

BACKSPIN

Official E-Zine of Pitch and Putt Ireland

April 2021



Pitch and Putt
Ireland

Issue Highlights:

- P & P Equipment
- International Years
- National Years
- Plus More...

A Chara,

You are very welcome to our first Backspin edition of 2021. Sadly not a lot of action has taken place since our last edition following the cessation of play on December 30th last. It's been a difficult three months for everyone in a lot of different ways and while I am sure there are those who would like to be back playing a lot sooner than April 26th, grounds committees will probably appreciate the coming weeks to get our courses in ideal condition for the return to play.

In this edition our President Mervyn Cooney outlines where he sees the year potentially panning out from here as well as some of the conversations the NEC have been having since Christmas. We hope to do a lot more to market and promote our sport this year and we hope to make an announcement on that front in the coming weeks. Elsewhere we have a quirky look back at some of the equipment we have used throughout the history of our sport. *(continued on the last page)*



Pacelli Darcy (left) was the senior champion in the Catalan Open in 2016. Alan Hanlon (right) won the IV San Marino Open in 2006. John Manning takes a look back through the international years starting on page 6.

A message from President Mervyn Cooney

I am writing this piece for our Backspin magazine having just watched the Taoiseach address us in relation to changes to Level 5 restrictions.

To say I am somewhat bewildered is an understatement and I am sure this is a sentiment shared by many of our players and officers throughout the country.

I have been hearing our most eminent scientists speak in the last few days of how safe the outdoors are when it comes to the spread of the virus, and in their view there was a very low risk associated with the playing of non-contact sports like Pitch & Putt, Golf and Tennis. To see the re-opening of our sport put back until April 26th is a major disappointment.

There is no doubt that this lockdown has been very challenging for all of us, and the fact that we are unable to play Pitch & Putt has really exasperated the situation. I know it's still some time away but as the evenings stretch out we can look forward to April 26th and the resumption of play at club level.

A fixture calendar has been completed but I fear we have some distance to go before the resumption of Open Competitions. It is going to be another difficult year for us in relation to provincial and national events, we are hopeful that it will be possible to hold both the Matchplay and Strokeplay Championships, with the August Bank Holiday as a possible date for the Matchplay, with the Strokeplay in late August or early September.

We are conscious of the fact that Clubs will be anxious to see as many Club Opens and Scratch Cups as possible played from July onwards, as many will need this income to help cover some of their lost income.

As you may have seen on our website we are seeking candidates to undertake a Referees

Course which we hope will get underway in the next few weeks. We have approximately 20 expressions of interest so far, I would like to see many more and I would encourage members to undertake this course. Part 1 is an online theory course with a set number of questions. The purpose of this course is to see a number of qualified referees throughout the country and available to officiate at various Championships and Competitions.

We recently wrote to all clubs advising them of additional information on the handicap system. There is now an end of year review of all players' Handicaps where the player has played a minimum of five competitions; clubs may if they wish use this information when reviewing members handicaps. If a club wishes to make a change they should inform the office and the changes will be updated.

I have recently held discussions with a digital marketing expert in relation to better promotion of our sport. This would encompass Club promotion and promotion of our Championships and competitions and also live coverage of our major events. If a programme and cost can be agreed I would hope to see this starting sometime in May. I believe we need to more proactive in this area as we compete for people to take up our sport. It is an exciting prospect and one I am really looking forward to.

Given the current restrictions it will not be possible to meet indoors for some time yet, therefore it will be necessary for us to hold County/Regional Board Conventions and a restricted National Convention to confirm Officers and financial statements for the year end. These will have to be conducted via Zoom and we have started discussions with a company with a view to getting these organised in the near future. The NEC will assist Boards in the organising of these Zoom Conventions. We will correspond with

Board Secretaries in the weeks ahead.

In conclusion I would appeal to players to join their club and support it at this most critical of times. I can see from media reports that many committees and members have worked extremely hard over the past number of months to ensure their course is ready for the resumption of play; we can repay that magnificent effort by joining for 2021.

I want to wish all of our clubs and members the very best for this once again shortened season, and we look forward to better days ahead. A lot of lives have been lost to this terrible virus and no doubt we all know someone who passed away from its effects, I send my sympathy to families within our organisation who have suffered loss as a result of this pandemic you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Mervyn Cooney,
President Pitch and Putt Ireland



Pitch & Putt Equipment

By John Manning

It's probably a slight exaggeration to say that Gene Sarazen invented the sand iron or wedge. But there's no doubt that the link-up between the nine-time major champion and the Wilson Equipment Company significantly impacted the multiplicity of wedges that we know today. And Wilson clubs have had a profound impact on the evolution of modern Pitch & Putt.

Two of the greatest players of all time, Ray Murphy and John Walsh, have both used the Wilson Reflex Sand Iron to lift their incredible haul of titles. Walsh still uses the Reflex Sand Iron he purchased (for €25!) from 1988 National Matchplay runner-up James Angland. How profitably that small investment has delivered!

Taking Sarazen's idea of a new club with a pronounced sole, Wilson created the first sand wedge in 1933, shifting 50,000 units that year. Wilson Reflex Sand Irons have also sold well in Co. Kerry.

2004 National Matchplay champion Derry McCarthy likes a pitching club with a slightly heavier head, whereby one can feel the club head position in the backswing, and something with a straighter leading edge which suits his chipping action. Derry reckoned the Wilson Reflex Sand Iron fitted him perfectly and his lead was followed by his willing protégé.

"I started using a Wilson Reflex SI when I was

about 15," remembers Damien Fleming. "Derry had one, so they were all the rage." His Wilson Reflex has helped Damien to lift three national championships and a trio of Irish Open titles.

Derry is now an accomplished golfer but his Pitch & Putt club stays at home when he's on the golf course. "I have never used the reflex for golfing," smiles Derry, "as I didn't want to be taking divots out of the ground with it, thus damaging the grooves!"

T.J. O'Riordan's two Irish Matchplay Pitch & Putt titles in the 1960s were delivered with a Clerys' Wedge and a Clerys' Putter purchased for 29 shillings (less than €2)! These were simple blade clubs. Another to employ a Clerys' club to success was a youthful Paul O'Brien. "A Clerys 8-iron kind of won me a Munster Juvenile (Strokeplay) in 1993 at Lakeside where I used it for 17 holes," laughs the Lakeside maestro. "On the 18th, I took a practice swing and the head flew off! I got a loan of a Fred Smyth 10 iron (another, slightly more modern, blade club) for the remaining 19 holes and ended up playing brilliantly with it to beat Ronan Walsh in a 9-hole play-off."

Ballinlough's John O'Leary started playing with a pair of wooden shafted clubs from a very old golf set - a putter and a seven iron, which he used in to help Cork win the 1981 National Juvenile Inter-County, in a play-off with Meath at Par-



John Walsh (left) from Collins P & P and John O'Leary (right) from Ballinlough P & P.

teen.

Niblicks were used for high approach shots in golf before wedges came on the scene. The big face now seen on modern sand and other wedges were also a feature of the old niblicks. Typically with a loft of about 50 degrees, the niblicks were very well balanced, with thin flanged blades. Most of the weight is in the flange and so it is applied low on the ball. The niblicks made ideal Pitch & Putt clubs for many.

