

BACKSPIN

Official E-Zine of the Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland
December, 2018



Issue Highlights:

- 2018 National O-55's
- 2018 Nat Mix Foursomes
- Joe McGrath Jnr Honoured
- Evan Carry & Sophie Farnan

A Chara,

You are very welcome to this our third edition of Backspin for 2018. Firstly I wish to apologise for the delay in issuing another edition since the last one in July. It had been intended to do another one in the intervening period. Unfortunately however, work as well as some other commitments prevented me from devoting the time necessary to complete another edition until now.

This edition primarily forms a 'Review of the Year' feel. John Manning profiles our National O-55 winners from McDonagh back in July while there are also profiles of National U-16 winners Evan Carry and Sophie Farnan on their day of doing a great double for Meath back in Fermoy in August. We also speak to Dave Towler about his success alongside his St Stephens club-mate Mairead Manning in the National Mixed Foursomes in Lakeside back in September.

We also have a profile of Erry's Joe McGrath Jnr who was recently honoured by the Offaly Sports Partnership for his role in volunteering with the County Board over a prolonged period which we thank Offaly County Board PRO James Walshe for our use of. Following on from (*continued on last page*)



2018 International Challenge, Ireland vs Catalonia @ Seapoint P&P Club

2018 National Over 55's Strokeplay Winners 2018

By John Manning

Frank Ryan- Senior Gents

On July 29th at McDonagh, Frank Ryan (Athgarvan) became the fourth two-time winner of the National Gent's Over 55 Senior Grade Strokeplay championship, joining Pat Greene (who has won three in all), Anthony Malone and William Sheridan. Frank Ryan scored 92 around McDonagh to tie the record for the longest gap between a first and most recent victory in the National Gents Over 55 Senior Grade Strokeplay Championship - 11 years (2007-18), emulating Pat Greene (2006-17).

The first player to win two National Gent's Over 55 Senior Grade Strokeplay championships representing a different club during each victory, Frank was playing out of R.G.S.C. when his 93 around St. Patrick's in 2007 gave him a 10 shot winning margin over Pat Desmond (ESB). Later that year, Frank played for the Dublin side

that finished second to Cork at Lakewood in the 2007 National Inter-County championship.

Frank represented Ireland in the 2014 International Challenge against Catalonia at Lloret Papalus, Spain. Frank won his singles against European Team championship winner Daniel Gimenez to take one point from possible three during that outing. He has been a top-class performer for upwards of 20 years. Runner-up in 1997 Kildare Matchplay championship final, beaten by the legendary Andy Dempsey, Frank was the winner of the 1998 Kildare Matchplay, defeating Athy's Paul O'Brien in the decider in Athgarvan.

His closest shave in the National Gent's Strokeplay Championships came in the Ryston renewal in 2010. Frank Ryan posted rounds of 44, 46, 45 to finish fifth, just two strokes out of the Eddie Carey/John Walsh play-off. There was retribution at Ryston three years later when



2018 Inter Club Competition @ Royal Meath. L-R are Bridget Shelley, Lakeside (Ladies Winners), PPUI Honorary President Mervyn Cooney, John Cahill, Fermoy (Men's Scratch Winners), Derek Delany, Gowran (Men's Nett Winners)

Frank was crowned Leinster Strokeplay champion in Newbridge. His 141 aggregate on that occasion left him three clear of Paul Tobin (St. Patrick's). Frank narrowly failed to regain that Leinster trophy at St. Bridget's last year when a 139 tally saw Frank finish just two strokes behind Martin O'Neill (St. Patrick's).

A member of the Kildare quintet that was runner-up in the 2001 National Inter County to Cork at Rocklodge, Frank was a Leinster Inter-County winner with Kildare in 2011 at Tullamore. The redoubtable man was registered with St. Bridget's when he won the successive Leinster Matchplay championships of 1996 (McDonagh) and 1997 (Tullamore).

