

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Slow Play

By Stephen Somerville

Loyal readers will recall that in my last column I wrote about my son playing in his first golf tournament.

The tournament was put on by the Canadian Junior Golf Association (CJGA), which operates a number of age specific tournaments across Ontario.

There are sixteen tournaments across Ontario for the Junior Linksters Program, running every week from early May until the end of September. The CJGA does a wonderful job in setting up the courses and making the experience seem like a regular PGA/LPGA Tour Event, right down to having the starter formally introduce the players to the small galleries and having the children keep track of one of their competitors' score in addition to their own.

My son has played in four tournaments so far and he has really enjoyed it.

I have been truly amazed by the improvement of my son and his fellow competitors over the four tournament rounds that they have played thus far. Most of this improvement has been in their chipping; some of the short game shots that were struck have been simply marvelous.

Along with the improvement in play has been one consistent item that is not so good ? slow play by the same players.

The rounds are supposed to be just a little over four hours in length. The first tournament that my son played was at Rolling Hills in Stouffville back in early May.

The round took probably 4 hours and 45 minutes which was not bad, considering it was the first tournament of the year and the weather felt like the children were playing at the British Open; it was cold and very windy.

The second round was in Oakville under ideal weather conditions and the pace of play was fine.

Three weeks ago he played in Cambridge and the Starter told the participants that the round was supposed to take about 4 hours and 25 minutes or so. The round ended up taking six hours, which is ridiculous for a 4,400 yard course.

The main culprit is that I suspect some of the kids have been watching the PGA/LPGA Touring Pros and probably playing with their parents and incorporating some of the habits of these two groups.

I saw one child in the group ahead of us take about ten practice swings before he hit every shot! It was maddening to watch!

The children in our group were very nice and they were good players but they too took a long time over the ball.

From the first time that I introduced Ryan to the game I have always reminded him of pace of play and while he may not be going out to the PGA Tour any time soon, I am happy to report that his pace of play is like that of his PGA Tour Hero, Brant Snedeker; which is to say, Ryan moves along at a good pace.

The CJGA officials remind the children about slow play at the start of the round, but none of the officials on the course seem to enforce the rules. I think they need to do this.

If your son or daughter likes the game of golf and would like to compete against others, irrespective of their level of play, then you should check out the CJGA website.

Not only will the children enjoy themselves, so too will the parents!

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