Clare Keating used an old niblick with a very low swing weight. Geraldine Ward's club of choice paid homage to the lady whose records she chased down and eventually surpassed. Ger's Cecil Connolly Pitcher is another niblick. The 8 marked on it does not reflect the lower loft one would expect on a modern 8-iron.

The late great Pitch & Putt mentor Willie Parker created a club with Cork-based golf professional Tommy Maher. The 51 degree "Maher Special" mimicked the old niblicks. John O'Leary wielded the "Maher Special" to victory at Dunlops in the 1983 National Matchplay. "When purchasing it, I was told it was designed for Pitch and Putt," recalls John, who beat the legendary Michael Forrest in the 1983 final. "It was very open-faced, which enabled me to get the ball in the air as quickly as possible." The "Maher Special" was copied and marketed as the "Pitch & Putt Special" elsewhere in the country.

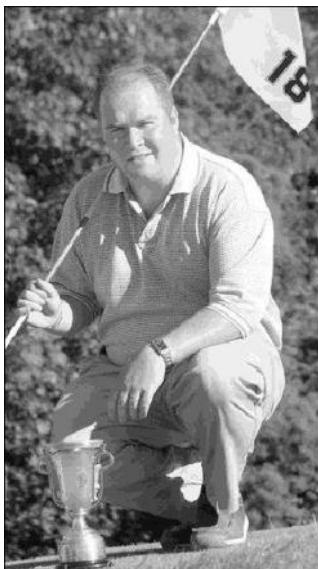
Perimeter weighted wedges became popular in the 1990s. Also known as peripheral weighted or

cavity-backed, these clubs had weight distributed all around the edge of the clubhead. The Slazenger XTC Wedge, a classic of this type, helped Sean Downes and Sean Harkins claim multiple Irish titles. Norma O'Brien, who enjoyed a brief but glittering ladies career, was another perimeter weighted club devotee.

Niblicks had thin flanged blades because they were forged, rather than cast as many more modern clubs were. Clubs were forged up to the 1950s, from then on most were cast. Casting enabled a wide array of clubhead sizes and lofts, and facilitated experimentation with level of bounce and width of flange. Clubs such as the Wilson Reflex were developed in the 1970s/1980s, as were other Wilson blade makes such as the X31 Sand Wedge, favoured by 2008 Irish Strokeplay champion and two-time Irish Open victor Frank Dineen. It's no surprise that so many top players continue to use the old-style blades as they prefer the feel of the ball on the clubhead, which enables them to control the shot better.

The development of wedges has continued to evolve as manufacturers experimented with different flange designs to aid the golfer to obtain optimum spin on the ball, enabling it to stop quicker on the green. At first glance, the sole of a sand wedge may appear to be just a huge mass of metal, but careful consideration has been given to the placement of the weight, and the camber and roll of the club.

As aircraft engineers have got involved in golf club design, forging has undergone a renaiss-



Derry Mc Carthy (left) from Deerpark P & P and Chrissie Byrne from Ryston P & P.

sance. One finds a combination of forging/casting and also milled clubs. Lob Wedges (typically 60 degrees) and Gap Wedges (52) have joined the pitching (48) and sand irons (56).

Ray Murphy confesses to finally bowing to progress' march. "At the start of last year I started using a Titleist Vokey (54 degree)," admits the ten-time National individual champion. "What I look for in a club is to have a good weight to it and have good grooves on the face to stop a ball," says Ray.

Typical of the new CAD (computer aided design) clubs, Vokey wedges are made from soft steel that gives perfect feedback to the player, which makes it easier to judge how hard a shot should be hit.

Many players, including Derry McCarthy, John O'Leary, Chrissie Byrne, Sean Harkins, Paul O'Brien and Damien Fleming started with a pitching club other than a wedge.

Another Wilson advocate, Chrissie Byrne has every confidence in her cavity-back Bernard Langer Pitching Wedge which she's now been playing with for 20+ years and which would be somewhat heavier than the niblicks swung by her fellow ladies legends, Ger and Clare. Chrissie eschews the current obsession with technology. "I think today there is too much focus on technical aspect of clubs such as bounce, spin ratio etc., which I feel is unnecessary." Conversely, Sean Harkins has never been slow to dabble. "With the changes in equipment over the years I have experimented with wedges and balls, but have settled with the Callaways (the slightly larger than average CB) over the last while. (I'm) always looking at new gear when it comes along, so ask me again in a few years!" Frank Dineen has trialed other clubs (a Ping wedge, a Big Bertha wedge and a Reflex) but always returns to his Wilson X31, which was bought secondhand many years ago for £10 (less than €13).

Pitch & Putt calls for solid aggressive putting. Small greens in general mean shorter putts so rather than "roll it up", as in golf, Willie Parker always said the mantra on the Pitch & Putt green should be "Rattle it in."

A putter is very much a matter of personal preference albeit a heavy putter (designed for golf) may feel a little clumsy on the petite Pitch & Putt greens. However, Damien Fleming attests, "I would have to say I like weight in the putter as it allows me be more solid over the shorter putts."

Putters vary enormously in design and that design has changed over the years. Initially, the shaft was attached to the head at the heel of the club – they had that familiar L shaped look. They typically had a blade or mallet head, with the weight behind the face.

An old wooden shafted club, the Bobby Jones Calamity Jane, was the most famous blade putter. Michael Forrest, Liam O'Brien and John O'Leary were three All Ireland champions to putt with replicas of the Calamity Jane. Paul O'Brien's George Nicoll Pin splitter is another vintage blade putter. The World Cup and European Team championship winner has never used another.

Mallet-headed putters were also popular in Pitch and Putt. 1992 and 1998 National Strokeplay kingpin Frank O'Donoghue employed his John Letters Silver Swan to deadly effect.

The next design to evolve was the centre shafted putter. Centre shafted putters mean more solid hits. The Acushnet Bullseye is probably the most celebrated centre shafted putter and Sean Harkins holed significant footage with his Bullseye, when capturing the 1986 National Matchplay title at the old R.G.S.C. course.

Ping Putters arrived in 1959. They were heel and toe weighted to lend more consistency to the stroke. Many of the modern day putters still use this design. Damien Fleming loved his Ping Zing while John Walsh used a Ping B60 for a while. Sean Harkins currently employs a Ping TR (True Roll) Cadence.

"I'm using a Scotty Cameron now. Putting is all in the head," insists John Walsh. "If you putt badly, I think you blame the putter but it's not necessarily so. It could be the greens are too slow or too fast but you just have to adjust and don't blame the putter."

Blade putters are still around but they're a bit more sophisticated these days. "I've always liked the small-headed blade putters rather than the big-headed Odyssey or Titleist ones," says Ray Murphy of his Mizuno 9002, which has been his chosen weapon on the greens for many years now.

Chrissie Byrne's Callaway Palomar putter, which the Ryston star has employed with devastating efficiency for over a decade, is an example of a modern mallet-headed design.

Scotty Cameron and Odyssey both transformed putter design in the 1990s. Using premium materials Cameron produced fine milled putters using innovative methods and classic as well as modern shapes. Odyssey putters were famous for the insert on the face of the putter and later for the two circles (2-ball) behind the face to aid the lining-up process.