He was a key member of a St. Bridget's team (that also included Chrissie Byrne, Tara Dillon and Ian Dillon) that claimed victory in the 2002 National Mixed Team event at Glenville. St. Bridget's 172 Stableford points off low handicaps saw the Kilcullen outfit over the line by two from Glenville. Frank was back in a Leinster Matchplay Semi-Final in 2016, before losing to eventual winner Ian Donnelly (Cement) at Bellewstown.

He didn't rest on his laurels after his tour de force at McDonagh in July. Saturday rounds of 49 and 45 left him in a challenging position overnight in the VI Irish Open at Seapoint. A superb 47 on Sunday saw Frank right in the mix, ultimately securing third place, just two off Damien Fleming's winning score of 139.

Sean Minogue- Intermediate Gents

Sean Minogue has been a contender at the top level of Pitch & Putt for upwards of 30

years. The Tipperary man's career has undergone something of a renaissance following a milestone birthday and a re-grading to the Intermediate ranks.

What a run the Nenagh civil servant has had in the National Gent's Over 55 Strokeplay Championships over the past three years - runner-up in Senior Grade in 2016, runner-up in Intermediate last year and now the Intermediate Champion. Shooting 94 to be second behind runaway Over 55s winner William Sheridan at Fermoy in 2016, Sean was back in the Intermediate ranks for the 2017 Championship at Cloghogue. The Riverdale man's 99 return was joint best of the day but local player Ronan Hollywood proved just too good in a nine hole play-off.

Sean broke 100 for the third year running in the Over 55s tests at McDonagh in July. His 96 tally saw him finish a single stroke clear of Tullamore's John Fleming to be crowned National Over 55s Intermediate Grade Strokeplay Champion. The first left hander to represent Ireland in the International Series against Australia, Sean Minogue was a Semi-Finalist in the 1989 National Matchplay Championship, losing to eventual runner-up Bobby Kilduff (Lucan). Minogue took three points out of a possible four in that historic match at Queanbeyan, NSW in October 1996.

Sean played for Tipperary when they were Runners-Up in the All Ireland Inter-County championship at Lucan in 1991 before winning with Tipperary at Lakewood in 1993 and at Tralee in 1995 (on the day he was captain and principal inspiration, shooting a best of the championship 89). Tipperary, with Minogue again on board, finished third in their title defense in 1996 and were second in 2005. A member of further

bronze winning quintets in 1999, 2007 and 2009, Sean was still part of the Tipp line-up at Hillview in 2013, when the Premier County were second behind a rampant Cork.

International competition has beckoned Sean back in recent years. He was just a shot behind Pacelli Darcy in the Seniors (over 55) category at the Rocklodge 2016 Irish Open having been third in the same classifications at the 2016 Catalan and British Opens. The coveted first win arrived at the 2018 British Open in Dagenham. Sean Minogue returned 156 for 54 holes. That six under par tally gave the Riverdale stalwart five shots to spare in the Over 55s category over fellow countryman Billy O'Donovan. A Munster Inter-County winner in the blue and gold of Tipperary at the 1996 and 2000 championships, PPUI Honorary Auditor Minogue has picked-up five provincial runners-up medals since – including three in a row (2005-07).

A regular Scratch Cup and county championship victor, Sean has also achieved individual provincial success. Having lost to Tony Tracey (Waterford Glass) in the 1990 Munster Matchplay final at Ashgrove, he defeated fellow Tipperary player Noel Joyce (Hillview) in the 1991 decider at Tralee. Sean was a Munster Championship runner-up at Bruff twice – in the 1991 Strokeplay (three strokes behind John O'Leary) and in the 2003 Matchplay (losing the final to Chris Scannell).

He was a Munster intermediate Inter-County championship runner-up (alongside his son John) at Castleisland in 2017.

