

WHO IS OLIVER MORTON?

by Fraser Paterson

A graduate of Stirling University, 27 year old Oliver began his career as an assistant professional at Gullane Golf Club in East Lothian, then moved to Swanston shortly afterwards. Two and a half years ago, head pro Stuart Campbell gave him the chance to work with the juniors: no doubt due to his passion for coaching and growing the game.

Since then, the number of juniors in regular coaching has multiplied four-fold to seventy. Membership is now almost two hundred, and approximately fifty juniors currently play in medals.

He now works as a self-employed coach, and enjoys a strong working relationship with Swanston. In essence, Oliver wants to create a rounded individual by developing the person first, the athlete second and the golfer third. A person with a strong set of

these skills can open doors for a fully funded higher education.

What he offers

The Swanston Junior program is holistic. He evaluates their performance using a mantra of 'good, better, how'. What matters is not what the manual says, but what works or does not work for an individual. This develops their confidence.

It is run on a Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday during term time. Children are split into age groups. Five to eight - 'cyclone', nine to twelve - 'smash', and those thirteen and older into 'wave' classes: the last of which works with Golf Fit & Alex Woods, specific fitness pros. They spend an hour with them, and one hour on golf with Oliver.

Six months later they measure the kids' growth height velocity, to ensure they are

in the right age group biologically. Cyclone is speed and stamina based - throwing, kicking, catching and smash - skill window. Oliver does fundamental movement and sports skills with them. An indoor facility is used in poor weather. It contains putting & chipping greens, hitting nets, etc.

During school holidays, with the exception of Christmas and New Year, Oliver puts on golf camps, where the same activities are undertaken as during term time, for five days a week. Although based at Swanston, kids can join the camps regardless of whether they are members.

Swanston also has a junior Development Squad for those he feels are working hard. He coaches them on a Monday night.

The Futures program is for thirteen to twenty-seven year old lads who are doing well nationally. With these kids Oliver works with Dean Robertson, Stuart Savage, Bobby Rushford and others. This is a program to help feed the Universities International Scholarship Program. They work all over Scotland on this. Oliver is creating closer links with higher education bodies like Stirling University, thereby playing an increasing part in developing collegiate golf in Scotland. He helps them set their goals, and financial planning.

Oliver's role is to guide the kids, not to be an autocratic instructor. Take a junior and make golf fun. By developing them as a person and an athlete, by way of their co-ordination and movement skills this helps them enjoy other sports also.

He is currently building working relationships with local schools. There he can use fake trees and bunkers on AstroTurf pitches.

Oliver hopes to continue expansion of his junior golf development programs and establish a learning institute.

He is currently working with Alex and Craig at Golf Fit in helping Scottish European Tour star Stephen Gallacher with his bio-mechanics.

Who he's learnt from

Coaching is Oliver's passion. It is something he has always wanted to do. At his own initiative, he has completed extensive training through the Titleist Performance Institute, Vision 54, The Plane Truth, Stack and Tilt, K-vest - bio-mechanics, and Glen Billington, a putting coach in Spain. He sought them all out as he felt they'd help him in his coaching. They are world leaders in their fields.

In December last year, he met Rudy Duran, who coached Tiger Woods between the age of four and ten. Rudy told Oliver that he noticed that Tiger's hands did not touch each other in his grip. Rudy tried to change this, but Tiger's game deteriorated. Rudy took the decision not to change his grip, but instead, focusing on teaching Tiger how to hit a variety of shots. You can see the parallels with Oliver's philosophy.

Oliver's special moment

At the end of 2012, he saw three generations of a family - grandfather, father and son - going out and playing golf together.

Summary

Oliver has coached just over six hundred kids in two and a half years. A tweet he recently received from a parent read "My kid has thoroughly enjoyed this week - Easter camp. Learnt loads, had fun, and is much more confident and assured."

This is what Oliver does best.

Photos courtesy of Fraser Paterson