Scotty Cameron putters have delivered many Pitch and Putt titles in the hands of John Walsh, Damien Fleming, John Ross Crangle and others. Odyssey short sticks are endorsed by Frank Dineen, Derry McCarthy and John O'Leary. Dineen even uses a Scotty grip on his Odyssey!

Continuing his golf versus Pitch & Putt theme, Derry McCarthy says, "I also used an Odyssey DF 550 putter from 1996 but found this was a bit more difficult to use on the longer putts when golfing." Derry now uses an Odyssey White Hot Pro V-Line.

The much-decorated champion, JR Crangle, offers a whimsical Scotty Cameron-related tale. "I now use a Scotty Cameron Newport putter. I had used a Cobra Adelaide for a few years but the plate was loose and my dad subsequently sold it on at a car boot sale to none other than Frank Ryan, who won the Leinster Strokeplay that year (2013) in Ryston with it!"

Like so many, Sean Harkins started by using the Dunlop 65, A ball that had a rubber sphere as its core, with rubber band type winding around it and a soft cover, the Dunlop 65 pretty much set the standard for a long time. It was the zenith of nearly half a century of wound golf ball design, particularly in the 1.62 inch era.

One of the Penfold Equipment Company's biggest claims to fame came in 1964 thanks to Sean Connery's sleight of hand. Connery's 007 famously used a Penfold Heart in his big match against Auric Goldfinger, which sent orders for Penfold balls through the roof!

The Penfold Commando was heavier than other contemporary balls and spun more. The Commando once earned this memorable description from Golf Digest magazine, "Flies like a pillow, spins like a three-piece."

Originally designed as range ball, the 70 compression one-piece Commando was the go-to ball for thousands of Pitch and Putt exponents for decades.

So much so that the Penfold Commando marque was the title sponsor for the National Matchplay championships between 1995 and 2001 as well as National Mixed Foursomes (1990-94). Commemorative Commandos were much in vogue.

"In the mid-90s, Commandos were all the rage," remembers JR Crangle. "You were a king in the club if you could find one with the printed "'98 Matchplay in Glenville" ball. Like gold dust."

The Penfold Player, a similar compression ball, was also widely used, finding favour with top champions, such as Ray Murphy, John Walsh and Chrissie Byrne. Here's JR Crangle again, "Players, Apollos, (and) Tornados were also used before we upped ourselves to Rexstar, Titleist Balatas and Professional 90s."

Balata golf balls had been around since the 1960s but it took until the more affluent 1990s for balatas to be adopted by Pitch & Putt players. The soft balata cover made for maximum spin and control and in contrast to the not very lively Commando, the balata was very responsive for chipping and putting.

Gradually, the top players, in particular, gravitated away from the Commando. However, the balata cover scuffed easily.

From the 1990s, technology and aerodynamics steadily provided consumers, accustomed to a simple choice between the wound or a solid core ball, with an increasingly mesmerising array of options.

Urethane-covered, and with two or three or even four layers of technologically advanced polymers encapsulating a central core, the newer balls were very resilient and scuff-resistant. Some were high spinning, had a soft feel and facilitated outstanding control. Pitch & Putt players began to investigate these balls that seemed to be able to withstand plenty of play without cutting or deforming.

An example of the newly enlightened ball use across the Pitch & Putt grades was the Callaway Hex three-piece (with hexagonal dimples) used by Stephen O'Leary (Douglas) to win successive National Junior and Intermediate Strokeplay titles in 2001 and 2002.

Golf ball manufacture was revolutionized in the new millennium with the arrival in 2000 of the Titleist Pro V.

The Titleist Pro V1 is the ball of choice for top players such as Ray Murphy, JR Crangle, Damien Fleming, Derry McCarthy, Chrissie Byrne, Frank Dineen and John O'Leary. The Pro V's associated "Drop and Stop" trade mark could well have been devised for Pitch & Putt!

John Walsh is not averse to trying out different golf balls. "I played with a Player when I started," states the Collins star, "very good for spin control. Then they stopped making them! I loved the Nike RZN and they stopped making them, so (now) I'm between Bridgestone and TP5x. When we're back swinging, I'll just play with one of them and put the others out in the shed!"

Ray Murphy tested a few golf balls, starting off with the old Commando, moving on to the Player, before trying out the Wilson Staff balata ball while eventually settling on the Titleist Pro V1. "I like the Pro V1 as it gives me everything; height, stop and spin". Damien Fleming agrees. "Regardless of the conditions, I feel I can trust that once I hit it correctly the Pro V1 will behave."

Another with a firm slot in the Pro V1 camp is Chrissie Byrne "I don't believe in changing or trying out different branded balls. Pro V1's have all the characteristics I need for playing Pitch & Putt."

Seed Golf, an Irish company based in Carlow, have recently started to produce premium balls at attractive prices. Paul O'Brien is convinced. "It reacts well in wind and spin control," says Paul of the SD-01.

JR Crangle stresses the importance of a piece of equipment that tends to be underestimated. "The tee is a really big thing in the game that is often overlooked. It determines the connection of you strike and a loose tee can lead to bad connections leaving you likely to be short", reflects the Loughlinstown legend. "I used basic plastic 2¼" tees for years but recently have found the Masters Pink 2¼" tees better, as they are a little wider and are more secure in mats."

Frank Dineen is also a tee peg connoisseur. "I used the plastic 2½ inch cap ones - but I cannot get them anymore," bemoans the two-time Irish Open victor. "There is a longer tee that has become more common with a flatter head - I am using those but I cut a fraction off the length with a pincers to suit myself." Chrissie Byrne insists on "Pink flat tops." On the other hand, Ray Mur-

phy is unconcerned. "I've no preference as regards tees, once they're not wooden ones. I'll use whatever is in my Pitch a& Putt bag."

Everybody is different. Frank Dineen likes a pitching club that does not cut the ball, which has a nice shape to the head and a low flange. John O'Leary has "to have an open faced pitcher, which enables me to put the ball in the air and so be able to stop the ball on the green."

We have diverse swings and contrasting perceptions. Paul O'Brien feels "weight and feel" are putter essentials. Currently using an Odyssey Black #7, what does Frank Dineen look for in a putter? "Balance, weight and visual lines. Also I like a long putter, 32/34 inches (hard to find!) and a soft grip."

"Flight, spin, putting feel and durability," form Dineen's recipe for the ideal ball to tackle Pitch & Putt while Sean Harkins seeks, "soft feel with good stopping ability."

What is abundantly clear is that every player can take advantage of equipment nuances in different ways.



JR Crangle from Loughlinstown P & P pictured last summer.

International Years

By John Manning

40 YEARS AGO (1981)

History was made at Ierne on June 7th when the first-ever Pitch & Putt international match was staged between Ireland and England. Ireland (Joe Fitzgerald, Andy Dempsey, Michael Forrest, Gus Carolan, Jack McCormack, Sean Breen, George McMahon and Donal Long) won 9-0.

25 YEARS AGO (1996)

In an International match at Queanbeyan, NSW on October 12th/13th, Ireland (Derry McCarthy, Chris Scannell, Pat Greene, Sean Minogue, Sean Downes and Derek Courtney) beat Australia by 16-5.

