

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER


NO. 02-301

DATE August 14, 2002

CD _____

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: JUNIOR GOLF AGE REQUIREMENTS

J. Combs* 	A. Coroalles _____
J. Duggan _____	R. Fawcett _____
H. Fujita _____	J. Kolb _____



 General Manager

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board approve amending the Junior Golf Age Requirements for junior golfers to play City golf courses unaccompanied by an adult from age fourteen (14) to age (13) thirteen; and remove the minimum age limit of ten (10) years of age required for a certified junior golfer to play accompanied by an adult.

SUMMARY:

The Department has several minimum age restrictions for juniors to play on City golf courses that ensure appropriate paced play, established in 1974. Today, there is a greater focus on encouraging more youth to play golf, and juniors are becoming more sophisticated players. In addition, a more comprehensive marshaling program is in place on City courses that will help ensure the pace of play and the safety of these youngsters. Lowering the certified playing age to 13 will bring us in line with County junior golf policy and provide a more comprehensive opportunity for youth to learn and play golf. Removal of the minimum age limit of 10 years of age that requires juniors to play accompanied by an adult would encourage even younger players, and further promote youth golf in Southern California. The Golf Advisory Committee is aware and concurs with this recommendation.

FINDINGS:

In 1974, the Board approved age restrictions for junior golfers on City golf courses as follows:

Minimum Age (With certification)	10-13 years
Minimum Age (Unrestricted playing privileges)	14 years and up
Minimum Age (Advance reservation privileges)	16 years and up

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To provide the opportunity for qualified youth under the age of 14 to play the City courses, the Board approved the Junior Certification Program. Under this program, juniors 10 through 13 years of age may qualify to play on City courses, accompanied by an adult, by taking a short written test on rules and etiquette and by demonstrating satisfactory ability to hit shots. The child is then given a certification card with his/her skill level indicated on the card (9-hole, 18-hole, Par 3).

At that time, it was felt that some age limit was necessary for the safe, enjoyable and maximum use of a public golf facility. Age fourteen was seen as the best point to make this, admittedly, arbitrary cut off to enjoy golf unaccompanied by an adult. At the time, 14 was the age when most youngsters made the transition from junior high school to senior high school and thereby made a significant step in the maturing process.

In 1974, there was only sporadic marshaling to help monitor youngsters on the golf courses. Currently, there is a full time ongoing marshaling program which will help ensure safety of juniors on the golf course. Additionally, juniors today are more sophisticated about golf with the influx of young golfers inspired by the success of Tiger Woods. Many youngsters compete in tournaments at earlier ages. Many juniors under the age of 10 can demonstrate knowledge of rules and etiquette, and the ability to advance the ball enough to play on an 18-hole course. These juniors should be given the opportunity to be certified to play.

In January 2002, the Department of Recreation and Parks Golf Division created the Youth Golf Alliance, which includes representatives from L.A. County Parks and Recreation, the City junior golf program, several non-profit groups and other individuals interested in promoting youth golf. The purpose of this alliance is to coordinate efforts among all of the groups to provide a comprehensive opportunity for youth to learn and play golf. One concern of the Alliance is that juniors encounter inconsistent regulations when they go to play golf. At the time of the 1974 Board Report, L.A. County required juniors to be fifteen years old to play unaccompanied by an adult. Currently L.A. County requires juniors to be thirteen years old to play unaccompanied. Therefore, staff recommends that lowering the age required to play unaccompanied on City golf courses to thirteen as well is one way to bring about more consistency.

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CONCLUSION:

Today, there is a greater focus on encouraging more youth to play golf, and the City of Los Angeles should do its part to make playing golf more user friendly for juniors. Juniors are transitioning to high school at a younger age and are more sophisticated about golf. The more comprehensive marshaling program that is in place will help to ensure the safety of these youngsters. Lowering the certified playing age and removing the minimum age of 10 would encourage the younger players, and ultimately promote golf in Southern California.

Report prepared by Pete Frey, Golf Division.