

BACKSPIN

Official E-Zine of the Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland

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PPUI

Issue Highlights:

- Inter County Review
- A Report on the Inter Club Finals Day
- John Manning Talks to Our Senior Champions
- Alan Hanlon Takes us Inside the Dutch Open
- Plus Much More...

WELCOME TO THE OCTOBER ISSUE!!

A Chara,

You are all very welcome to this the third edition of Backspin for 2014. With the completion of the National Secondary Schools Competition in Ryston last Friday, the main Pitch & Putt fixtures are now at an end for 2014 as thoughts now turn to more local concerns of Turkeys and Hampers within clubs!

In this edition we round off the remaining events from the Provincial Mixed Foursomes at the end of August onwards. The Inter-County in Tullamore certainly lived up to expectations and we have it covered from three different angles namely the two Gents events as well as the Ladies competition. Three weeks later of course we were back at the Offaly venue for the completion of the National Inter-Club competitions which produced just as much excitement as Pitch & Putt did its best to replicate a certain event that was happening over in Scotland at the same time!

Provincial Juvenile Matchplays were played in different circumstances, a welcome return for such an event in Munster while it was a historic first for Leinster in the holding (***continued on last page***)



*Kildare Ladies are back on top! Always in contention, it is hard to believe that 2008 was the last victory for the lilywhite ladies until their triumph in Tullamore in early September. Chrissie Byrne and Mary Donnelly are pictured above accepting the cup from PPUI President, Eamonn Birchall, with her team mates Marion Byrne, Margaret Keogh, Mairead O'Toole and Tara Dillon. In an action packed weekend in Tullamore, Cork retained their Gents title, while Clare were the winners of the new Gents "B" section, which was a welcome introduction. **Report Page 12.***

ALL IRELAND SENIOR (OVER 55) STROKEPLAY CHAMPIONSHIPS

By John Manning

John Manning looks back at proceedings in Kells and also got the thoughts of the six respective winners over the two days of competition in the Ladies & Gents grades...

Senior Ladies

Margaret Hogan didn't see her tee-shot finish on the 36th hole. Margaret explains, "It's a blind one with a bank before it and a bit of a drop on to the green." By the time Margaret reached her ball, spectators had informed her, "What way it landed, what way it ran up to the hole, how it stood at the pin and then eventually fell in!"

That final hole ace gave the Co. Offaly marvel a second round of 45, an aggregate of 95 and a record seven shot winning margin in the National Over 55s Ladies Senior Championship, all this on her first appearance in the event. And it wasn't even her first hole-in-one of the day! An earlier ace during her first round provided significant momentum. It arrived at a time when the previously nine time All Ireland champion was just one under par. Asked to describe her feelings, the new champion enthuses, "It's brilliant! In a way it (winning) was the furthest thing from my mind. It's my first time being involved with it so I didn't know what to expect. It was a very enjoyable day with Sheelagh Elmes and Pat Murphy - great craic and a laugh. To play well was a bonus; to win it was an added bonus." How does the Seniors success compare with all the other great individual victories on the national stage? "I was delighted. "It's an All Ireland at the end of the day. It all came together on the day."

Gaeil Colmcille is a long-standing favourite of Margaret's. "I used to play a lot there years ago. I went back down about two weeks before this All Ireland to practise. It was looking very well. They're pretty progressive down there and the course is in great shape." Margaret pays tribute to an old adversary (making a welcome return to the national stage), who provided the strongest opposition in Kells. "When I won my Matchplay in McDonagh (1997), Jean (Cooney) was runner-up. She is still playing and playing well." A constant contender since she was National Strokeplay champion in 1977, Margaret is still consumed by our sport. "I just love it, I still enjoy it. I wouldn't be playing otherwise! I enjoy every round I play, whether on my own or in a big championship."

As 2014 winds down, Margaret Hogan is already looking forward. Amy Galvin will be eligible next year as Offaly seek to build on their encouraging Inter-County form.

1. Margaret Hogan (Tullamore) 50 + 45: 95
 2. Jean Cooney (Cement) 50 + 52: 102
- Helen Wynne (Erry) 52 + 51=103; Sheelagh Elmes (Portmarnock) 51 + 52: 103; Kathleen Geraghty (Navan) 54+51=105; Vera Glennon (Old County) 51 + 55: 106.

SOME KEY FACTS

Margaret Hogan's win in the National Over 55s Strokeplay is her tenth National Individual victory, adding to five National Strokeplays and four National Matchplays.

Margaret Hogan's 50 + 45: 95 is a new all time record for the National Over 55s senior grade Strokeplay championship.

Jean Cooney's second place finish at Gaeil Colmcille in the National Over 55s Strokeplay adds to four runners-up placings in National Individual Championships. Strokeplay title that she had won three weeks prior.

Intermediate Ladies

Betty Cody doesn't underestimate the worth of her National Intermediate Over 55s success. "Absolutely the best day of my Pitch and Putt career!"

