

Women's Division 2023 AGM - WOW Report

I'm pleased to have this opportunity to be able to tell you about our Women on Wednesdays league and give you some information that will help to clarify possible misconceptions and give you a better understanding of how our league operates.

WOW was started in 2014 with a two-fold mandate. Offered later in the day, it was a draw for working women who were not able to play in the Tuesday morning league. And it was conceived as a social league in order to encourage new players to the game. I think it has succeeded on both counts.

I've been participating in WOW since Day 1. In the early years, the tee times started at 5:15 and we had fewer than 20 golfers. We're now at 3:30 to 6:00, and with 8-minute intervals, we manage to squeeze 80 players onto the tee sheet (until the cancellations begin). We do not have a seasonal fee but collect a twoonie from everyone who plays. This goes towards the weekly prizes and our year-end closing.

We currently have an active list of 200 names comprised of both Club members and green fee players who have played in the last two years. Chester Golf Club has 269 women players, and of those, 93 are on our WOW members list. There are usually 35 to 40 Club members sign up each week. We have spots for 80 players, so we've always able to accommodate all of the Club members who want to play.

People may look at the tee sheet online and assume that the green-fee players are taking spots from Club members. That's just not so. Any Club member who signs up on the Wednesday before play is guaranteed a tee time (like the golf club giving a one-day lead time to members, but we don't have a separate sign-up day). We have a process to ensure that members who get their request in on Wednesday will be on the tee sheet.

One of the beauties of not needing to be a Club member to play in the WOW league is that Club members are free to sign up their non-member friends/family to play a social game of golf with them. Indeed, on a typical week that I took count, we had 38 members sign up and they had 17 non-members signed up with them. So, that in itself, is a form of member preference. There were 55 of the 80 spots taken up by members and their guests. Which left only 25 spots open to others, so we're definitely not skewed towards green fee players.

WOW is very popular, and we start off with a waitlist almost every week, but with cancellations we have never had a waitlist on the night of play. On our busiest nights this year we had 77, 74, & 73 go out. Most nights this year it's been between 40 and 68 because of weather. 2023 was terrible for Wednesday golf. If it wasn't pouring rain it was blistering hot. We had to actually cancel WOW three times which we don't do unless there's no chance of anyone playing.

Even though we're a social league and do not manage handicaps or score cards, players can always benefit from learning more about the game and its rules. Many of our golfers are

totally new to the game and may want to work their way into playing Tuesday mornings. This year we were pleased to have Ruth Christian give us one of her valuable clinics. It was planned for the afternoon clinic to be followed by a late shotgun start. Of course, it poured rain and it had to all be cancelled, so when we rescheduled for a regular night, fewer people could attend because of their conflicting tee times which was somewhat disappointing. Still, those who could attend were very appreciative. I'm very grateful to Ruth for graciously offering her time and expertise to the league which she was instrumental in getting off the ground and I hope she's pleased with what it has become.

Because we are open to green fee players, we're able to generate significant revenue for the

Club, and I'm always checking with Dan to ensure that our balance of members to non-members is acceptable to the Club, which he assures me it is. This year we had 416 member rounds and 394 green fee rounds which provided \$11,820 in revenue to the Club not including carts and restaurant.

Wednesday has also been good for the Club restaurant. In May, WOW members are almost the only ones there. Given the time of day we're playing, it's very conducive to going in for a meal or snack after the game, so we're proud to be able to contribute in that way too. Financially, our aim is to break-even each season which we do by distributing the revenue through meal subsidy, a sleeve of golf balls to all closing tournament attendees, and prizes both weekly throughout the season and at the closing event.

Lastly, on WOW's contributions to Women's golf as a whole, we offer an opportunity to all women to play the game in a relaxed environment without the stress of playing well or knowing all the rules. Women, in particular, are often reluctant to book themselves into a regular tee time when they are just learning or are unsure of their game. Even if they do play well and keep proper score, the WOW league is a chance to enjoy a more social game with like-minded women. I hope we've been able to inspire some newer golfers to keep coming out while they hone their skills. This message I received just after our closing sums it all up. "I just wanted to thank you for the fabulous season. Being new to golf (and not very skilled) I initially felt intimidated coming out to play, but without exception everyone I met this season was welcoming and encouraging, and I completely enjoyed myself. It's all thanks to WOW and the supportive environment you've created – no small feat!"

We're all looking forward to keeping that atmosphere going but hopefully with better weather in 2024.

Diane Crowther
WOW Coordinator