Christy and Anne Sweeney Junior Gents & Junior Ladies

Anne and Christy Sweeney, from the St. Bridget's club in Kilcullen, Co. Kildare are the



PPUI Leinster/Ulster competition coordinator David Reddin pictured alongside all the prize winners from the 2018 Leinster Matchplay hosted by Inniskeen P&P Club, Co. Monaghan and Collon P&P Club, Co. Louth

second husband and wife (after Finbarr Looney and Mary Looney, RIP, of the Collins club in Cork) to win national Over 55s Strokeplay titles. With Mary Looney having won in 2005 and Finbarr winning seven years later, Christy and Anne are the first husband and wife to win National Pitch and Putt Over 55s Strokeplay championship titles in the same season.

Anne became the seventh Co. Kildare winner of the National Ladies Over 55 junior grade Strokeplay championship in the 15 stagings of the event, following her one shot win over club-mate Dina Dillon at McDonagh on July 28th. Christy's 103 at McDonagh later that same day equalled the second all-time lowest winning aggregate in the National Gents Over 55 Junior Grade Strokeplay championship.

The McDonagh achievement represents Anne Sweeney's second national Pitch and Putt success inside a year after her 2017 win at the National Ladies Promotional Day (alongside Frances Murphy from Kilshannig and Betty Fox of The Acres). The venue for the latter event, McDonagh again! Christy was 1997 Kildare Intermediate Matchplay Champion. Having won the Strokeplay equivalent in 1998, Christy was runner-up in the 2003 Kildare Intermediate Strokeplay Championships at McDonagh, three strokes behind club-mate Bill Hanley.

Christy and Anne are regular partners in pairs and team events and secured Best 1st 18 in the 2014 Leinster Mixed Foursomes at Old County, with a score of +6. Anne was a Kildare Ladies Inter Club winner with St Bridget's in 2001 at Athy on the same day as Christy helped St. Bridget's Intermediates to the title. Four years later at Athgarvan, Anne figured on another winning St. Bridget's team.

Anne and Dina Dillon have battled each other around McDonagh before. The pair met in the 2004 Kildare Ladies Intermediate Matchplay final, which Anne won by 5&4. That meant Anne retained her title having defeated Sandra Sweeney (St. Bridget's) 3&2 at Athgarvan in the 2003 final. In fact, Anne accomplished a treble of sorts as she had been county Ladies Junior Matchplay champion at St. Bridget's in 2002, beating club-mate Betty Barker by 10&9 in the final.

2002 was a doubly profitable year for Anne as she added the Leinster Junior Matchplay crown to the county equivalent. McDonagh again proved happy hunting ground for the St. Bridget's lady as she won an exciting provincial final at the 37th there against Ann O'Rourke (Channonrock). Anne was part of a Kildare team that won the Leinster Ladies Junior Inter-County championship at St. Bridget's in 2015.

Christy served as a very effective Competitions Secretary of Kildare County Board for many years. Anne and Christy have also functioned administratively at St. Bridget's, with Anne a successful Lady Captain and Christy a charismatic Chairman. Anne is a first cousin of the late great Jim Connolly (RIP). She loves Country and Western Music and is no mean singer herself.

Curragh Camp native Christy and Anne, from Kildare town, live in Newbridge. They raised a large family and when they are not amassing Pitch & Putt titles, they now dote on their grandchildren.

Mary Murray- Senior Ladies

The achievements on Mary Murray's résumé keep moving to a higher plane. 2018 has brought a provincial senior grade championship, a 107 around McDonagh, which won the National Ladies Over 55 Senior Grade Strokeplay championship to go with the Intermediate equivalent of two years earlier. Then after a Best Gross victory with the Cork Senior Grade team at the new-look Munster Inter-County in Parteen, Mary made her Irish International debut against the Catalans at Seapoint, beating Marta Trillo in singles.

The springboard for the season was probably that Munster Strokeplay success at Lakeside by a stroke over Eleanor Walsh. Mary's voracious appetite for national success was somewhat sated in a tumultuous week in July 2016. She had been a perennial contender in the National Intermediate Ladies Strokeplay previously - second in

2011 (shooting 162 to be one shot behind Pauline Balfé at Ringcommons) and third in 2013 along with two other top six placings. The Rocklodge lady's eight par under par 100 at Fermoy in the 2016 National Over 55s Intermediate Strokeplay championship was the lowest ever winning score in that event - by seven shots! Mary's winning margin of 14 strokes was the biggest ever in the history of the championship.