"When I took up Pitch and Putt first, I won the Junior five years ago," recalled Betty. That was at Tullamore. "I never expected to get down low enough to do well in intermediate so I was absolutely thrilled," is Betty's assessment of her 2014 efforts. There had been no pre championship visits to Kells. "I had been away in Cork all week and I hadn't seen the course." But once Betty arrived at Gaeil Colmcille, she was enamoured with what she encountered. "The course was beautifully maintained. I loved it. The greens were super and I putted well on them. They were very true."

Betty is a sports psychologist by profession and her training facilitated some positive thoughts after 36 holes. "I was delighted with my score, whatever happened. When I saw there was a play-off I thought there was more pressure on the other two as they were locals." The Loughlinstown lady tuned up for Gaeil Colmcille by contesting two international circuit

events. "I was touring Europe for one and I was over in England for the other. I didn't do too badly. In the Galicia Open I came 39th out of 54. I only had two clubs whereas all the others had three."

Betty's résumé differs a little from a typical protagonist in the Ladies Intermediate grade. "In the British Open I was 28th out of 43 and I beat some fairly good lads that I know from there. I'm a member of Centenary Park (the North London course which once featured the late great Willie Parker) because I'm over there quite a bit." Betty is impressed by the equality of opportunity offered by our sport's international element. "The beauty of the Pitch and Putt is they actually allowed me to play in those events." The play-off at Gaeil Colmcille went Betty's way. "I was lucky to get a three on the first but on the 2nd I was also very lucky to chip-in for a two when Beulah was getting a guaranteed birdie."

Betty wavered a little then but felt her rivals didn't capitalise. "I played a couple of very poor tee shots. Beulah and Monica didn't take advantage. I went way off to the right on the third but I chipped on to the green and made a four, Beulah three putted." A two at the fourth extended Betty's advantage. Initially, Beulah Morris was the Dublin player's closest protagonist but then, "Monica got two birdies in a row," remembers Betty and Monica was now the principal danger.

"I'm very comfortable on the ninth. I knew I wouldn't have a problem with the big tree. I played for a four. I knew a four would do." And it did! The Meath club-mates continued for another four holes but Betty Cody was home.

1. Betty Cody (Loughlinstown) 56 + 57: 113 (play-off)
 2. Monica McGovern (Gaeil Colmcille) 56 + 57: 113 (play-off)
 3. Beulah Morris (Gaeil Colmcille) 57 + 56: 113
- Bernie Dunne (St. Bridget's) 55 + 59:114; Mary Lynch (Portmarnock) 61 + 54: 115; Catherine Smith (Ryston) 58 + 58: 116; Kathleen Shanley (Hillview) 56 + 60:116; Mary Fullam (Shandon) 54 + 62: 116.

SOME KEY FACTS

Betty Cody of Loughlinstown becomes the second player (after Riverdale's Margaret Clear) to win both the National Over 55s Inter and Junior Championships.

Junior Ladies

Margaret Clear is quite content with her junior double. "It feels very good especially when it's back-to-back."

And she is disarmingly modest when quizzed as to what is the secret of her over 55s success (Intermediate at Deerpark in 2006 and now two junior titles on the bounce). "Lucky!" is her tersely unassuming summation. "First nine good, Back nine disaster!" is how Margaret appraises her first round of



Margaret Clear (Riverdale), Betty Cody (Loughlinstown and Margaret Hogan (Tullamore), winners of the three ladies senior titles at Gaeil Colmcille in late September.

disaster!" is how Margaret appraises her first round of 61 at Gaeil Colmcille. After going out in 26, Margaret ran up a succession of fours and a double bogey coming in. But she was still just two back at halfway of early leader Peg O'Donovan (Bruff).

Margaret doesn't feel the lack of recent experience of Gaeil Colmcille hindered her title retention push. "Would you believe I never went up to practice?" chuckles Margaret. "I played in the National Mixed Foursomes there 14 years ago." Margaret and partner Seamus Gleeson finished sixth then on +13, just three behind the winners. We did very well that day but we lost the fourth twice!" recalls Margaret of that October Sunday 14 years ago. The fourth was conquered this time with a couple of steady pars.

It isn't often that one has a friend and an incumbent NEC Officer as a fellow competitor in a national championship. Helen McMorrow filled that role at Gaeil Colmcille. "I know Helen well but she was afraid of her life to say anything to me," laughs Margaret. Helen was obviously trying not to distract a North Tipperary colleague from her quest. Helen stayed quiet. Margaret let her clubs do the talking. With a carefully played 57, the Nenagh lady finished just ahead of the fast finishing Joan Caffrey (Rathfeigh), who closed with a best 18 of the championship 56. The investment Margaret's family made in a gift of Riverdale membership back in 1990 had reaped another rich dividend.

1. Margaret Clear (Riverdale) 61 + 57: 118
 2. Joan Caffrey (Rathfeigh) 63 + 56: 119
- Ann Nugent (Skyrne) 60 + 60:120; Margaret O'Donovan (Bruff) 59 + 62: 121; Breda Foley (Cunnigar) 66 + 57: 123

SOME KEY FACTS

A third win-in-a-row for Riverdale (and a second in-a-row for Margaret Clear) in the National Over 55s Junior Strokeplay Championship.

