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# Innovative approaches to encouraging women's participation in Golf


Theme:  
Participation

 Innovative approaches to encouraging women's participation in Golf

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 This is ME

**In 2019, This is ME® Taupō hosted a have-a-go golf series for women at Taupō Golf Club, facilitated by Taupō Golf Coach, Renee Fowler, in response to community requests for more women’s opportunities. Survey data following this series showed that women wanted to continue to participate in golfing opportunities and had enjoyed the chance to learn new skills in a fun and inclusive environment.**

Following the success of the series, Maddi McLean, Participation Programmes Coordinator at Golf New Zealand, reached out with the aim of exploring the next phase of women’s golfing opportunities in Taupō. This is ME® and Golf New Zealand partnered to build on the have-a-go golf series by looking at ongoing opportunities, utilising the She Loves Golf 6’s Ambrose format. She Loves Golf 6’s—a Golf New Zealand initiative—provides women with the opportunity to take part in an Ambrose format across 6 holes, rather than the traditional 9 holes.

This is ME® representatives worked alongside Golf New Zealand and Taupō Golf Club to secure support and facilities for a 4-week series. Renee had run similar series before and so was equally equipped to provide guidance and advice on the best approach. The key premise was 4 holes with 4 friends, as an adaptation of the She Loves Golf 6’s. Following disruptions caused by COVID-19 in 2020, the series went ahead in February-March and November-December 2021. Renee ran the sessions each week with ongoing support from Golf New Zealand and This is ME®.

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## What is the purpose of your project?

This initiative aimed to address previously identified barriers to women’s participation in golf. Personal barriers to participation experienced by women in traditional golf were identified as self-confidence, current ability, and social connection. The 4 holes with 4 friends approach to the She Loves Golf Twilight Series encouraged women of all golfing abilities to take part, alongside their friends to build on established social connections and develop new ones.

Practical barriers can just as effectively restrict participation as a personal barrier. Practical barriers such as the golfing environment, time, cost, and access to equipment, were identified as restricting women’s participation in golfing opportunities.

### Environment

Environment refers to not only the physical environment used, but also to the culture and atmosphere created.

The traditions and conventions that surround the golf club environment have tended to be perceived as ‘elitist’ and ‘male dominated’, exclusive of women. Renee noted that a key challenge of facilitating this series was cutting through golf clubs’ traditional mindsets and getting members to embrace a different and diverse way of playing the sport. Golf can be quite an intimidating sport for women, as it is assumed that a certain level of ability is required to participate. Renee had come through those traditions herself, and so felt confident to question and challenge through discussions with key people, to achieve a more inclusive environment where women felt comfortable to play golf. This golf series was the result of those conversations.

### Time

As a sport, golf is perceived as a time-consuming activity. For the purposes of this series, the 4 holes with 4 friends format reduced the time commitment required to one hour and placed an emphasis on participation and fun. Renee’s adaptive approach to the series enhanced the participants’ experience without taking up too much of their time. For example, some weeks teams were late or did not have enough women to make up a 4-person team. Renee adapted to allow teams to tee off as they arrived, continue with fewer than 4 people, and alter the number of holes if teams were late. She also created multi-tee starts when more than one team arrived at the same time to maximise the participants’ time.

## Cost and access

Cost can be a barrier to ongoing participation, in the form of membership fees and specialised equipment. Accessing equipment alone can pose a significant barrier. To mitigate these barriers, costs were kept to a minimum (\$10 per session) and Renee made equipment available for those without access. Cost was also considered in discussions of ongoing opportunities for the women.

## What were the enablers that proved successful in your project?

Renee noticed significant improvement over the 4 weeks. Her creative approach to the series, which saw her integrate traditional concepts as scaffolded learning, meant that the women learned and improved without traditional, dedicated training. Similarly, by utilising key areas of the golf club usually reserved for members, Renee also made the environment comfortable for the ladies by enhancing a sense of familiarity. For example, Renee held a prize giving in the club rooms after each session, where the teams would socialise over a drink and some food. She awarded prizes for achieving different aspects of the game each week, such as highest score or best technique, rather than consistently awarding prizes for the winning score. A focus was placed on participation and understanding the game, rather than winning, and this proved beneficial to the women that participated and helped to grow their love of golf.

## What impact did your project have?

In 2021, a total of 80 women attended over two different, 4-week series held in March. Most of the women attended both series, and around sixty of them were new to golf. The participation numbers for this She Loves Golf Twilight Series exceeded the golf club’s regular twilight offering. The number of participants who took part in both 4-week series reinforced:

1. The need for ongoing opportunities.
2. The success of the 4 holes with 4 friends format.
3. The need for more inclusive and welcoming environments for women to participate in golf.

Participants used the series as an opportunity to spend time with their friends and try something new, noting how much fun they had:

“It was a great series and I would definitely recommend it to friends. The casual nature made everyone feel comfortable and the format was great for beginners”.

As an example of participants having fun and feeling comfortable, one team decided to dress up for each session of the 4 weeks. Prior to the final session, Renee encouraged other teams to dress up and was awarded a prize for “best dressed”.

## What were the outcomes for women?

After the first series, conversations with both Renee and Golf New Zealand resulted in Taupō Golf Club introducing a \$100 deal for women involved in the She Loves Golf Twilight Series and interested in golf more widely. This deal included 10 rounds of 9-hole golf and 10 buckets of range balls. This offer builds on the work of the series to provide women with continued access and opportunities with golf. Nine women continued participation in golf, utilising Taupō Golf Club’s \$100 offer. Renee also offered coaching opportunities for these ladies. Ongoing offers and opportunities are being explored with the club.

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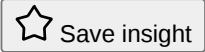
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