A mere seven days following her Fermoy heroics, Mary made history by winning the National Ladies Intermediate Strokeplay, becoming the first player to win that title and the corresponding Over 55 graded championship in the same year. Mary scored 174 at St. Stephen's to be the first Rocklodge winner since 1984. Mary, who was also third in the National Junior Strokeplay at Douglas in 2005, triumphed by two from Mary Quinn (Lakeside) and Ailish Sexton (Fermoy).



2018 Munster Matchplay @ Fermoy P&P Club.

(l-r) Intermediate Winner Mairead Manning (St. Stephen's), Senior Winner Mary Murray (Rocklodge) and Junior Winner Valarie Leahy (Lakewood)

Mary won the 2016 British Ladies Open (and was runner-up on her title defence in 2018). Having won the British Open at Dagenham two years ago, Mary Murray finished in the top two for the second successive international open when she was runner-up to Breda Lonergan at Rocklodge in the 2016 Irish Open. She helped Cork to the 2015 National Ladies Inter-County championship at Douglas and holds two Munster Inter-County winners' medals under the previous format – secured at St. Anne's in 2013 and at Tramore a year earlier.

Crowned Cork Ladies' Strokeplay Champion in May 2017, Mary defeated Patsy O'Donovan (Collins) in that year's Munster Intermediate Matchplay championship final at Bruff. Mary and Rocklodge club-mate John Tracey scored +5 to win Best First 18 in the 2014 National Mixed Foursomes at Ringcommons. Mary and John were Best Gross victors at the 2015 Munster Mixed Foursomes at Lakeside.

Mary has been a dominant force in the Munster Ladies Strokeplay Championships this decade. At Hillview in 2016, Mary Murray defeated Kathleen Shanley (Hillview) in a play-off for the provincial intermediate Strokeplay title after a tie on 111. The Munster Ladies Strokeplay was contested on a Nett basis at Ballinlough in 2014. Mary Murray scored 98 to win the senior grade by a shot from Sarah Byrne (Fermoy).

Having lost a play-off (to Lakeside's Martha O'Brien) for the 2010 Munster Ladies Intermediate Strokeplay Championship at Douglas, Mary took third place in the 2011 renewal at Castleisland and in the 2013 event at Cunnigar.

A Cork Handicap Matchplay winner in 2013, Mary Murray is a three-time Cork Intermediate Matchplay champion.

Mairead O'Toole- Intermediate Ladies

On July 28th 2018 at McDonagh, Mairead O'Toole and Mary Murray became the first players in history to win both the National Ladies Over 55 Senior and Intermediate Grade Strokeplay Championships. By a quirk of scheduling, Mairead O'Toole reached that milestone a matter of some hours before her Rocklodge counterpart. And the pair achieved that particular double in reverse order.

First crowned National Over 55s Senior Grade Strokeplay champion in 2007 at St. Patrick's, when a two-round 112 saw her home by a single stroke from Skyrne's Kathleen Geraghty, Mairead regained that title in 2013 at Erry when her 107 aggregate was four ahead of home player Helen Wynne. In 2018 at McDonagh, Mairead battled down the stretch for this year's intermediate championship with another former national Ladies Over 55s Senior Grade Strokeplay champion, Rose Kelly (Ryston). The Kildare duo tied on 110 before Mairead triumphed in the nine holes play-off.

Proud Poulaphouca lady Mairead also became the fourth player in history (Mary Murray and Mairead's fellow Kildare ladies Esther Martin and Bernie Dunne are the others) to win the National Ladies Intermediate Strokeplay championship and the National Ladies Over 55 Intermediate Grade Strokeplay championship. A blistering last round of 51 at Glenville saw Mairead O'Toole improve from seventh place after 36 holes to win the 2001 National ladies intermediate Strokeplay championship with a

166 aggregate for 54 holes. Mairead was out in 27 in the final round but shot three birdies coming in for a homeward run of 24 and a win by five over 36-hole leader Anne Kelly (Collinstown).