Riverdale's Margaret Clear has now won three National Over 55s Strokeplay championships, one Intermediate and two Junior.

Margaret Clear's two in-a-row in National Over 55s Junior Strokeplay equals the feat previously achieved by Nora Tierney (Prosperous).

Senior Gents

The legend that is Wally Sheridan was typically understated when he reflected on a glorious eight days in September. First, how does it feel to be Over

55s Strokeplay champion? "Great. I've been trying to win for the last two years. It's my second year as a senior." Familiar surroundings helped the ebullient Meath man. "I've played Gaeil Colmcille regularly for the last 10-12 years. Everything went well for me on the day. Tee-shots and putting, everything," he said.

Again confidence played its part. "I was hitting the ball very well in Bellewstown, the day before. It was coming off the club lovely and I knew if I could carry that on for Sunday I wouldn't be beaten." Only one bogey sullied the Sheridan card. "I three putted the fourth green in the first round," grumbles Wally! "I was level after two, chipped in on the third and then bogeyed the fourth." The remainder of the round is summed-up in a characteristically matter of fact manner. "I got two more on the front nine and five on the back and then I was nine under for the second round." 16 under was a great score and two shots better than event specialist Pat Greene.

A week later, Ringcommons belonged to Wally and partner Catherine McCreevy as the low handicap combination saw off all comers to clinch the National Mixed Foursomes. Wally sums it up. "Ringcommons can be tough enough. Where the pins were it wasn't too easy. But it's the same for everybody and we did very well." After his second national title in a memorable week his first thoughts were for his colleague. "I was happy for Catherine. She's been playing well all year. She's a super player."

And the simple but appealing and effective formula for success espoused by the former dual Leinster champion and 100% record holder at the European Team championship? "I love the game."

1. Liam Sheridan (Bellewstown) 47 + 45: 92
 2. Pat Greene (Seapoint) 47 + 47: 96
- Kevin Bermingham (Old County) 48 + 48: 96; Anthony Malone (Lucan) 47 + 49: 96; Frank Ryan (St. Bridget's) 52 + 45: 97; John Joe Wynne (Erry) 52 + 46: 98; John O'Neill (Athgarvan) 50 + 48: 98; John Delaney (St. Bridget's) 50 + 48: 98.

SOME KEY FACTS

William Sheridan's win at Gaeil Colmcille in the Over 55s adds further lustre to a productive career, Leinster Strokeplay and Matchplay, provincial and National Inter-County, 100% record at international level (achieved in the 2010 European Team Championship).

Pat Greene finished second in the National Over 55s for the third time (2009, 2011 and 2014). He has also won twice, in 2006 and 2008.

Intermediate Gents

William McNally was still positively purring when we spoke to him about his two stroke success (from Kilbeggan's Johnny Feery) in the All Ireland Intermediate Over 55s Championship. "It's a great feeling at my age to win a national title. I felt very confident in the week leading up to it that I was going to do well, for some reason," beams William.

The Co. Meath maestro boasts a considerable pedigree in Pitch and Putt. "I won a Leinster Intermediate title before I gave it up. I gave it up twenty years ago and came back to it last year." Golf's loss was Pitch and Putt's gain. "I was playing a bit of golf but the club I was in closed down. I went back to play Pitch and Putt. I got engrossed in it and loved it." An affinity with the championship venue was no hindrance. "I like the (Gaeil Colmcille) course, yeah. I love the greens on it. At Gaeil Colmcille most of the putts are straight putts."

Self-assurance was a recurring theme during our chat with Stackallen's latest national champion. "I was just confident on the day that I was going to do well. I was striking the ball very well the week previous, even practising on my own course. I couldn't get a negative thought in my head about not being in the shakeup." William sought suitable advice from the best. "I was talking to a scratch player in Stackallen (Eamon Gibney) and he said to me - if you do a certain figure you won't be too far away. I said to myself - that's well within my capabilities. I felt very confident that if I held my nerve I'd be there or thereabouts."

Fulsome praise is reserved for William's fellow competitors. "There was great camaraderie going around with Gel Martin and Ger Hogan. They were very helpful and very relaxed."

1. William McNally (Stackallen) 49 + 47: 96
 2. John Feery (Kilbeggan) 50 + 48: 98
- Oliver Cooney (Cement) 49 + 50: 99; James Thompson (Lucan) 50 + 50: 100; Joe Egan (Erry) 55 + 48: 103; John Meade (Navan) 50 + 53: 103.

SOME KEY FACTS

William Sheridan and William McNally are the first Co. Meath winners of National Over 55s Gents Strokeplay championships.

Junior Gents

'Tosach maith; leath na hoibre' (a good start represents half the work) they say and Gerard Walsh

(Cement) certainly embraced that motto to win the National Junior Over 55s title. "In the First Round I was three under after three and in the Second Round I was four under after four." That tends to get the job done in the Junior. Gerard agrees. "It went well on the day, so it did."

