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NewsUpdate

SCANLON: The Japeri Project is creating a humanitarian legacy for 2016 Olympic golf



The youngsters have lessons twice a week with a R & A instructor / Vicky Whyte

LAURA WALDEN / Sports Features Communications

TAMPA/LAUSANNE: One of the most distinctive parts of golf's legacy is its humanitarian aspect and a good example of how the game is being used to make a social difference is with the Japeri project in Rio.

The ground-breaking Japeri golf course, founded in 2002, was constructed on public land in an extremely low income area and now serves as a valuable gathering place for a number of young golfers who get the chance to attend bi-weekly lessons taught by R&A funded coaches.



Self pride is key and the youth are highly motivated / Vicky Whyte

Not only do the kids get to learn about golf, but they also have compulsory school attendance in order to take part and even receive a basic food package every month - enough to keep a family going for a couple of weeks. The benefits are amazing and it is making strides to teach young people to have pride in what they do and to strive to get ahead.

International Golf Federation (IGF) Executive Director Antony Scanlon talks to *SportsFeatures.com* about how Rio is adding to their golf legacy for the 2016 Games.

ANTONY SCANLON: We had to change the perception that golf is elitist. We had to make it accessible and there is a wonderful social program with the Brazilian Confederation of Golf, and the R&A has one of their members already involved in it. It is being carried out in the suburbs of Rio is called the Japeri Project.

This is a wonderful program that has 70-100 kids every week showing up on a daily basis to play golf. And they are in one of the poorest parts of Rio but they show up immaculately dressed. They have so much self-pride, they have to go to school every day otherwise they can't play.

It forces a discipline in the kids to go to school every day to better themselves to be educated to get out of where they are.

The course itself was started by a lot of people who worked at one of the golf clubs in the center of Rio. They wanted to have a course for themselves, there was an interest in the sport and from that came this social program.

So the kids there also have the opportunity, there is a teacher there in the afternoon, there are some computers so they do their homework. At the end of every month they get a care package to take home to help the family.

Is the school public?

ANTONY SCANLON: The golf course academy itself is being privately funded through the R & A and other people within Rio that have dedicated time, money and resources to it.

Unfortunately it has had a little bit of a setback where a highway is being built in the middle of it so they are losing four holes. But the reason why we were there a short while ago was to look at the layout.

The PGA tour the people who build courses were there to help with a new layout and there'll be some assistance from the local government and the developer to redesign the course and give the kids the 9 holes and the purpose.

Some of the kids that are in this academy are already members on the Brazilian team and are playing in elite competition.

Here is another opportunity in Rio itself to provide another program for some young kids and help to give them a reason.