Having annexed the Kildare Intermediate Ladies Strokeplay Championship on her home course in 1997, Mairead first leapt into national Pitch & Putt prominence when she partnered Liam O'Toole to 13up and the runners-up slot behind Croom's Mary Dore and Ger Wallace in the 1998 National Mixed Foursomes at Castlelyons. Liam and Mairead O'Toole played the last five in one under gross to be joint fifth on +6 after eighteen. The Poulaphouca couple were +9 with the last nine to play (after a one under par gross front nine). They bogeyed the 10th but birdied the 11th and parred in for their 13up aggregate but that ultimately left them a stroke behind their Limerick rivals.

Mairead beat Masie O'Brien (St. Bridget's) by 8&6 in the final of the Kildare Ladies Intermediate Matchplay of 2001, one of a number of county championships for the Poulaphouca player. She was runner-up to Chrissie Byrne in the 2004 Kildare Senior Ladies Strokeplay championship at Poulaphouca. She has been an integral part of Kildare inter-County success, provincially and nationally, since 2003. Mairead played on the 2005, 2007, 2014 and 2017 National Inter-County winning Lilywhite teams while she has participated in seven Leinster Inter-County victories (2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2017).

There have been many runners-up slots as well – Mairead holds seven National Inter-County silver medals (including four in a row from 2010) and no fewer than eight Leinster Inter-County second place finishes.



2018 Munster Matchplay @ Fermoy P&P Club.

(l-r) Intermediate Winner Kyle Kennedy (Hillview), Senior Winner Declan Freeman (Fermoy) and Junior Winner Sean O'Neill (Larkspur Park)

2018 National Girls Strokeplay - Sophie Farnan

By Jason O'Connor

ONLY two years playing the sport, Sophie Farnan became the first girl from Meath in 38 years to win a National Girls Strokeplay when she got the better of the Ahern sisters from Lucan in Fermoy back in August. Communications & Press Officer Jason O'Connor spoke to her father John about the Skyrne's player win.

HAVING taken up the sport from playing golf over six years ago, John Farnan was eventually joined by his daughter Sophie in his trips to Skyrne for a round in the last two years. It's unlikely the duo thought it would end up with her winning a national title so soon. Sophie had played with the Meath's U-16 team at the Leinsters in Glenville but missed out on the national side, but some consolation would come in being able to head to Fermoy to take part in the Girls event alongside Eimear and Maebh Ahern on the day beforehand.

Leaving the Royal County at 6.30am that morning, Sophie was heading into the unknown

somewhat having only played within Meath at events in Stackallen and Navan. "It was a bit of a baptism of fire as she had never played in an event like it before. She was nervous at the start before eventually finding her feet and Eimear and Maebh were very nice playing partners to have. I must credit Helen (McMorrow, National Youth Officer) for being very encouraging and supportive to them throughout it all. The course was in great condition and everything was in great order I thought," John said. He looks back at the first nine holes of the second round as being crucial to Sophie's win.

"She went around in 28, one over and had three birdies, two bogeys and a five which was good scoring and I know after the win this year, Sophie is really looking forward to next year when hopefully a few more girls will be playing," he said. The Skyrne player's win was the first for a Meath player since Denise Rusk of Clonee won in 1980 as Sophie had won a fair amount in the club already in time playing. "She enjoys the competi-



Pictured at a Fermoy P&P Club are PPUI Youth Officer Helen McMorrow, 2018 u-16 Girls Champion Sophie Farnan (Skyrne), 2018 u-16 Boys Champion Evan Carry (Castletown) and PPUI Honorary President Mervyn Cooney

tive aspect of the game, she has won three major competitions in the club and it's great for a small club like ours with only 27 members to have a success like it. We're in the same parish as the Hill of Tara and she joins Kathleen Geraghty and Oliver Duane in winning national titles from the club," her father said.