Practice at Gaeil Colmcille was diligent. "Myself and my friend went over there two Saturdays in-a-row. He was playing in the Intermediate. He didn't do anything, though!" jokes Gerard. On what were his initial visits to the Kells complex, Gaeil Colmcille impressed Gerard. "It's a nice course. I enjoyed the two practice rounds. People that were there looking after the course couldn't do enough for you. They were very helpful."

In some ways, Gerard says, "it hasn't sunk in" but sums it up as "just nice" that, after merely a couple of practice rounds at Gaeil Colmcille and the two rounds in the championship, he has delivered the biggest win of his Pitch and Putt career. Gerard's three shot success over Riverdale's John Cawley comes some five years since his return to the sport after a lengthy break. "I was off for about 14 years." Other priorities intervened. "I was working. The kids were only young."

Now that Gerard is back, he was thrilled to bits to hear that his victory will feature in the PPU's electronic publication. "I often saw the Backspin magazine years ago and used to say to myself. How would you get your name in that?" He's just discovered a way!

1. Gerard Walsh (Cement) 51 + 50: 101
 2. John Cawley (Riverdale) 54 + 50: 104
- Terry Dunne (Corkbeg) 51 + 56: 107; Seamus Gleeson (Riverdale) 53 + 55: 108; Eddie Flynn (Cloghogue) 57 + 52: 109; Michael Kerin (Clare Road) 57 + 52: 109; Jim Doyle (Fermoy) 56 + 53: 109; Brendan Walker (Cement) 56 + 53: 109.

SOME KEY FACTS

The three winning scores at Gaeil Colmcille this year (William Sheridan 92, William McNally 96 and Gerard Walsh 101) are the lowest graded winning scores in the history of the Over 55s championships.

MUNSTER COMPETITIONS ROUND-UP

By Jason O'Connor

Munster Mixed Foursomes

25 teams competed for the title on Sunday August 31st in Fermoy with the title going to a pairing from the Kingdom for the first time in over 10 years. Tralee's Tony Blake and Lisa O'Connor were third overall after the first 18 holes on 6up, one behind the leading pairs of Dean and Margaret Courtney from Riverdale along with James Devonshire and Sarah Byrne from the hosts on 7up. They powered through to take victory with a second round of 9up and a winning total of 15up, two ahead of James and Sarah who eventually finished on 13up.

Margaret and Dean could only improve their score by two shots in the second round but they still claimed the First 18 prize courtesy of their solid start. In a day of tough Gross scoring, local duo Daniel Keohane and Nicole Burke claimed the 36 hole prize with a total of 4up while the other prize on offer on the day, the second 18 was won by Ballinlough's Karen and John Aherne with a score of 5up.

Tony and Lisa's success was the first for Kerry and indeed the Tralee club since 2004 when Jamie Wrenn and Theresa Broderick were also victorious in this competition. The victorious pair are pictured below.



Munster Schools Competition

Although it was October 10th by the calendar, it felt more like August 10th with the splendid conditions in Cunnigar, Co Waterford for the 2014 staging of the Munster Schools competition. Only a late shower towards the end of the second session put a slight dampener on proceedings as the three prize-winners on the day came from the first session with the course proving to get the better of a lot of the players on the day.

St. Colman's College Fermoy 1 were the victors as rounds of three under par from Sam Tonks, two under from Ryan Sexton and a three over par score from Gary Mahony gave them a total of 322, 10 shots clear

of Carrigaline Community School in second. David Howard shot two under par while Shane Livesey and Ian O'Donoghue both had five over par scores as they finished on 332. Completing the Cork 1-2-3 on the day were Coláiste Chríost Rí with a two under par round for Conor Irwin followed by four over and seven over par scores respectively for Evan Sheehan and Brian Barry as they finished a shot behind Carraigaline on 333.

Just to illustrate the difference between the first and second session scoring in Dungarvan, sixth place was the best finish of a School in the second session that being the Davis College, Mallow team of Greg Barrett, Ed Walsh and Roy Whelan with a total of 338.

Munster Under 16 Matchplay

After five years in the wilderness, the Munster Under 16 Matchplay made its welcome return to the Pitch & Putt calendar on the weekend of October 12th & 13th in St Stephens, Cork. 23 players competed for the honour to be crowned the first victor since 2009 and following the completion of the quarter-finals it became strictly a Cork affair in the last four.

Glenn Towler from the host club pulled off a big win over Raffeen Creek's Charlie Morrissey (National Boys Strokeplay Champion) in the first quarter-final by 3&2 while his brother Ryan (St. Anne's) set up a battle of brothers in the semi-finals courtesy of a 7&6 win over Deerpark's Mark Harnett. The other semi-final would be contested between Douglas club-mates as Cian Morrison defeated Raffeen Creek's David Howard 6&5 while Conor Irwin was a convincing 12&11 winner over Deerpark's Sean Courtney in the remaining quarter-final.

