

~~Carina Hickey~~

From: ~~Alan Douglas Links alan@douglaslinks.com~~
Sent: Tuesday, 3 May 2022 6:46 PM
To: ~~Carina Hickey~~
Subject: Andre whites submission on behalf of the NZ PGA

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I didn't like golf, at all.

I figured that it was only for rich old people in stupid clothing, and used as a stepping stone to bowls in white clothing.

But then it literally changed my life.

It was May 1983 and I was in what turned out to be my last year at high school. Our PE teacher said to us "Today we are going to hit golf balls"

"You have got to be kidding me", was my first thought.

With the worlds worst teenage attitude I dragged a club and kicked some balls to the end of the rugby field and thought "This is stupid, golf is not a sport"

I lined up a ball and took a swing

Now let me give you a little bit of my background, of which I am not that proud. My friends were what may have polity been thought of as "Known to the authorities", and I was a gullible and easily influenced teenager.

This was not a road or journey that was heading to a happy ending.

At one stage my Dad had to call in one of his Lawyer friends to assist when myself and one of my friends thought it would be fun to going into a car wreckers yard with softball bats and smash up some windscreens.

The corrugated fences were high and we figured we were smart enough not to be caught.

The Police were a lot smarter than us though.

Another time my friend procured some cannabis seeds and asked me to grow them.
"Sweet, I'll grow them on the roof"
Another smart move on my behalf.
That was until Dad decided to clean the gutters.

Suffice it to say that even though scholastically I was more than capable, emotionally and socially I was a fish out of water looking for a pond.

That was until my first golf swing.

The ball flew from one end of the rugby field to the other and I was hooked, transfixed and [REDACTED]
This first hit is so burnt into my brain I could take you all to stand on the very spot it happened .

I wanted to be a golfer.

I entered the local junior golf program and rather than hanging around with my friends and going further off the rails, I spent all of the school holidays at the golf course.

Then it was every day after school and every weekend for the rest of the year.

Sometime early in the next school year my accounting teacher Mrs Grant, who ironically was a member at the same golf club I was, asked me if there was any point in me being at school anymore to which I answered "No"

I took a sign-out sheet home to Mum and said "Mum I'm going to be a Golf Professional"
And here I am today, an NZPGA Golf Professional of over 30yrs and living proof that golf can make positive impact on youths lives.

And I am not alone.

One of the trainees I employed had a checkered background that had him see the inside of a courthouse. Not only did golf change him as well, he ended up working for me during an annual law profession tournament and assisting the very Judge who presided over his case.
The Judge remembered him and was extremely happy to see how his life had turned around.

This particular event is New Zealand's oldest privately run golf tournament and has been running since 1932.

At this same annual golf tournament we have run a caddy program whereby youth are paired up with a participant and they caddy from them. Well it is more that they push their trundler around and chat and intermingle with them really.

This has been wildly successful and I know of caddies, who did not have a clear direction in life, since enter the legal profession and return to play in the event.
They had come full circle and were now the influencer rather than the influenced.

I have employed a young man from the Bay Of Plenty who had every opportunity to go off the rails. However he also started playing golf, became a qualified Green Keeper and also a qualified Golf Professional.

I have been involved in the lives of many youth for whom golf has had a positive impact.

Kalyn Ponga was part our our very successful junior golf program. Kalyn became the New Zealand U13 golf champion before his family shifted to Australia and he developed into an international Rugby League superstar.

After Kayln left his Dad sent me an email and in it he said

"Thanks as always must go to you and the golfing fraternity who taught KP so much when he was young about how golf can teach you the mannerisms to be a good person"

Another young man who went through our junior golf programs is Tim Wilkinson who has since gone on to play on the worlds biggest stage, the USPGA Tour.

One of Tim's desires is to give back to Golf New Zealand when he finishes his career and returns to New Zealand.

Another example of how golf stays with you for life and can turn full circle.

I have had the opportunity to travel with Tim extensively through the USA and have seen the incredible impact golf has.

From a wide variety of employment possibilities a golf course can offer, through to the astounding amount of money raised at tournaments.

Golf is an phenomenal vehicle for assisting charities and local communities.

I know of no other sport even close to being able to raise as much money for charities, or employ so many of the local population.

In fact in the USA the PGA Tour has donated more to charities than all other professional sports combined.

With green space being such a vital component to community wellbeing golf stands head and shoulders above all else.

The psychological and physical benefits of golf are astounding.

A Swedish study found that playing golf at least once a month may lower older an adult's risk of an early death.

This study found a 40% lower mortality rate amongst golfers, relative to non-golfers. That means a potential extra 5-years of life – regardless of age, race or gender!

Moderate physical activity will result in improved mood and emotional states.

Exercise can promote psychological well-being such as

- Improved mood
- Reduced stress as well as an improved ability to cope with stress
- Improved self-esteem
- Pride in physical accomplishments
- Increased satisfaction with oneself
- Increased feelings of energy
- Improved confidence in your physical abilities
- Decreased symptoms associated with depression

In short, golf can help you live a longer and happier life.

One of my fondest memories is of a gentleman named George Bridges. George lived to 101 and played golf almost all the way up until the end.

George had one of the sharpest minds I've ever known and his posture was a sight to behold. It would put most of us to shame.

This memory of George was watching him play golf with his son, who in turn was playing with his son, who in turn was playing with his son.

4 generations in the same group.

That alone is testament of golf for life.

Golf courses sit within, and improve, the surrounding environment.

Take Wairakei Golf Course where not only has it improved and preserved its flora, it has become a sanctuary and predator free environment for native wildlife.

Wairakei is a shining example of improving the land and improving the environment.

We at the Manawatu Golf Club are home to breeding pairs of the New Zealand Falcon. An endangered species of only approximately 3000 breeding pairs left.

The management of the club are diligent in protecting these birds regardless of any inconvenience it may cause our members.

Conservation is important.

Tara iti in Mangawhai is another example of how golf can assist in conservation. Upon acquiring the property, club founders established a Trust to conserve and protect fairy terns in addition to other at-risk shorebird wildlife.

Within the golf course are reserves for the fairy tern whereby golfers play around these areas and as such become aware of their plight.

I for one had never heard of this bird before playing there.

The course takes its conservation efforts so seriously that it is in fact named after the fairy tern as Tara iti means fairy tern.

With the Tara iti being New Zealand's rarest native breeding bird, this commitment will prove pivotal in its survival.

From my dealings with The Douglas Links personal I understand that environmental, conservation and ecological issues are at the very forefront of their minds and potentially more so than any other course I know.

With The Douglass Links lifetime commitment to revitalising it's dune environment, promote native flora and bird life, along with the measurable and quantifiable benefits to, specifically the local community, but also the wider and international golfing community, I stand here today on behalf of the Professional Golf Association of New Zealand in full support of this project and implore you to do the same.

Thank you.

Sent from my iPad Sent from my iPhone

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