Festive viewers of the Christmas TV ads might notice the 'Mrs. O's' pub in the Guinness ad which happens to be right next door to the Skyrne course itself. Success within the county

would follow for Sophie at the season ending Meath U-16 Scratch Cup where she was honoured alongside Evan Carry by the Royal County.

"It was very nice for her to be honoured alongside Evan after everything he has won himself. She was presented with a lovely silver frame by the Meath Board recognising her win." After finding out about the event only by chance it was certainly worth the long trip in the end for Sophie to Fermoy on the third Saturday in August.

History Maker—Evan Carry

By Jason O'Connor

AMONGST a litany of successes for Evan Carry in 2018, one achievement will stand tall in becoming the second player in history to win the Eugene McCarthy Cup three years-in-a-row nearly two decades after the achievement was done by Waterford Crystal's Barry O'Neill between 1997 and 99. Communications & Press Officer Jason O'Connor spoke with Evan about a historic day in Fermoy back in August.

Nothing quite dominated the build-up to any competition in the summer like the question about whether or not Evan Carry would join an exclusive club of one in Fermoy in winning the National U-16 Boys Strokeplay title for the third straight year? All the signs appeared to indicate he would, a Leinster Matchplay, Leinster Strokeplay and a National U-16 Matchplay (where he beat Parteen's Shea Fennell in a novel final between the Leinster and Munster Matchplay winners) all won in the build-up indicated he was in the right form to achieve what only one other had done before.

His first success in Royal Meath in 2016, a 12 under par total and a six shot victory over Deerpark's Lorcan Martin was followed by a 10 under par total in Erry last year and a five stroke victory over Dominic Scully from the host club. Fermoy was perceived to be a different challenge



History Maker—Evan Carry (Castletown) is pictured with PPUI Honorary President Mervyn Cooney



PPUI Honorary President Mervyn Cooney & PPUI Youth Officer Helen McMorrow pictured with the prizewinners at the PPUI National U-16 Championships in both the Boys and Girls events.

though, especially with Evan having to win ‘a big one’ in Munster for the first time. “Fermoy is a super course, Cork have some top courses and Fermoy is definitely up there with them. It’s incredible to win one not to mind three but it’s still always hard to beat the first one like I had in Royal Meath. I didn’t really think about it in terms of being a ‘three-in-a-row’ until after the National Matchplay in Kilbeggan,” the Castletown player said.

After the first 18 holes it looked like Evan was set for a third win with seven under par, two clear of Deerpark’s Cillian Courtney at that stage, but it got a bit too close for comfort in the second 18. “Yeah it was funny shooting seven under par when I could have had a few more strokes on it and then to do only one under for the second round. I wouldn’t say I was feeling nervous, I would just say that the putter was feeling a bit cold and I was struggling to hole putts. That probably shows you how Pitch & Putt can be different from round-to-round,” he said.

Approaching the last nine holes on eight under par and hearing scores of six and five under par from other players did heighten Evan’s nerves but in the end eight under par would be enough to see off Kilbeggan’s Jack Mullins, St Stephens Aaron Roche and Deerpark’s Robbie Harnett who all finished within four strokes of Evan’s winning score. “That’s how nationals should be in the scoring being so close, whether it’s an adult or U-16 competition. It probably made it that more special to win when it was that tight,” Evan felt. Now Evan enters the adult ranks in 2019, straight into the senior grade as well, something he is very much looking forward to. “I can’t wait especially seeing as I am going straight in as a senior. I feel I have the game to compete and it’s a challenge I can’t wait for.”

Evan also acknowledged the contribution of his club Castletown to his successes. “I very much appreciate their support, it’s been very helpful to me over the last few years.”

Dave Towler - 2018 National Mixed Foursomes

By Jason O'Connor

AFTER seeing his sons win National U-16 titles in recent years, Dave Towler managed to join both Ryan (National U-16 Strokeplay) and Glenn (National U-16 Matchplay) in winning a National title back in September when he won the National Mixed Foursomes in Lakeside alongside his St Stephens club-mate Mairead Manning. He talks to Communications & Press Officer Jason O'Connor about the win.