Sunday's semi-finals were contested in ideal conditions once more and the battle of the brothers certainly didn't disappoint as they halved a hole in one during their semi-final. Ryan always seemed to hold the advantage in this encounter, turning a 2up lead after 18 holes into an eventual 4&3 victory. The other semi-final between Douglas club-mates Cian and Conor was also of a high standard even if the final scoreline of 10&8 didn't necessarily reflect that as Conor struggled to live with Cian's accuracy in the match.

The decider between Ryan and Cian ebbed and flowed both ways, Ryan taking a 1up lead after nine holes before Cian quickly responded to go 1up after 12 himself. Cian looked to be in the ascendancy with nine holes to go as he held a 2up lead but Ryan finished strongly by winning four of the last eight holes to go on and record a 2&1 win.



The victorious Ryan Towler (St. Anne's) and Runner-Up Cian Morrison (Douglas) pictured after the Munster Under 16 Matchplay Final at St. Stephen's alongside PPUi President Eamonn Birchall and Vice-President Pdraig O'Shea.

LEINSTER COMPETITIONS ROUND-UP

By Jason O'Connor and Linda Thomson

Leinster Schools Competition

By amazing coincidence or pure fluke, depending on your perspective, the winning score in the Leinster Schools Competition in Erry, Co Offaly was the exact same as the Munster equivalent as 32 teams competed on the day. Home advantage told true in deciding the winner however as Ard Scoil Chiarain Naofa 1 (pictured below) were the winners by two shots from St Patrick's of Navan.

Three under par for Josh Fleming, level par for Ciaran Doyle and one over for Mark Newman, the most consistent team of the day, were the ingredients in

the Clara school's success as they waited for the second session scores to come in before their victory could be confirmed. St Pats Navan's total all contained scores ending in '8' in terms of strokes, 10 under par for Liam Carroll (98), level par for Conor Doyle (108) and 10 over par for Ryan Crocock (118) which saw them finish on 324.

12 strokes further back were the St Johns Ballyfermot 1 team who finished on 336 courtesy of one over par for Dean Coleman, five over for Evan Doyle and six over par for Craig Hennessy as they had two shots to spare over St Mary's, Drogheda 1 in fourth on 338.



Leinster Under 16 Matchplay

WHILE only 13 players in the inaugural staging of this event it certainly didn't take away from the sense of history created by proceedings in Athgarvan on Saturday October 11th with the support of the Civil Service Credit Union. Only three quarter-finals took place at the event with Lucan's Cian Montgomery ending up getting a bye straight through to the semi-finals as a result of withdrawals on the day.

The quarter-finals that were played saw Evan Carry of Castletown defeat Lucas McKeen of Bellewstown at the last hole in an all Meath quarter-final. There was better luck for Bellewstown in another quarter-final as Christopher Woods beat Gowran's Dylan Cleere by 4&3 with 4&3 also the score in Lucan's Aaron

Monaghan's win over Sean Clerkin of Bellewstown. It was essentially Lucan vs. Meath in the semi-finals, Aaron struck first for the club with a 6&5 win over Christopher in the first semi-final but Evan prevented an all Lucan decider with a 3&2 win over Cian in the second semi-final.

In the decider Aaron made most of the running, but was never more than two up at any stage. Evan bravely fought back each time, with two birdies, a massive putt on 16 and a chip in on 17, key to him taking the game to extra holes. At the first sudden death hole, a firm chip from off the green lipped out on Evan. This allowed Aaron, who pitched wonderfully all day, to roll in a six foot putt for the victory.

Leinster Mixed Foursomes

This year the Leinster Mixed was in the tricky grounds of Old County. A Dublin club that has flourished in the last number of years mainly down to the friendly members and of course Monica's cakes! For those who would not be familiar with the venue, Old County is set out around the Lorcan O'Toole GAA pitches, so it may be small, but has many a surprise in store for visitors. The committee and ground staff in this club have done Trojan work over the last number of years and have carried out some excellent work to add some very tricky shots.

A total of 36 teams descended on Old County including last year's winners and runners-up. We had six pairings from the host club involved, and in advance, one of these teams would be favourite to win, as personally, I find this course suits local knowledge! With proceedings starting at 10am, and the format being foursomes, it can prove quite a tricky game with all bad tee-shots and missed putts costly. The first round leaders on a score of 6up was St. Bridget's duo Ann and Christy Sweeney on followed by Mary Kennedy & Colm Black

(Bellowstown) and Betty Cody & Richard Harkin (Loughlinstown) on 5up. The best opening pairings from the host clubs was Joan Redmond & Stephen Power on 3up.

As the afternoon went on, Frank Connelly and Stella Sheridan (Glenville) has posted a score of 6up for 36 holes, with Joan Redmond and Stephen Power (Old County) matching them. They now had to wait to see if the teams that had a good start were adding to their scores to keep them out of the winner's circles, or would the missed putts be costing the early leaders dearly? The three pairings in the lead at 18 holes unfortunately could not add to their scores. Stella Sheridan and Frank Connelly were the new Leinster Mixed Foursomes Champions on 6up beating home team Joan Redmond and Stephen Power on the back 18.

The best Gross went to Tracey & Joe McGrath from Erry on 2up. Ann & Christy Sweeney's 6up on the first 18 was good enough to get them a prize, with Mary Hughes and Leo O'Reilly from Glenville collecting the second 18 prize on 3up.