20 YEARS AGO (2001)

Saturday May 5th was a wonderful afternoon for the Irish on the Costa Brava. The Ireland team (Sean Downes, Chris Scannell, Ray Murphy, Derry McCarthy, Mark Millar and Sean Harkins) won the second European Team Championship at the Lloret Papalus course, north of Barcelona. 2-1 down after the morning foursomes in the final to hosts Catalonia, the Irish scooped five of the afternoon's six singles to clinch a memorable 6-3 victory.

15 YEARS AGO (2006)

Ireland lost to Andorra in the World Cup semi-

final in Teia on March 24th before beating The Netherlands to finish third overall.

On April 30th, Ireland's James Carroll won the French Open at La Grande Motte with 154 from Norway's William Hatle (156) and 2005 winner, Alan Hanlon (156). Liz Quinn clinched the Ladies on 168.

On June 25th, Alan Hanlon (Ireland) picked up another international title when he claimed victory in the IV San Marino Open event with a commanding performance at the Cesenatico course, scoring 154 to win by three strokes from local player, Angelo Fusco. The Ladies Division was won by Ireland's Liz Quinn with a 168.

In the Willie Parker International Challenge at Pampendal on October 27th/28th, Ireland (Marian Byrne, James Cleary, Liam O'Donovan, Sean Downes, Paul O'Brien, Chrissie Byrne, Brian Webster, Ray Murphy Darren Collins, William Buckley Jnr, Paudie O'Sullivan and Alan Hanlon) defeated The Netherlands by 56½-15½.

10 YEARS AGO (2011)

Ireland (Frank Dineen, Paul O'Brien, Bryan Delaney, Tracey McGrath, Jonathan Goodall, Ray Murphy, John Walsh and Ger Ward) beat Catalo-



Ray Murphy (left) from St. Annes P & P and Ger Ward from Portmarock P & P.



Tracey Mc Grath (left) from Erry P & P and Eamon Gibney from Castletown P & P.

nia by $13\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ in an International Challenge match at Tralee on April 14th.

In the Irish Open at Deerpark on April 16th/17th, Damien Fleming (Deerpark) posted a 54 hole aggregate of 23 under par 139 to win by a single shot from Paudie O'Sullivan and Frank Dineen, the holder of the Irish Open title. Tracey McGrath scored an eight under par aggregate of 154 for victory in the Ladies Open.

Ireland's Ian Farrelly clinched the inaugural European Strokeplay championship at Imjelt, Norway on July 17th. Farrelly closed with a final round of 49 to beat fellow Irishmen John Ross Crangle and John Walsh by a single shot.

Ray Murphy (Ireland) dominated the Dutch Open at Bussloo on August 13th/14th. Ray carded three consecutive rounds of 46 for a 54-hole aggregate of 24 under par 138 and a four stroke winning margin over Patrick Luning (Netherlands).

5 YEARS AGO (2016)

On 3rd April Pacelli Darcy (Ireland) was senior victor in the Catalan Open with 155 at Roc 3, which left the Bruff man two clear of Amador Rodriguez (Catalonia).

Ireland (John Ross Crangle, Eamon Gibney and John Walsh) beat Catalonia 3-2 in the World Cup final at Xixerella on July 3rd – a third successive World Cup win for the Irish.

Mary Murray fired 165 to win the Ladies British Open at Dagenham on 21st August. Eamon Gibney was runner-up in the British Open while Dennis Monaghan was narrowly defeated in a play-off for the seniors event.

In September, 2010 winner Frank Dineen added his second Irish Open at Rocklodge, scoring 135 for a one shot victory over Damien Fleming. On level par 162, Breda Lonergan was a five stroke winner in the Ladies Open Mary Murray finished second. Pacelli Darcy picked up yet another Over 55s victory. Pacelli scored 53 on Sunday for a 54-hole total of 151 and finished just a stroke clear of Irish colleagues Anthony Malone and Sean Minogue.

Tom Hanley and Kieran Earls clinched the International Pairs tournament at Sant Cebria. The Co. Limerick pair recorded 24 under par 138 on November 4th/5th to win by three from fellow Irish pair Stephen Murray and Paul McGreal.

The Yesterdays of Domestic Pitch & Putt

By John Manning

60 YEARS AGO (1961)

RTE Television was launched. John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as 35th President of the United States. Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to fly in space. Construction commenced on the Berlin Wall.

Eoin Morrissey (Hillview) captured the first National Gents' Matchplay to be played under PPUI rules. Eoin won the final at Hillview by 2&1 against Portmarnock's Kevin Rogers on May 22nd.

Mrs D.J. Coghlan (Woodvale) bagged the National Ladies Matchplay Championship by beating No. 1 seed Teresa Kennedy (Shandon) 6&5 in the final at the Garda club in Dublin's Islandbridge on June 18th.

The National Gents' Strokeplay Championships were played in Athgarvan. The winner of the Senior Strokeplay title was Portmarnock's Bernard Rogers on 211, who had a single stroke to spare from John Redmond (Athgarvan) who returned 212 for the 72 holes.

Winner of the Intermediate section was Noel Wall (Hillview) on 214 while Jimmy Browne of Hillview was crowned junior champion on 221. In the 1961 National Ladies Strokeplay Championship at Highfield, Hannah Dilworth of Rocklodge emerged victorious on 206, well ahead of Matchplay champion Mrs D.J. Coghlan (Woodvale).

Dublin (Bernard Rogers, Pat Kane, Bernard Moore and Tom O'Donoghue) won the Inter-County Championship at Ierne. Waterford finished second in a field of nine counties.

50 YEARS AGO (1971)

66 football supporters sadly perished in the Ibrox stadium disaster. Joe Frazier beat Muhammad Ali at Madison Square Garden. Hall's Pictorial Weekly was first broadcast on RTE. The GAA Ban on members playing 'foreign games' was lifted.

In an all-Carrigaline National Matchplay Final at Rocklodge on June 7th, Joe Doyle defeated Robbie McCarthy by 3&2.

On June 20th, Mary Snell (Athgarvan) overcame

Clare Keating (Woodvale) by 5&3 in the National Ladies Matchplay final at Arden (Tullamore). Lefthander John Crowley scored 99 at Ierne on July 11th to beat Michael Hayes (St. Annes) by one stroke in the National Gents' Strokeplay Championship. Hugh Hamill (Portmarnock) took the intermediate title on 107 while Phil O'Callaghan (Lucan) carded 104 to claim junior honours.

Dublin won the Gents' Inter-County Championship at Hillview on July 25th. Gus Carolan, Pat McLoughlin, Kevin Rogers and Tom O'Donoghue combined in a team total of 399 that was eight better than runners-up Kildare.

Douglas' own Kit O'Donovan carded 107 to capture the National Ladies Strokeplay Championship at Douglas on September 12th. May Buckley (St. Annes) was runner-up with 115. Angela Roche (Rocklodge) scored 113 to claim Intermediate honours while Vicky Cole (Douglas) was the Junior Champion on 125. The first-ever National Ladies Inter-County Championship was held in conjunction with the Irish Strokeplay. Cork (Kit O'Donovan, Marie Kelleher, Kay Foley, May Buckley) scored 443 to be the inaugural champions with Meath second on 479.

September 19th saw the Major Extra Team tournament decided at Portmarnock. Mellows (Christy Egan, Eamon Columb, Tony O'Boyle and Tom McCarthy) scored +27 to pip Dublin's Rockbrook by one stroke.