Playing the game competitively for around three years, Dave Towler was inspired by his own sons Ryan (2015 National Boys Strokeplay) and Glenn (2016 National U-16 Matchplay winner) successes to try his hand at the game himself. "I didn't want to be considered their transport manager," Dave said with tongue-in-cheek about his two sons' respective victories in recent years.

Playing with Mairead Manning, the duo were prize-winners in the Munster Mixed Foursomes before moving on to national level, where preparation for last September's event in Templemore wasn't exactly perfect.

"We played only about 36 holes together before it, St Stephens greens were being hollow-tined at the time so we had to go up to St Annes to get our practice in the day before we went up to Lakeside," he said. Winning the Cork Junior Matchplay Final two weeks previous to the event along with Mairead's success in winning the National Ladies Intermediate Strokeplay in Collins back in July had given the duo some decent form heading into the event as Dave described their 36 holes.



2018 National Mixed Foursomes winners Mairead Manning & Dave Towler (both St. Stephen's P&P Club)

“We got the plusses everywhere we had a shot which was crucial. With only one tee-shot it is a very tough format but I think the big thing was our finish. I put Mairead in the bunker on the 15th after a poor tee-shot and she did well to get out of it and leave us with a par after. We got plusses on the last three holes which in hindsight were huge in bringing us to 15up,” Dave said. As they were in the morning session, a long wait would ensue to see if they could hold the lead after the afternoon session.

“We had great company in Paula Nolan and Hugh Cooney while we were waiting but even though we thought someone else had shot 15up when it was confirmed that we had won it was a great feeling,” he said. Margaret and Dean Courtney of Riverdale came within one shot of them but Dave and Mairead could savour joining club-mates Mary and Alan Daly in winning the

Sean Coyne Memorial Cup, just three short years after the Daly’s had done so in Collins. For the club in particular Dave felt it was a significant win.

“Mairead has had great success in winning the two Nationals in the Ladies Strokeplay in recent years but with our win and Ger Hogan winning a County Intermediate title and Aaron Roche winning the Cork U-16 titles, I don’t think the club has ever had a year quite as successful as this.”

The former soccer player who was inspired to take up the game by his two sons own feats certainly went a fair share of the way to holding his own in any discussion about Pitch & Putt successes at home!



2018 Irish Open @ Seapoint

Pictured are some of the prize winners from the 2108 Irish Open along with Officials and sponsors

McGrath Recognised by Offaly Sports Partnership

By James Walshe

Erry P&P Club PRO James Walshe, reporting on the club's social media page, wrote about the deserved award bestowed on club-mate Joe McGrath Junior by the Offaly Sports Partnership at their recent Networking and Volunteer Recognition Evening. James has kindly allowed us to reproduce his piece for this edition of Backspin.

On Thursday 6th December at a celebration of volunteerism in sport hosted by the Offaly Sports Partnership at the Tullamore Court Hotel, our own Joe McGrath Jun was recognised for his contributions to Pitch and Putt. Joe is not one to seek the limelight, but he was deservedly centre stage on a night that celebrated all the great work been done by the various sporting organisations in Offaly.

The night began with the various groups and organisations displaying just what their sport has to offer to people looking to participate in sport in 2019 before attention turned to celebrating all

those who give up their time to volunteer in sport. Among those who spoke at the event was the night's key note speaker, Irish footballing legend Packie Bonner, who had earlier taken time out to visit all the stalls and speak to each group in attendance. When the speeches had ended, it was time for the awards to be handed out and for a shocked Joe to be announced as the recipient of the Pitch and Putt award. He had been nominated by the P.P.U.I in recognition of his great work in promoting the game not only in this county but further afield.

