, the cost, at present, is being borne by the parents. While the green fees and caddie fees are paid by each player, a token amount is collected to take care of overhead expenses. The prizes and refreshments are sponsored by a different set of parents each time. "A big part of the operational cost is the golf course fees, but the managements of all the courses we have approached for holding tournaments have been very encouraging. We are confident of getting their continued support," says Talwar.

Three tournaments (played over one or two rounds) have already taken place under the Albatross umbrella and four more are scheduled for the current year. The association also aims to hold regular training camps in the future to further nurture the players and educate them on the rules and etiquettes of the game.

Initiatives such as the Albatross tour will help the game grow where it's most needed — at the grass-roots level. We may as well raise our cuppa chai and say cheers to that!

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