At Ierne on October 3rd, Eamonn and Noreen Scanlon (Ashgrove, Cork) won the first-ever National Mixed Foursomes on +12. Denis Kiely and Angela Roche (Rocklodge) scored +8 to be second.

40 YEARS AGO (1981)

Pope John Paul II survived an assassination attempt. The first London Marathon was held. An Irish General Election resulted in a Fine Gael/Labour coalition. Ireland hosted the Eurovision Song Contest.

Joe Fitzgerald (Ferrybank) won the National Gents' Matchplay at Rocklodge on June 1st with a 6&5 final victory over George McMahon (Old County).



Norma O'Brien (left) pictured alongside former president Aiden O'Brien. Sean Harkins (right) pictured with Ian Dillon.

Shandon hosted the final of the National Ladies Matchplay. Soccer star David O'Leary was in attendance to present to cup to home player Mildred Murray, victor by 10&9 over Kay Foley (St Annes).

On July 6th, John O'Neill (St. Anne's) beat Jim Connolly (Athgarvan), 22 to 25, in a nine-hole play-off for the National Gents' Strokeplay Championship after they had tied on 94. Raymond Whelan (Royal Meath) took the Intermediate crown on 96. Completing the Roll of Honour at Collinstown, Ben Lennon won the junior title for Cement with 104 after a play-off with Jim Dillon (St. Annes).

Westmeath (Rose McCormack, Marie Rooney, Dinah Carton, Ann Whelan, and Carmel Cunningham) won the national Ladies Inter-County at Hillview on July 18th. Meath were second on 432. Amid tremendous scenes of celebration, Tipperary (Leonard Devine, Jimmy Hough, Johnny Shoer, Roy Linden and John Shortt) took their second Inter-County title. Their score of 384 was two clear of runners-up Meath. Cork won the National Juvenile Inter-County Championship after an exciting three hole play-off with Meath at Parteen.

Alan Moore (Douglas) returned 95 at Parteen to win the National Boys' Strokeplay Championship. That proved five better than Pat Wills (St. Annes). Marian Marks (Ierne) clinched the girls' title with 114, one clear of the holder – Royal Meath's Denise Rusk.

Offaly's hurlers made the breakthrough at Croke Park, Ann Ginnane (St. Annes) shot a superb 94 to spreadeagle the field in the National Ladies Strokeplay Championship at Fermoy. Tullamore's Margaret Hogan was runner-up on 99. Maura McNally (Dunlops) was crowned Intermediate Champion on 103 while Elaine Des-

mond of Douglas scooped the Junior Championship with 108.

Four 16-year-olds (Denis Dermody, Ger Vaughan, Pat Buggy and Michael Dermody) from the Lacken club in Kilkenny took the Carrolls Club Tournament at Killarney on +41. Rocklodge finished just a single stroke shy.

+13 on October 4th won the National Mixed Foursomes at Waterford Glass for Christine Glasheen and Richard O'Halloran (Tipperary Hills), just ahead of Sandy and Charley O'Neill of Irish Ropes.

30 YEARS AGO (1991)

Lech Walesa, the Polish Workers President, was elected President of Poland. Slovenia and Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia as the Balkan War began. After Gordon Hamilton's famous try at Lansdowne Road, Ireland were minutes from a Rugby World Cup semi-final only for Australia to dash the dream.

Sean Harkins (Shandon) got the National Pitch & Putt season underway on June 3rd with a thrilling triumph in the National Matchplay Final at Cement. Sean recovered from three down with four to play to beat Old County's Cormac Caulfield 1up.

Anthony Malone (Lucan) won the National Strokeplay Championship for the second time in three years on 30th June. Anthony's 36-hole tally of 95 at IGB was two ahead of Shandon's Pat Brennan. Peter O'Neill (St. Otterans) shot 103 to win the Junior title while a fast start secured the Intermediate crown for Loughlinstown's Hubert Kelly (99).

A beautifully controlled pitching performance on July 7th secured the National Ladies Strokeplay crown for Norma O'Brien. The Douglas player

carded 101 around St. Lomans to beat Una Pyke (Tullamore) by four shots. Tramore's Nellie Sullivan won the junior on 120 and the Intermediate Champion was Bridget Guilfoyle of Kilbeggan who scored 111.

Norma O'Brien's double was up when she survived an all-Cork National Matchplay Final at Lakewood on July 28th. A three-footer on the last green gave Norma victory by the narrowest of margins over E.S.B.'s Eileen Buckley.

Cork (David Ryan, Anthony Foley, Michael O'Connell, David O'Donovan, Mark O'Keefe) enjoyed a 17-shot winning margin in the Juvenile Inter-County Championship at St. Fiaccs. The Leesiders returned 406 to Dublin's 421. Marian Byrne's first of two National Juvenile Girls Championships arrived at St. Fiaccs on August 25th. Marian carded 112 to head Grainne Gill (Irish Ropes) by a brace. Michael O'Connell (St Annes) returned a 97 to clinch the Boys' title by a single stroke from David Ryan (Douglas).

The Inter-County Championships were played in Lucan on a superb September weekend and resulted in a Dublin double. Dublin Ladies (new stars Gail McDermott and Dolores Monaghan joining Marian Marks, Geraldine Ward and Marie Mallin) fired 416 for a 24-shot win over Kildare. Dublin Gents (Mark Keane, Derek Courtney, Sean Harkins, Anthony Malone, Pat Brennan) scored 384 to Tipperary's 388.

Kilbeggan dominated at the Carrolls Club Tournament final in Tullamore. Alan McCormack, Paul McCormack, Eddie McCormack and John Carton returned +25 to beat another Kilbeggan team by one stroke.

Dennis Monaghan and Dolores Monaghan (Shandon) won the National Mixed Foursomes with a fine score of 12 up at Royal Meath. Oliver and Jean Cooney were runners-up with 8up.

20 YEARS AGO (2001)

It was the year of the tragic terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center and other US locations. The Foot & Mouth disease affected Ireland. Colin Montgomerie won the Irish Open.

Mark Millar retained his National Gent's Matchplay title with a brilliant display at Ryston. Mark clinched a 3&2 victory over Darren Collins (St Annes) in their final. Bernadette Coffey (St Bridgets) claimed a second Ladies Matchplay crown with a 40th-hole verdict over reigning champion Ann Hall (Royal Meath).

It was a comfortable victory at Royal Meath for

Erry (Joe McGrath, Tracey McGrath, Joe Egan and Sarah Lee Carroll) in the National Mixed Team Event. Erry conjured up a brilliant aggregate of 172 Stableford points for a nine stroke victory over Royal Meath.

John Cahill of Fermoy won the National Gents' Strokeplay Championship at Stackallen on July 8th with rounds of 47, 48 and 45 for a one stroke victory over Ray Murphy (Templebreedy).

James Kiernan (Castletown) pitched close to birdie the opening hole of a play-off with Damien Long (Riverdale) for the Intermediate Championship. James maintained his lead and earned Castletown's first National Championship, 26 to 29. The pair had tied on 159 on a difficult day scoring-wise.

Dominant force in the Junior Championship was Stephen O'Leary (Douglas). Stephen posted 162 for a five shot victory over Pat Murtagh (McBride).