Stella Sheridan and Frank Connelly (Glenville) - Leinster Mixed Foursomes Champions 2014

NATIONAL MIXED FOURSOMES REVIEW

By Linda Thomson

Three weeks after the Provincial Competitions, the National Mixed Foursomes, Sponsored by Brophy Brothers Builders, was held in our nation's capital. This year's venue was in deep contrast to the other Dublin course (Old County) where the Leinsters had been held. The large pitching track is nestled of the M1 in Balbriggan. Many teams taking part in the Nationals had taken part in the Leinsters and Munsters and many in the winning enclosures of both events were featuring.

36 Teams from all over the country travelled to the Ringcommons clubs, all in search for glory of the Sean Coyne Memorial Cup. Catherine McCreevy and Wally Sheridan posted an excellent opening round of 7up, with the nearest to them after 18 on 5up which was Mary Murray and John Tracey of Rocklodge, with John and Kathleen Carton one shot further back on 4up. It was evident that Wally was on a high following success in the National Seniors Strokeplay the previous week.

Early scores from the second 18, came from Ann & Paddy Bird from Laytown, posting 6up on their second 18, giving them 7up for 36, and Gemma McCarthy & Michael Kennedy (Hillview) posting +5 to add to an opening +3 to leave them top of the leaderboard. The teams would have to wait and see if Wally & Catherine were going to add to their score? Posting 4up to their original 7up saw them winners by three shots over the Hillview team in second on 8up.

It was a second success in the Gross for Joe and Tracey McGrath, adding to their Leinster win in Old County three weeks earlier. The First 18 prize went to Mary Murray and John Tracey for their round of 5up. Ann and Paddy Bird's round of 6up after the turn saw them claim the Second 18 prize.



PPUI President Eamonn Birchall and Breda Brophy representing sponsors, Brophy Brothers Builders are pictured with the National Mixed Foursomes winners for 2014, Catherine McCreevy (Navan) and Wally Sheridan (Bellewstown).

NATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPETITION

By Jason O'Connor

PRIOR to this year's staging, the winning team in this event had never come from outside the host province of the competition but that all changed this year as Carraigaline Community School of Cork powered through for victory. With all teams playing in a shotgun start at the same time, form was very hard to judge as a lot of guess work was going on by the onlookers as to what might be the winning score on Friday, October 24th last. When everyone eventually piled into the wonderful Ryston clubhouse with their scorecards it eventually became that bit clearer.

Rounds of seven under par from David Howard, two under from Ian O'Donoghue and four over from Shane Livesey gave Carraigaline their winning total of five under par. That was one place better than their runners-up finish in the Munster Schools competition two weeks earlier. Also improving their showing from the Munster competition by one place were the Colaiste Chriost Ri team of Conor Irwin (eight under), Evan Sheehan (one under) and Darren Hourihan (six over) as they claimed second with a tournament total

of 321. Completing a Cork 1-2-3 in the medals were last year's winners Davis College of Mallow as Edward Walsh was another player to shoot an eight under par total on the day with team-mates Greg Barrett and Roy Whelan shooting three and four over par respectively.

Indeed such was Munster's dominance in this year's event that they occupied the first five places in the official standings with Leinster Champions Ard Scoil Ciaran Naofa of Clara the best placed of the team's from the host province in sixth place overall. The one honour that Leinster could claim hold to on the day was the honour of the best individual score which went to Conor Doyle of the St Pats, Navan team who finished with a 36 hole total of nine under par.

By and large the three Schools competition were a success this year and they were aided greatly by the sponsorship of Nevada Bobs whose contribution we all greatly appreciate.



The victorious Carrigaline Community School team, pictured with PPUi President, Eamonn Birchall: Shane Livesey, David Howard and Ian O'Donoghue.

NATIONAL INTER-COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS REVIEW

By Paul O'Brien, John Manning and Linda Thomson

The Battle for The Anchor Cup

What can I say? I was playing in the final round with my beloved Tipperary where we were vying for a medal spot. I played with John Walsh and JR Crangle. I am in this game a very long time but I have never witnessed Pitch & Putt like it. Walsh was unbelievable, his radar was on and his longest putt for the first nine holes if my memory is correct was five feet and that might be an injustice. I have played Walsh at his best but this to me was him at his maximum. Crangle was slow out of the traps in comparison but slowly but surely he started to make a few putts and gather momentum. Millar was making massive inroads; Redmond for a so called novice at this level was making a laughing stock of such a tag and was firing in birdies from all angles. Chris Gallagher was simply fantastic for his opening 15 holes where I could be wrong but I believe he was -10 through 15, phenomenal shooting one would say!

