



Off The Beaten Track

In this series, we go behind the scenes to profile people with interesting, though not necessarily conventional, careers

Teeing off with kids

Ms Alicia Huang is a golf instructor. But her students are not the typical group of adult learners. Instead, they are a group of giggly, adorable and sometimes bratty two- to seven-year-olds. Far from being a bunch of little terrors, her young charges are a joy to teach, she finds. She considers her job a privilege as she values the chance to groom the next generation of golf players.

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Having fun is par for the course

By Janice Goh

Teenage aspiration

Golf seemed to be out of her reach during her teenage years. Ms Alicia Huang had flirted with the idea of learning the proverbial rich man's game, but financial constraints pushed it to the back of her mind where it lingered.

Today, Ms Huang, 24, not only plays golf, but she also coaches young aspiring golf players in the game. Her oldest student is aged seven, and the youngest, aged two.

Ms Huang, 24, is a preschooler golf instructor at KinderGolf, a golf school for children using kid-specific methods. She has risen through the ranks in the past three years to become the supervisor of three KinderGolf centres in Singapore, where she oversees the daily operations and coaches close to 200 junior golfers.

She loves being around her students, because "kids, unlike adults, do not play politics".

"Kids are fun-loving, simple and forgiving. They do not stay angry for too long, and they have a pure and open mind. And that is also why many of them can swing and enjoy the game freely," said Ms Huang, who sports a trim, toned physique and a healthy deep tan.

"They enjoy it very much and have a positive mindset towards the game which is an important asset for a golfer," she added.

Since her school days, Alicia has always been active in outdoor sports like basketball and rollerblading. After graduating with a degree in logistics, she decided that instead of getting a job in a related field, she would first see "what else was out there".

She saw a job advertisement for a sports



Photos: Jamie Koh

SMALL WONDERS: Working with children is a pleasure because they are fun-loving, simple and forgiving, says Ms Huang.

Worth the pain

Alicia works five days a week from either 9am to 6pm or 10am to 7pm. Of her working hours, 60 per cent is spent indoors and the rest outdoors.

A typical 45-minute session with a student involves warm-up exercises, golf drills and lessons on the rules and etiquette of the game. During the practical part, for example, she grasps her student's hands and demonstrates the correct way to hold the club and execute a swing. She also uses other teaching aids like an activity workbook. In it, she draws the outline of a golf course and explains to her student the elements of the game.

For her, the lessons also mean long periods of bending over at awkward angles, sometimes in back-to-back sessions.

"I'm always half-squatting for, like, 30 minutes during each session. It can sometimes get quite tiring and I start to develop body aches," she said with a rueful laugh.

She also has to deal with other challenges in her daily work. Handling screaming kids is one of them; managing parents' expectations so that they know their kids are in good hands, is another.

Not that she is complaining. "I love this job because it allows me to cultivate a good mindset for discipline and focus in the kids, and build their confidence and integrity. On top of that, it is a privilege for me to be able to set a strong foundation for their golf and life journey ahead.

"People tend to think that teaching golf, especially teaching preschoolers, is really too tough. But I have taught at KinderGolf for so long, and I'm still enjoying myself."

teacher, applied for it and got it. And as fate would have it, she got to play and teach golf.

Training to teach

Before she started teaching, she had to undergo a systematic training programme. First, she learnt the rudiments of the golf game, picking up the different strokes, such as putting, chipping, pitching and a full swing.

She also learnt the rules and etiquette of the game. Then, she was trained in golf instruction specially designed for the "minds and bodies of preschoolers".

She still receives regular training. She said: "I attend weekly training at SwingU, an institute for preschooler golf teachers. I also practise weekly at the driving range and at least once a month at the Laguna Country Club or the National Service Resort and Country Club."