Glenville's Peggy Campbell won the National Ladies Strokeplay Championship at Glenville on July 15th. Peggy shot rounds of 43, 45 and 46 en-route to breaking the championship 36-hole and 54-hole records in the process. A blistering last round of 51 saw Mairead O'Toole (Poulaphuca) improve from seventh place after 36 holes to win the Intermediate Championship with a 166 aggregate. Mairead triumphed by five over 36-hole leader Anne Kelly (Collinstown). Sarah Lee Carroll (Erry) won the Junior event by three with a three round total of 174. Ann Thomas (Lucan) took the silver medal on 177.

Coming out on top in the National Juvenile Inter-County Championship, after an exciting battle in miserably wet conditions at Waterford Crystal, were the Munster Champions Tipperary (Declan O'Dwyer, Thomas O'Gara, Jason McNamara, Kenneth Kiely and Brendan Leahy). Tipperary's aggregate of 419 (13 under par) was good enough for a one shot victory over Kerry.

In a very exciting finish to the National Juvenile Girl's Strokeplay Championship in ideal conditions at Waterford Crystal, Sarah Coffey (Kilbeggan) holed a seven foot downhill birdie putt on the 36th green to tie clubhouse leader Valerie Leahy (Rocklodge). Sarah Coffey chipped-in from right of the second green to take control of play-off and some superb chipping from there on saw her safely home - the first Westmeath winner since 1984.

The Boys Championship witnessed one of the all-time great performances. Little 11-year-old

Kevin Metcalfe from Rochfortbridge posted an aggregate of 12 under par 96 to overhaul the clubhouse target of 11 under set by Patrick McBride (Stackallen).

Cork (Chris Scannell, Ray Murphy, John Cahill, John Walsh and Darren Collins) romped to a fifteen shot victory in the Inter-County Championship at Rocklodge with a superb 59 under par aggregate of 473, to beat holders and playing partners Kildare into second place. There was no stopping Limerick in the Division A championship. The all-Bruff Limerick line-out won by 20 shots over Down.

Ger Ward, Peggy Campbell, Margaret O'Shea, Stella Sheridan and Sheelagh Elmes clinched a nine shot victory for Dublin in the Ladies Inter-County Championship at Rocklodge. Kildare (champions for the previous two years) finished second. Meath ran out five shot Division A winners over Down, 461 to 466.

Paul Bray and Liz Quinn, (Collinstown) shot a superb total of +15 at St. Bridget's to win the National Mixed Foursomes by one from Ray Murphy (Templebreedy) and Linda Murphy (Collins).

10 YEARS AGO (2011)

Prince William married Kate Middleton. Financial markets crashed. Michael D. Higgins was elected President of Ireland. Republic of Ireland footballers qualified for the 2012 European Championship finals.

In the longest National Ladies Matchplay final in history, Margaret Hogan (Tullamore) beat Tara Dillon (St. Bridget's) at the 41st in Collinstown. Damien Fleming (Deerpark) was a 9&8 winner over Chris Scannell (Collins) in the Gents decider.

Cunnigar won the National Mixed Team Event Final on home turf at Cunnigar on June 12th. The Dungarvan quartet of Martin Hayes, Lorraine Troy, Paddy Noonan and Mary O'Neill posted 158 points for a one stroke margin over Fermoy.

Chrissie Byrne (St Bridgets) delivered a National Ladies Strokeplay tour-de-force at Ring Commons on July 10th. Chrissie's 43, 47, 49 performance left her seven strokes clear of the runner-up – her sister Marian. Pauline Balfe (Old County) scored 161 to lift the Intermediate Cup while Christina Carroll (Seapoint) was a runaway 15-stroke winner in the Junior grade.

A phenomenal final round of 42 at Douglas saw Anthony O'Loughlin (Claycastle) victorious by eight strokes in National Gents' Strokeplay

Championship at Douglas on July 24th. Loughlinstown John Ross Crangle finished second on 140. Shane Murphy (Pfizer) totalled 148 to claim intermediate laurels while Colin O'Sullivan supplied a host club junior success on 158.

There was also a home club triumph in the National Juvenile Strokeplay Championships, at Deerpark on 20th August. Creagh Courtney (Deerpark) fired 97 to pip Shane Redmond (Channonrock) by a single stroke. Claire Keatinge (Old County) scored 109 to win the Girls Championship ahead of Fermoy's Michelle Flynn.

In the following day's Inter-County Championship, Dublin (Aaron Daly, Fintan O'Connor, Sean Gallagher, Barry Hendrick, Simon Lenihan and Conor Gorey) scored 411 to finish just a stroke clear of Kerry.

Dublin (Geraldine Ward, Helen Greagsbey, Linda Thomson, Maree O'Toole, Sheelagh Elmes and Siobhan Keely) won the National Ladies Inter-County Championships at Portmarnock on Saturday, September 10th, six ahead of Kildare.

Cork (John Walsh, Bryan Delaney, Anthony O'Loughlin, Paudie O'Sullivan, Frank Dineen and Ray Murphy) scored 391 to win a ninth gents' championship in succession, thirteen ahead of runners-up Meath.

Six All Ireland Senior (Over 55) Strokeplay Championships were decided at Cement on September 17th/18th. Sheelagh Elmes, Kathleen Grendon (Rathfeigh) and Breda O'Donnell (Cunnigar) took the Ladies Senior, Intermediate and Junior Grade Championships respectively while Johnny Campbell (Cement), Dan Kiely (Kilmichael) and Joseph O'Riordan (Bruff) captured the corresponding Gents' titles.

Ailish Sexton and David Sexton (Fermoy) scored +16 to win the National Mixed Foursomes at Fermoy on Sunday 25 September. Lauren Pyke and Gary Pyke (Tullamore) were runners-up on +14.

Mairead O'Toole (Poulaphouca), Maura Kelly (CYMC/LC) and Eileen McCabe (Ferbane) won the National Ladies Social Competition at St Bridgets on 22 October with 35.33.

In the All Ireland Schools Competition at Hillview, on October 25th, Fermoy's Coláiste an Chraoibhín (Wayne Galvin, Conor Clancy and Chris Wheeler) fashioned a 294 tally to head runners-up Coláiste Chríost Rí by nine.

A couple of decades since my first European team championship win — Chris Scannell

This is an edited version of a recent piece John Manning did for the FIPPA website.

Chris Scannell won his first European Team Championship winners' medal with Ireland at Lloret in 2001.

"My memory of it is well faded, to be honest," laughs Chris Scannell when we invited him to share his reflections of that success. That's an issue with players like Chris that have achieved so much in the sport. They have such a variety of events to recall!

But the former Irish Strokeplay and Matchplay champion warms to the theme as we discuss the II European Team Championship, the 20th anniversary of which will arrive in May.

"I might have won something for most birdies," says Chris, as we deliberate on how close it was between the 1995 Irish Strokeplay champion and his fellow countryman Sean Downes, who won the Best Gross award in the 2001 European championship Strokeplay qualifying round.