Junior and George McGreal were not scoring as prolifically as the others but were playing very consistently. Suddenly the wheels began to unravel for the Rebels. Uncharacteristic mistakes saw their lead being hauled in hole by hole by the men in Blue. JR had started his run of birdies to eat back at Walsh but John made a massive birdie on the 14th, which to me was pivotal. He birdied the 15th again but so did JR, I knew when JR held a slippery putt on 16 that it was so tight that lads were afraid to add up the scores. I was informed at this stage that Dublin were two ahead. Jaysus, even I became nervous watching this drama unfold in front of my very eyes. Walsh nails 17 but JR holds a massive putt to remain two ahead or so I thought. Down 18, I asked John Walsh did he know the scores and to be fair he said he was told they were two behind. JR's pitch was very well struck, but he was a tiny bit deep and I mean a tiny bit and the ball spun left and there was no stopping it from going down the hill. Walsh saw an opportunity and



The Cork team pictured accepting the Anchor Cup from PPUi President, Eamonn Birchall: John Cahill, Ray Murphy, Paudie O'Sullivan (captain), Kieran Dunscombe, Frank Dineen, Bryan Delaney and John Walsh.

maximised this with his entire prowess. He sent his ball to four feet but above the whole and what a slippery left to right putt he had left himself.

To me what happened after that was most unfortunate. Playing the game we love, you never want to see a player make a mistake that could ultimately cost his team a championship. However what unfolded was as dramatic and cruel as I have seen in my lifetime of Pitch & Putt. JR uncharacteristically failed to get up and down so we all thought that Walsh had a putt to send it to a play off as it had transpired that the sixth men on both teams were tied. Walsh held his nerve and with his putt he finished an incredible -13 for his last 18 in what was a massive pressurised environment to send the Championship to a play off or so we thought! It then transpired that after all the calculations were done that Cork had won by a shot. I felt it was my duty to try and meet JR Crangle in the aftermath. It's never easy to lose but it's worse to lose when you have a win within your grasp. Seeing tears in his eyes, I shared some words with him but let me emphasise JR Crangle did not lose this championship for Dublin. Every player within any team will look back and say I could have done better if that putt had fallen or this chip had ran further to the hole etc. Dublin proved to themselves they have the potential to win this title and if anything the togetherness their team showed over that weekend certainly will stand them in good stead going forward. It was a fantastic display from the Boys in Blue.

Cork, what can one say, they seemed home and hosed but when the pressure cooker was at its highest one man came to the fore for them in John Walsh. He was simply magnificent and his total score of 86 was instrumental in their win. Ray Murphy aided their cause with an excellent -14 on a course he would admit that he has struggled on in the past and John Cahill made a welcome return to the Cork jersey with a fine 95 as did Kieron Dunscombe. The mercurial Frank Dineen who say places of Tullamore he didn't know existed shot a battling 98 with Bryan Delaney hitting 100. With Douglas pending for next year's Championship, I am sure Cork will be overwhelming favourites but it is my belief that some counties are reaching new levels to try and push them all the way.

Kerry were a team written off by their own before they even struck a ball. This obviously inspired them. Yes a young team, but a few older shoulders on board

too and to their credit they proved that young blood and raw talent is a massive combination. Clearly their exploits in Munster were not a flash in the pan. They were magnificent over the weekend and clearly showed that they are going to be a force in the next few years. I am a firm believer in the youth in this game and it was great to see Kerry provide such a team that played the game the way it should be with and with abandonment. Long may it continue and they will no longer be the underdogs going forward.

What can be said of the remaining Teams? Well Offaly will be disappointed I feel with their showing, they seemed to have setback after setback before a ball was hit with two players deciding to stand down from the team. This I feel hindered their prospects but in saying that they were exceptionally close to a medal as were Limerick. Kieran Earls and Pacelli Darcy were instrumental in the Limerick push for a medal and they came up ever short but it's a team that I believe have serious consistency in the team and will be there or thereabouts going forward. Wexford and Tipperary must be wondering where it went wrong for them in the final singles. I believe and this is genuine that Wexford will have a big say in Championships in the coming years. I was so delighted to see an old buddy in John Hudson returning to the game. He will give them an added dimension in the coming years and I firmly believe they will be knocking hard for medals and cups in the near future. From my own and Tipperary's perspective, we simply were not good enough. Consistency is key to win these tournaments or challenge for medals and this is where we lacked. We have the players to compete and from a personal perspective it was great to be back.

Louth were very surprising to me. I don't mean to sound condescending but they have some great players and I was surprised to see them struggle like they did but in saying that they have the players who will dust themselves down and come back stronger next year. Westmeath were most unfortunate. We played them in a challenge the week before and they gave us a nice trimming and everything seemed great in the camp. Seven days in sport will tell you many stories and with the inflaming of John Browne's injury and the putting woes of which I read subsequently of Alan Hanlon, it really seemed to affect them. It was a great year for the Lake County all the same and no doubt they will push hard next year to redeem themselves. Meath and Down struggled but both counties have some fine players and dedicated players and hopefully they can continue to improve.

