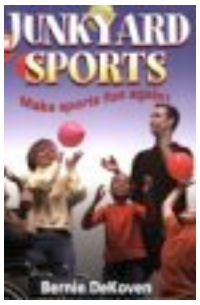
presents:

JUNKYARD GOLF & POTLUCK

A miniature golf-course and community-building event

by Bernie DeKoven
author of



The Event

The **Junkyard Golf Course and Community Building Event with Potluck** is a community-building and community-playing event, where participants build a miniature golf course (a.k.a. “Putt Putt” or “Mini-Golf”) using a collection of recycled materials and found objects, and then play the entire course. The **Junkyard Golf Course and Community Building Event with Potluck** can be conducted with 12 to 200 participants of almost any age and ability.

Safe, Inclusive Fun

It is an invitation to a few hours of safe, inclusive, creative, challenging fun, for everyone, coworkers and their families and even their neighbors, their kids, and parents, and grandparents, for people who speak English and don’t speak English and don’t speak at all, people on walkers, in wheelchairs, and their little dogs, too.

Why

Probably the only good reason for having your own **Junkyard Golf Course and Community-Building Event with Potluck** is how much fun people have. This means that the main measure of success is how many people had fun for how long. Inclusion is the rule of the day.

If someone needs to know why you want to have this kind of fun, really, as in, what are the actual benefits of everyone in the entire community having fun together, everybody involved, safely, creatively, everyone, for three hours – you have found a potential champion. Because clearly, that person really needs a few hours of good, healthy, solid fun.

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Preparation

Of course you don't really have to prepare anything. You could be just so spontaneous, so ad hoc, that you do the whole thing with a few friends, in the parking lot, on a long lunch break - share whatever food and junk you have, and scrounge the rest. And significant fun would be had.

On the other hand, if you want to get a whole community together, preparation is just about key. The real key is fun, of course.

There's a lot to prepare for, if you want to. The potluck for example, can't be left entirely to luck. Well it can, if you don't mind picnicking on, for example, potato chips and jell-o. You'll need places to recycle the recyclables, and throw out the disposables. Enough water – drinkable and wash-with-able. And some kind of emergency procedures for dealing with potato-chip-swollen tummies and jell-o wounds.

Then there's the signage – signage, I always liked that word.

If any one knows of a junk band – you know, the kind that plays percussion with oil drums and broom sticks. Or maybe some artists who make things out of junk.

A little PR wouldn't hurt. Maybe you could stage a few extremely mini-minigolf events in strategically selected places during moments of mass gathering.

And junk – junk to make golf courses and equipment, trophies, flags and score cards.

Here's the start of a typical Junkyard Golf junk collection - like I said, it's only a start. Who knows what other junk is right in the area, just waiting to be made into something golfish?

- **Golf clubs**: brooms, empty plastic 2-liter bottles, PVC pipe, hoseballs, rolled-up newspaper or blue print paper, plastic water bottles or soda bottles or milk bottles or jugs
- **Golf balls**: aluminum foil balls, sock balls, ping pong balls, plastic bag balls, tissue paper balls, Play-Doh balls...
- **Tees**: plastic bottle tops, soda cans, paper cups, breast pumps
- **Holes**: trash cans, paper bags, paper or plastic cups, cardboard boxes, coffee cans, shoes...
- **Ramps and Bumpers**: pizza boxes, paper plates, bike chains, more

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newspaper, belts, telephone books, computer monitors, keyboards...

- **Greens and Roughs**: tabletops, carpets, wood floors, grass, cement, sand, newsprint, cardboard, paper, bubble-wrap…
- **Flags and Scorecards**: (optional) pencil or crayon pieces, sticks, hangars, broomsticks or branches, scrap paper
- **Trophy**: Styrofoam cups, forks, pipe cleaners, paper clips
- **Tools**: Sharpies, packing tape, scissors, glue, self-stick badges

Yes, you could think of Junkyard Golf junk gathering as a kind of art, which is why it falls to you, you Junkyard Golf Pro, to collect and sort the stuff ahead of time.

And, on yet another hand, you could leave the gathering of the junk more or less completely up to the participants. When Southwest Airlines was preparing to play the game, they had everyone go through the offices, asking for donations. It made the collection a bit unpredictable, but it transformed the collecting into a fun, mysterious way to market the event and get people involved, even if they weren't planning to participate.

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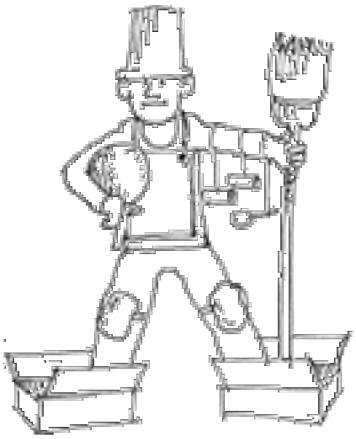
Event Flow

The **Junkyard Golf Course and Community Building Event with Potluck** takes around three hours, and can be broken down into four distinct phases:

- **The Team-forming, Potluck picnic-readying, and Junk-gathering**
- **The Hole-making, testing and par-setting, Trophy-making and naming; eating, continued**
- **The Tournament**
- **The Gathering and Trophy-awarding with the Schmoozing along with the Cleaning and Packing**



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The Team-forming, Potluck picnic-readying, and Junk-gathering (45-minutes)

During this phase, while some people are doing all those wonderful things they do when they get their potluck picnics ready, you and your fellow Junkyard Golf Pros are gathering junk (yes, you can even ask for extra picnic plates and stuff), making junk depots, and planting numbered flags (one flag per team) at every depot. You could be having more fun nibbling on potluck picnic food, but you couldn't get everyone together before the event to get things ready. If you know what I mean. At any rate, you're also gathering hoverers. As people start following you around, you invite their participation and help. All in all, you have 30 minutes to make as many flag-numbered, junk depots as there are teams of 3-12 people.