Captain of the winning Irish team at McDonagh two years later, Chris stresses the huge importance of he and fellow Cork man Ray Murphy delivering a foursomes point in the 2001 final against Catalonia. The Catalans won two foursomes but Ray and Chris defeated Ramon Carrera and Gines Fernandez to give holders Ireland, although trailing, a boost for the singles. "It was obviously very important. Otherwise you'd be three-nil down. You wouldn't come back from that. You'd have to win five out of six singles and you wouldn't do that, not in Catalonia."

As it happened, Ireland did win five singles that day but every one of them was very closely contested. "I won my singles, maybe three or four up," says Chris (It was actually by 2&1 against Ramon Carrera). "I played very well. A few friends were over with me - Noel Dunlea and Trevor Ahern. I'm getting flashbacks now," smiles Chris. "One hole around the twelfth. A pitch into a saucer. I holed a huge putt on that



Chris Scannell pictured on the left.

across the whole slope. All I heard was a big roar! I was (just) hoping to get it down in two!"

Where does the win at Lloret rank amongst all of Chris' achievements in the sport? "I'd have to have that high up. The best one is obviously the individual - like the Matchplay (All Ireland Matchplay 2010) because I was trying for so long to win that. But Lloret is well up there as well as when I captained the team in McDonagh."

In the Pitch & Putt news ever since he played for Cork as a 16-year-old in 1984, Chris tries to keep in touch with the members of that 2001 Ireland team (which also included Sean Downes, Sean Harkins, Ray Murphy, Derry McCarthy, Mark Millar Ray Murphy and reserve Derek Courtmey), albeit that everyday life intervenes and that Sean Downes and Derry McCarthy are no longer on the Pitch and Putt circuit. "Only when you see them around. I talk to them all the time when I see them. I met Miller at Larkspur Park when the Matchplay was up there. I was talking away to him. I'd see him at the All Irelands. You wouldn't see Downes at all. Derry is gone as well. I had to ring Harkins a few years ago when the (Irish) Strokeplay was on in Ryston."

Scannell played a huge amount of Pitch & Putt when the sport reopened in Ireland and he can't wait for the latest restrictions to end. "Last year when the course was open, I was playing well and looking forward to competitions and then they were all cancelled! Now, I haven't hit a ball in months. I'm looking forward to going back. I'm still only 52 - surely there's another few more years left in me!"

Competitive fires still burn fiercely within this giant of our sport. "I was playing very well last year up in Collins. If I went around in less than 10 (under par) it was a bad score. I was doing 15, 16 (under par!) with (new member) Jimmy Sullivan. We were down there every morning, without fail, from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m."

Chris clearly likes the Lloret course. He almost won there with John Walsh in the 2014 International Pairs and again in 2015 with Weeshie Murphy. "To be honest we should have won that, myself and Weeshie," bemoans Chris of the 2015 International Pairs (which he and Murphy led into the final round). "Weeshie got a bit nervous (on Sunday). He lost a ball on the second hole up the right hand side. He got a shank on third and lost another ball. The boys (eventual winners Oriol Mas and Marçal Moré) were after getting two or three birdies to go ahead at stage! I was "on my own" for first five or six holes! I think I birdied the last two or three to get second. We were only beaten by a shot."

Somewhat downbeat could describe Chris' reply when we canvass his opinion on international Pitch & Putt now, 25 years on from when he journeyed to Australia with the Irish team in 1996. "There's not much happening," replies Chris flatly. "There aren't as many tournaments. It was great before. There were things that one could practise hard for and get on the Irish team get a trip out of it - to Spain or wherever. I've been in Australia. That was great."

Hopefully, when worldwide restrictions lift, serial winner Chris Scannell will be seen back on the leader boards again.

Paul O'Brien - Ten years since he helped Ireland defeat Catalonia at Tralee

This is an edited version of an article that previously featured on the FIPPA website by John Manning.

We were delighted to catch up with 2007 European Team championship victor and 2008 World Cup winner Paul O'Brien to recall Ireland versus Catalonia for the International Challenge Cup, which was played a decade ago at Tralee.

Q: What are your memories of the 2011 match between Ireland and Catalonia in Tralee?

A: My abiding memories of that time was that the match was played a year late to the Ash Cloud of 2010. Luckily, we got to play the match in Tralee in the preceding days of the Irish Open that was held in Deerpark. We had a very strong team at that time, I would imagine some players wanted another crack at Catalonia after they had

beaten Ireland in the previous European Championships. Tracey McGrath was Captain of the team that year and she was a fine captain. I remember she gave each player a bar towel with our names on them as a memento which was a lovely touch. She is missed on the ladies' circuit; she was an outstanding player and I would hope she might return to the ladies' game in the future. Ireland always assemble very strong International Teams but at home, it would take a brilliant team to beat us. I know the scoreboard showed we won that match easily, but a lot of those matches were tight and could have gone either way.

Did you get together as a team beforehand to prepare?

We practiced the day before the match itself. We all know each other as players but trying to gel players who are used to competing against one



Paul O'Brien from Lakeside P & P.

another is always difficult to do. I had been in Tralee a few times before the match itself to prepare and while the game was played in early April, Tim Scannell and his team had Tralee in great shape for that match. Niall Reynolds was team manager and I know I would have spoken to Niall before the match in terms of potential partnerships. He was a very competent manager who let the players just get on with their games, a man that is sorely missed by all within the game.

You had played the Catalans before (in 2007 Euros). How did the 2011 team compare?

The 2007 team was a different atmosphere whereby, in my opinion, there is a big difference between a challenge game and a European Final. That match in 2007 was extremely close. It was my first-time playing against Catalonia and they were the best putters I have seen. I loved the environment; it was boisterous and partisan but played in a great spirit. In 2011, a few of the Irish team (John Walsh and Ray Murphy) were on the receiving end of a loss to Catalonia in the previous European Championships so were determined to gain revenge. I knew Tralee would suit us as the greens are raised and the Catalans aren't used to that type of pitching. That said, they sent a very strong team over to play us, but we were too strong for them at the time.

What happened to yourself and Frank Dineen in the fourballs?

To be honest, we just played poorly. We missed too many putts early on and were punished. We did rally towards the latter part of the match, but it was too little too late. The Catalans (Daniel Giménez and Enric Sanz) played very well that morning against us to be fair, but we didn't help ourselves by making mistakes.

Your link-up with Bryan Delaney was much more successful?

Bryan had recently won the All Ireland Stroke-play in Tralee and, to be fair, he pitched unbelievably well, and we won very easily but that match was more down to the playing ability of Bryan than anything else. If memory serves me right, we birdied the first 11 holes, the majority of them were down to Bryan's tee shots and I just knocked in close putts. The Catalans (Marc Lloret and Marçal Moré) had no answer to us in that game, but Brian showed that day how good he really is and was to become in the years ahead.

Your overall opinion of international Pitch & Putt?

I have always enjoyed playing Internationally. I have met and made great friends through this side of the game. I have been part of great teams, who luckily for me, won big tournaments and I was always proud to have played a small part in those teams. When times change for us all, I would be hoping to play the Catalan and Dutch Opens as I have yet to play in them and I think it is a great chance for clubs to take a group of players to these type of events as there is an array of prizes available and they are good socially also.

You haven't played for Ireland since. Is it an ambition to get back on the team?

