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The children who participated in the 2022 pilot project obviously had a lot of fun | © DGV

Youth

A milestone in talent diagnostics in Golf

June 16, 2025 , Stefan Blümer

The DGV (DEUTSCHER GOLF VERBAND / GERMAN GOLF ASSOCIATION) Talent Cup 2025 will take place from June 19 to 22 at GC St. Leon-Rot and the TSG Hoffenheim Research Lab. The initiative's primary goal is not to promote already identified talent, but rather to develop a new form of scientifically supported talent diagnostics. This is the first time worldwide that a project of this kind is being implemented that focuses not on current performance levels, but rather on potentially performance-limiting, largely genetic factors.

The goal is to capture characteristics in children under eleven years of age that, according to current research, most likely allow for a valid prediction of long-term athletic development beyond stroke play results or trainable skills. Golf.de spoke with the initiators, scientific advisors, and organizers of the project: Professor Dr. Klaus Roth (University of Heidelberg), Michael Scholl, and Marcus Neumann (both DGV).

Golf.de: Professor Roth, international studies show that current talent diagnostics in sports are not very accurate. Only a small percentage of future world-class athletes were even identified as "talented" as children. What makes the DGV Talent Cup fundamentally different in this regard?

Klaus Roth: Indeed, a central problem with previous talent diagnostics is that they often recorded parameters that are highly influenced by training and therefore have little predictive value. Only about twelve percent of future Olympic and world champions were even recognized as talented in childhood. This is because too often people focused on short-term performance metrics. In the DGV Talent Cup, we pursue a different approach: It's about utilitarian diagnostics – we want to determine which athletically relevant characteristics a child truly possesses, i.e., which biological and psychological potential could be utilized in the long term. The concept is therefore strongly based on the heredity principle: We analyse performance-limiting, genetic traits, such as coordination, reaction speed, or the ability to concentrate. We also consider exogenous factors such as training history. A particularly important aspect is biological age, which can vary by up to five years in formally 11-year-old children. This is measured using the Sonic Bone Test and serves to put results into perspective. In this way, we create a much fairer and sounder basis for long-term development forecasts.

Golf.de: What is the DGV's central objective with the Talent Cup 2025, and what fundamentally distinguishes this event from a traditional youth tournament?

Michael Scholl: The goal is to raise awareness among clubs and state golf associations about the importance of age-specific, general motor skills, and golf-specific training in the U11 age group. Furthermore, this event serves the German Golf Association (DGV) through scientifically sound identification and long-term support of promising motor and psychological talents. The goal is explicitly not to compare state golf associations on a sporting level.

Golf.de: What specific challenges in youth development led to the development of this format? What structural impetus does the DGV hope to provide for clubs and state golf associations?

Michael Scholl: There is a significant backlog in child-friendly training content. We want to broaden the base and invest more specifically in training and continuing education. The declining membership numbers in the children's and youth sector, as well as stagnating HCPI developments in the AK14 group, are an incentive for us to act early and more systematically. The goal is a rethink in talent development: away from short-term performance comparisons and toward holistic potential analysis.

Golf.de: What is the schedule and organization of the event in June?

Michael Scholl: A modular structure is planned, with a golf competition on June 19. Over the next three days, the children will complete six modules in rotating station work, each one scientifically supervised, standardized, and physically challenging.

Golf.de: According to which criteria are the children's performance in the modules recorded and evaluated?

Michael Scholl: A combination of objective tests, such as darts, bowls, Trackman, and the Vienna Test System, is used. In addition, subjective assessments are conducted by trained coaches. The data is used to derive relevant characteristics for later athletic development. Only absolute results are communicated to the children themselves. The state coaches also receive standardized, biologically relativized results.

Golf.de: What role do GC St. Leon-Rot, the Research Lab of TSG Hoffenheim, and the Institute for Sport and Sports Science at the University of Heidelberg play in the organizational and conceptual process?

Michael Scholl: The German Athletics Federation (DGV) operates its national base in close cooperation with GC St. Leon-Rot, whose excellent infrastructure makes the event possible. The TSG Hoffenheim Research Lab is responsible for administering cognitive and executive function tests. The ISSW Heidelberg is providing us with personnel support through student assistants for data collection.

Golf.de: How is participation in the DGV Talent Cup linked to the DGV's quality management system for junior competitive sports?

Michael Scholl: Participation is a mandatory component of the DGV's quality management program. The Talent Cup is intended to take place annually and establish itself as a reliable component in talent assessment.

Golf.de: To what extent is the Talent Cup also used as a platform for coach training?

Michael Scholl: Coaches from the state golf associations are actively involved through the accompanying C-level coach training program and through direct supervision of the modules. The goal is to sustainably transfer the principles of child-oriented talent development to the clubs.

Golf.de: What concrete insights were gained from the pilot events in 2022 and 2023?

Michael Scholl: The pilot phases were crucial for validating the test structure, optimizing individual modules, and consolidating the processes. We were able to gain valuable experience for the scientific and logistical implementation.

Golf.de: What is the significance of the support from the Dietmar Hopp Foundation?

Marcus Neumann: The German Society for the Advancement of Science (DGV) is extremely grateful to the Dietmar Hopp Foundation. The full funding of Project 2025 was made possible through this support. Without this support, such a complex and high-quality implementation would not have been possible