As to the potluck picnic, which takes place during the whole three hours of the event, actually, you should congratulate yourselves on all the work you did to get people to bring food to share. The potluck idea is so clearly "junklike," so easily integrated into the whole theme of the event, so fun to eat. Sure, some people bought, basically, a bag of potato chips while some others actually got together ahead of time to get soft drinks and punch for everyone, but, all in all, it works, and it's fun, and people are meeting each other, and the kids are starting to feel part of a very, very big family.

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The Hole-making, testing and par-setting, Trophy-making and naming; eating, continued (30 minutes)

Now, you get some more things happening. People are still probably positioning flags and getting stuff and stuff, but they don't need you any more. So, you and your fellow organizers go out among the Table People, organizing golf-hole-making teams, and getting the rest of the people to start making trophies.

Hole-making teams have less than 30 minutes to claim their flag, play with their junk, make a hole, test it, and determine par. Par is the average number of strokes each hole-builder requires to get the ball from tee to hole.

Speaking of "tee to hole," since people have to make everything out of the junk at hand and in the immediate environment. Everything. Junkyard Golf Pros generally find it useful to remind hole-makers what those everythings are.

- Ball – an object that can be propelled by a club so that it lands in a hole (see "hole")
- Club – any satisfying ball-propelling device: a slingshot, a boxtop, perhaps a foot.
- Tee – something that can hold the ball without it rolling off, whilst raising the ball above the fairway.
- Fairway – some kind of surface, with boundaries, and maybe things to bounce off of, with at least one Tee and one end, and one Hole at the other.
- Hole – a thing you can hit the ball in to or maybe on top of, or that can be hit by the ball, and maybe make a noise or fall down.
- Obstacles – things on the fairway that get in the way, unless you're good or lucky. Any things. Including people.

Which means they have to make a ball out of, what? a piece of paper? a plastic

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grocery sack? And a club out of maybe a newspaper and a water bottle covered with a pair of panty hose. A tee? Maybe those milk bottle lids….

Sometimes, you find yourself getting a bit inscrutable. Part of the fun, you know: “so what is a golf club? Is it anything other than a means to get the ball from tee to hole? Could not a golf club be a sling shot made of a pair of panty hose? Does not this paper cup fly well? Could not we use that tube as a ball thrower? That drinking bottle as catapult?”

The ball can be thrown or kicked, as well as, of course, hit with a golf-like club, or water bottle, perhaps, shoe. It can be very small or maybe even basketball-size. The tee, it turns out, can be almost anything with a mouth - a bottle, a jar lid, even the business end of a discarded breast pump. Holes can have human components, even. Some people are exceptionally good at being, for example, windmills.

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The Tournament (60 minutes)

Sooner or later, even if not everyone is finished making everything, it's time to put a stop to these hole- and trophy-making activities, and let the tournament begin.

Everyone who wants to compete should get a scorecard and maybe a pencil and a golf hat made out of newspaper or paper bags. And everyone who wants to watch should follow the players and gather in polite groups to observe, empathize, and applaud. And perhaps those with cameras can capture, and those with recorders comment in most newsworthy manner.

At any rate, the object of both player and spectator is to having fun "playing golf tournament." Whatever makes it feel more "real," makes it feel more fun.

Non-tournament players (kids, people who don't want to keep score) will probably play any hole in any order, pretty much as often as they want to.

Warning: for some people, just about any attempt to keep score or par or decide which hole to play next in any meaningful way is pretty much doomed. Playing other people's courses and actually managing to get the ball in - given whatever they use for a club and whatever else they use for a ball and wherever they put the hole - is often little short of miraculous.

If it gets crowded, and more than a couple players are waiting, have them play together. After the first player shoots, the next player continues from where the ball stopped. Continue taking turns until the ball finally reaches the target. If playing for score, all players get the same number of strokes counted against them.

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The Gathering and Trophy-awarding with the Schmoozing along with the Cleaning and Packing (45 minutes)

So, now you want to get everybody to stop playing already, and clean up and clear out. And you have an hour. So, you gather the hole-making teams and kind of invite them to recycle their junk one last time. And you invite players who have completed the course to assemble near the Table People, and when most everyone is gathered around, the Table People award their trophies accordingly – that is, according to whatever criteria they chose (aesthetics of the hole they made, first to complete the whole course, last to complete, highest score, lowest score, funniest hat…).

Everyone else is eating, of course, or contributing to the clean up, or offering food, or wandering around and schmoozing. If you happen to be schmooze-engaged, you might want to direct the schmooze towards the topic of "fun." As in: "Wasn't it fun when…" Each aspect of the event featured it's own kind of fun: getting the potluck ready, seeing what other people brought, setting up the course, playing with the junk, creating the hole and equipment, testing and refining them, playing "tournament," seeing other people play your hole, seeing the art and creativity in the holes that other people made, eating, making trophies and deciding what they are to be for, awarding trophies, getting awarded, and the significant fun of schmoozing.

- thanks to Wade Lee Hudson for talking me into writing this, and Magdalena Cabrera and the families of the Leaping Lizard Pre-School for helping me understand why.

For even more fun with junk, see: http://www.junkyardsports.com
Wade Lee Hudson is the author of http://progressiveresourcecatalog.org/

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