Yes! In 2013, I changed jobs that had to curtail my involvement in the game because I was working away from home. I returned home properly in 2017 but I then injured my back playing in the County Matchplay, and I found it very hard to play after that. I suppose my technique doesn't help a bad back! Once my surgery was successful, I wanted to get back playing to see if

I can still compete. I have always loved to play Pitch & Putt for Ireland. Only a unique group of players have achieved it and I think I still have the game in me to get back to competing for places on the team.

How are you coping with the current enforced inactivity?

I have found it hard, no doubt about it. I am one of the luckier ones in terms as I am still working, albeit from home. I do some maintenance work with my club Lakeside and this has really been of benefit to me as it gets me out of the house, and I love helping on the course. The plus side of it is that I get to spend a lot of time with my family and am not as busy as I normally would be outside of work, so that has been a very positive thing.

Have you any tips about how Pitch & Putt players generally could cope with the lockdown?

We have a small community within the game where most people know each other and always feed ideas to each other. One of the things I would like to see if people could assist in the development of their clubs' facilities. We have so much expertise within the game in the likes of Brian Webster, Ger O'Connor, Paudie and Gary O'Sullivan, to name but a few, who are more than obliging in assisting clubs with their development. People may have some extra time on their hands, and I would be positive in saying that there is always work to do on your local course. Getting out and doing a bit of work in the fresh air, once one is socially distanced from others, has been of huge help to me personally. Clubs need help whether it's on committee or

assisting on the course but if you have time, your club is more than willing to accept your help.



Going Dutch

By Marina O'Rourke

The following is a piece that will appear on the FIPPA website in due course. Millennium National Strokeplay champions Marina O'Rourke and Ray Murphy visited the Netherlands 20 years ago this month to assist in the development of Pitch & Putt in that country. With Marina's kind permission, we're featuring an edited version of a diary she kept during that momentous weekend.

When first invited by the Nederlandse Pitch & Putt Board in December 2000, I was surprised and delighted by the prospect. Unlike other International events, Ray Murphy and I had been invited to Holland to attend the opening of the new course at Kardinge in Groningen and play an 'exhibition' 9 hole match with Holland's leading players Rinus Huberts and Herma Olthuis.

At lunchtime on Thursday 19th April, our merry band consisting of Ray and Linda Murphy, Eamon Birchall, Sean Breen, Billy Lynch, my sister Bernie and myself met up in the departure lounge at Dublin airport for the short flight to Amsterdam where we were met by a smiling Patrick Luning. Patrick loaded us into his minibus and we set off for Koekange which is Holland's original course, owned and run by Eric and Pie-

trix Jorritsma. The course is built on a long narrow strip of land, typical of the farmland in the area, with a charming clubhouse converted from the original barn. Eric & Pietrix lived in the adjoining farmhouse. The clubhouse has a bar and restaurant and they attract a large number of green fees and society outings. The course has shots of similar length to what we are used to, it is surrounded by small dykes and has some drainage problems but has some excellent shots. Pietrix had prepared a meal for us and we relaxed while Ray and Sean (keen Liverpool fans) squirmed through the Liverpool/Barcelona UEFA Cup match.

Then it was another hour's drive to Groningen for the night. Next day we made our way to Kardinge where we were met by the course owners Bert and Herma Olthuis. This course is sited in the middle of some excellent sporting facilities in Groningen. Kardinge is a lot longer than Koekange with shots of up to 76 metres, the majority of holes were between 55 - 70 metres, which combined with a stiff cool breeze meant it was very tricky. Being a new course, the ground needs to mature and the greens will improve. The layout is good. Both courses used Astroturf type mats which included a rubber tee like driving range mats, so we had difficulty teeing up the ball. A large crowd attended the opening with



Marina O'Rourke pictured alongside Mervyn Cooney.

speeches by Eric and Bert as well as the Dutch Minister for Sport and other dignitaries. We were warmly welcomed and presented with bottles of the local liqueur. The local TV crew were also present as we began our game followed by a large crowd. Two excellent birdies by Rinus saw us two down with two to play and feeling nervous. I sank a six footer to birdie the 8th and Ray's tee shot to the ninth was stuck so we finished an honourable draw, which pleased everyone.

On Saturday we played another 36 holes in Groningen with the local members, Ray won the gents gross and Linda took the honours in the ladies. We returned to Kardinge that night to play a similar competition on Sunday with the locals there. Again Ray was victorious, almost breaking the course record, I managed to win the ladies prize. On Monday we spent a few hours in Amsterdam itself before flying home. We never saw a tulip the whole time!



The game was growing in Holland with a more commercial approach than in Ireland. We were all very appreciative of the kindness shown to us by our hosts and look forward to visiting them in years to come to witness the growth success they deserve.

Koekange Card

Hole	Metres	Index	Hole	Metres	Index
1	35	11	10	57	6
2	66	2	11	70	7
3	42	13	12	65	5
4	58	9	13	60	4
5	77	1	14	46	12
6	40	16	15	44	3
7	47	15	16	45	17
8	53	10	17	41	14
9	49	8	18	33	18

Coaching & Development

By Shaun O'Donnell

Its frustrating that we are still unable to return to play until the 26th April. Its hard to understand why given the fact that we're in a huge outdoor area and socially distanced, however it is good to finally have a date in mind to look forward to.

We are hoping to run the postponed Introductory Coaching courses in Munster and Leinster later in the year, with the current restrictions in place, it will be a number of months yet before we can gather indoors for the theory part of the course. Members that were previously registered for the courses at the end of 2020, will be contacted to see if they are still interested. Venues and dates will be confirmed when restrictions are eased, keep an eye on the website and social media.

We aim to have the Titleist balls with the new logo finally available for sale over the coming months. Anyone interested will be able to place an order by contacting myself and payments can be made by cheque or an electronic bank transfer. Again we will announce this on the website and social media in due course.

We are currently working on being compliant with the Governance Code for Sport Ireland. This is now a mandatory requirement for all

sports across the country and must be complete by the end of 2021, we aim to have this finished before the end of the month.

I would like to wish everyone a Happy Easter and look forward to the return to play at the end of the month.

Yours in Sport,

Shaun O'Donnell

Coaching & Development Manager

0861738722/shaunod@ppui.ie



BACKSPIN PRODUCTION TEAM

Jason O'Connor, John Manning and Shaun O'Donnell

Not only are clubs and balls assessed but even tees!

John looks back at the national in the years ending in '1' as well as well in national events and does a 'five year' look back at the international scene too. He has also kindly given us some articles for the FIPPA website including interviews with Chris Scannell and Paul O'Brien along with a diary by Marina O'Rourke on a visit both herself and Ray Murphy made to Holland over 20 years ago.

Our Development manager Shaun O'Donnell gives us a brief update on his work as well as we hope to do another edition around summertime.

My immense thanks to Shaun and John again for their assistance with this edition and hope you enjoy reading it.

We wish everyone a Happy Easter and hope that they enjoy the return to play at club level in the coming weeks.

Yours in Sport,

Jason O'Connor

Communications & Press Officer

Pitch & Putt Ireland

086 8048933

jason@ppui.ie

[Check out our social media pages:](#)

Facebook— [@officialppireland](#)

Instagram— [@pitchandputt_ireland](#)

Twitter— [@pitchandputtire](#)

LinkedIn— [Pitch and Putt Ireland](#)

[#pitchandputtireland](#) (on all sites)

www.irishpitchandputt.ie

