

Sisters are doing it for themselves...



Sisters Courtney (L), Chloe Belle (centre) and Libby do most of the work on the magazine. Inset: Golfer Girl magazine's second issue

Here's a family business with a difference. Where most family operations have mum and dad in charge and kids tagging along doing as they're told, the Hooton family venture breaks the mould. In fact their start-up golf magazine called Golfer Girl is exactly the reverse.

Keen golfers Claude and Michelle Hooton introduced their three daughters Libby, 16, Courtney, 13 and Chloe Belle, 11, to the game

early in life and all three have taken to it with a passion. So much so that a joke thrown out by Claude while watching television one night has turned into a bold publishing venture where the kids shoulder much of the responsibility.

"We were watching The Apprentice one night on television and the winner was a lady that had started her own magazine with her husband," Claude explains from the family's San Diego home. "And as

we were watching I sort of said jokingly "We should do that, start a golf magazine for girls....ha ha...." But when I turned around they were all just staring at me in silence. "And now here we are a few months and two issues later and it's a reality."

While Claude and Michelle obviously put up the money to start the venture (the family garage doubles as an office and warehouse for the magazine), it is the girls themselves who do the bulk of the work and take most of the responsibility for putting the magazine together.

Eldest daughter Libby, 16, is Editor In Chief while middle sister Courtney is Fashion Editor. The youngest member of the family, Chloe Belle, helps out with all areas of the magazine as required.

"The whole idea is not to try and make a pile of money," says Claude. "It's really two fold. As parents of three young girl golfers we can see there is a place for a publication like this but we also wanted to give our

daughters a real life, practical business experience.

"My wife Michelle sells the advertising and obviously we have a designer to actually put it together but the content and day to day running of it is very much the girls' responsibility. I've been really proud of the way they've handled it, too. It's a family operation and we all have some input but they certainly do their fair share."

For Libby, who is mature well beyond her 16 years, the magazine is a chance to marry her two greatest passions and gain some valuable life experience along the way.

"I've always loved writing and I've always loved golf so a magazine about golf is perfect for me," she says. "And I'm learning lots of things along the way. The main thing I've learnt is just how hard it is to get to the market.

"Distribution is very difficult but I think we're doing pretty well. We've got subscribers in 44 US states plus Mexico and Canada and we'd like to go international but it's a bit hard at the moment"

Trying to get the word out has also taught Libby some of life's tougher lessons.

"Not everybody takes us seriously," she says matter of factly. "Some people have been great and very positive and others have sort of dismissed us as just being some sort of kid's magazine. But that's part of it and we just keep going with trying to get the word out."

The content of Golfer Girl is similar to what you might expect to find in any teen girl magazine but with a golf spin. Fashion is a big part of it but there are also profiles of players (Alexis Thompson, the 12-year-old who made international headlines when she qualified for this year's US Women's Open, is this issue's cover girl and main interview) as well as instruction tips, rules advice and even a "Tell Jenn" most embarrassing stories section.

"The advantage we have with being so involved is that we know what other girls our age want to read about," says Libby. "That's hard for someone who's not a teenage girl to understand so I think we have an advantage there."

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