Joe has been giving up his time for well over 20 years now to our game and has done so much good for the game in that period. While Joe has indeed enjoyed some great successes on the playing fields in that time including winning an All-Ireland mixed Foursomes title with his sister Tracey, it's his work behind the scenes that help him stand out. It's so easy to take what you can from a sport as so many do but it takes something a little special to give back. Joe has been heavily involved with this club for over 20 years



Representatives from Offaly P&P Clubs at the recent Networking Event hosted by Offaly Sports Partnership.

now and has served the club in a variety of roles and is currently our club Secretary, a role which also includes the role of competition Secretary, one that Joe seems to excel at. He is also part of our grounds crew and will often be seen overseeing the watering of the greens.

Joe has also spent many years involved at county board level and until recently served as Secretary and Competitor Secretary on the board. For many years Joe also served as Juvenile Officer of both the club and county board and it's his work in this area that in many ways make him stand out. Joe took on this role at a time when his sister Tracey was only starting out and with his encouragement and guidance, she became the legendary player that we all know today. Over the years Joe has helped develop the talent of the likes of Larry Maher, Brian Doyle, Sean Galvin and Gary Pyke (the current Dutch Matchplay Champion). He was in charge of the Offaly Juvenile team that won the inaugural Leinster Inter County Championship at the Campions club in Dublin in 1999. He would preside over our next success in that event ten years later in Kilbeggan and was part of the backroom team for our most recent success in 2016 at the Acres club in Longford. Since the late 90's Joe has run in conjunction with his good friend Joe Egan the ever-popular Egan & McGrath Shield for our juvenile members, an event that continues to go strong.

Unlike many who only want to work with the best of the best, Joe only ever wanted his players to have fun. He is acutely aware that not everyone who takes up the game can be an All-Ireland Champion but that doesn't mean they can't enjoy it. He always encouraged the juvenile players to have fun on the course and it's a philosophy that we as a club are now seeing the benefits of. Over the last five years or so, we have had a number of our former juvenile members return to the game, all of whom had only positive memories of their time with Joe and the club. His encouragement of players with perceived lesser ability has al-

lowed us to hold on to those who may otherwise have left the sport.

Over the last 20 years or more Joe McGrath Jun has done so much for our sport, for the county, for our club and for the people of Clara and the surrounding areas so it is only fitting that he was finally recognised for his efforts. Many of us currently involved in the game would not be doing so had it not been for the encouragement received by Joe and all the work he has done along with others in ensuring the continued success of this sport.

Congratulations Joe on a well-deserved award!!!!!!



Joe McGrath Jnr, Erry P&P Club pictured with his award from Offaly Sports Partnership recognising his many years of volunteering in sport in Offaly

BACKSPIN PRODUCTION TEAM

Jason O'Connor, John Manning, James Walshe and Paul Hayes



(continued from first page) this edition John Manning will take a more in-depth look at the year in national terms which we intend to publish on the website over the Christmas period for some festive reading.

As we come to the end of the year I want to thank all those who assisted me in the course of my duties during the past year. I have indicated to the NEC my decision to stay on in the role for a further year although I might not be able to commit to travel to as many events next year due to a number of other commitments I have in 2019.

As we come to the end of the year we remember those in the game who contributed both locally and nationally to our great game. Eamonn Birchall will be foremost in all our thoughts this Christmas following his sad passing back in June. We think of his family and friends in the game at

this time as we all mourn his loss.

I wish everyone an enjoyable read of this edition and encourage you to do a trawl through our website and Facebook page for other features such as articles and videos from the year gone by.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

Yours in Sport,

Jason O'Connor

Jason O'Connor
Communications & Press Officer
PPUI
0868048933

MAJOR UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

2019 Club Affiliation and members registration is available from Jan 1st 2019

Closing Date for Advertisements for PPUI Fixture Book is Jan 7th 2019

PPUI Annual Convention takes place in Templemore Arms, Templemore, Co. Tipperary on Sat 9th March 2019



2018 Irish Open @ Seapoint

2018 Champion Damien Fleming from Deerpark P&P Club receives his prize