I feel it would be wrong of me not to speak about the time delays that this weekend encountered. I am not pointing the blame in any direction but waiting the bones of 3 hours between rounds in my mind is simply not on. I would urge that a plan be devised whereby this issue can be somewhat eradicated. Time delays are creeping in for all competitions and the players must also play a part in this. The game is getting too slow, players need to quicken up in my opinion and this should be constantly monitored. I saw one case over the weekend where a group had lost five holes. One solution that could be enforced is to split the competition into sessions and in particular I would incorporate two sessions on the Saturday which is the slowest format. I would urge that this matter be at least investigated going forward.

I would like to congratulate all the winners of the weekend, the hosts club for presenting such a pristine course to all us players and supporters. To the NEC for running the championship in what proved to be problematic at times in terms of delays etc but it was still ran very effectively. Roll on Douglas.

Gents - Division "B"

It was nip and tuck after the opening round of Saturday morning Scotch Foursomes in the first second tier Inter-County championship since 2003. Waterford posted an imposing total of 142, that's 20 under, helped in no small measure by a monumental 43 from Eddie Hennessy and Brian Farrell. Declan Sheedy's 44 helped Clare match the Waterford tally of -20. Longford were next best on -13.

Waterford returned -8 for their best five in Saturday afternoon's first round singles. Clare edged marginally ahead on -11. Clare's giant leap towards the county's maiden victory in the championship came in the Sunday morning straight foursomes joust. All three of the Dalcassian pairings dipped under par, with Martin Walsh and 2003 National Over 55s champion Marty Fawl firing a fine 49. The Banner County's 11 under par haul for this round skipped them nine shots clear of their rivals from the south east (the Clare tally was fifth best of every team playing, A and B combined). Hennessy and Farrell again top scored for Waterford with 50.

Waterford actually outscored Clare by a couple of shots in the singles. The top two counties played



The three winning captains in Tullamore, Chrissie Byrne (Kildare), Paudie O'Sullivan (Cork) and Declan Sheedy (Clare)

The top two counties played together on Sunday, joined by Longford. Eddie Hennessy returned an imperious 97 and Waterford had practically caught their Munster rivals after 12 holes. In the end the Clare team held out for a seven shot win over Waterford while Galway piped Longford for third spot. A tiebreak between the Tribesmen and Longford necessitated the counting of the sixth Strokeplay card. Marty Fawl top scored for Clare on 102 while skipper Sheedy held on for 104 after on 49 on Saturday.

Clare's historic lineout included representatives from the two Clare clubs, Clare Road & Cill Na Mona. The team captain Declan Sheedy is a Clare Road stalwart and he was joined by club-mates Marty Fawl, Kenneth Kerin and Niall Seery. Cill Na Mona were represented by Martin Walsh and Ger Hanrahan. Switching back to an A and B system in the Inter-County was only approved by the NEC at the 11th hour following a request from Clare, which was seconded by a number of other counties.

In future Carlow, Galway, Longford, Monaghan, Waterford and the Banner County will vie for this award. The aspiration for this change is to aid the development of the game in the six counties concerned. Clare raised the Eamonn Birchall Cup.

818 - CLARE (Martin Fawl, Martin Walsh, Niall Seery, Kenneth Kerin, Ger Hanrahan, Declan Sheedy).
825 - WATERFORD (Robbie Walker, Billy Aspel, Eddie Hennessy, Noel Farrell, Brian Farrell, Daniel Sullivan).
861 - GALWAY (Harry O'Hanlon, Francie Kelly, Thomas Kelly, Declan Comiskey, Harry O'Hanlon, Thomas Kelly).
861 - LONGFORD, 895 - MONAGHAN; CARLOW 904.

SOME KEY FACTS

Galway's previous best performance in the second tier of the Inter-County championship was seventh at Waterford Crystal in 1999.

Clare did once finish second in the main Inter-County championship, at Lakewood in 1993.

Waterford were previously runners-up in the second tier of the Inter-County championship, at Seapoint in 2002. Billy Aspel of this year's team also played in 2002.

2014 represents Clare's top all time performance in the second tier of the Inter-County championship. The Banner's previous best placing was third at Seapoint in 2002. Declan Sheedy and Martin

Ladies Inter County Championship

The tricky hills and long pitching shots of the Tullamore club was the host of this year National Inter-County for both Ladies and Gents. With the change of format both Ladies and Gents play over two days. The Ladies start proceedings on the Saturday morning with a round of Scotch Foursomes, the same again in the afternoon and finishing off with 18 holes of Singles on Sunday lunchtime. This is a very welcome format and it makes for an exciting tournament.

Seven Teams were taking part, which for Ladies Pitch and Putt is disappointing. Let's not delve on the counties not participating, but rather on the counties looking for the top spot. With the Tipp ladies returning to defend their title, the Dubs going for the double, the Lilywhites looking for silverware this year and Offaly on home turf, it sure was going to be a battle till the end! Dublin opened proceedings alongside Meath. Strong opening pairing scores can prove vital, and that it did when Kildare posted a combined total of 149 for the first session, three shots ahead of Dublin and seven ahead of Offaly.

The second session of doubles left Kildare sitting six shots ahead of Dublin after the first day with Offaly a further six back. It was all to play for on the Sunday. As the Sunday Singles got underway, a strong start was needed from all players. With conditions slightly improved -heat wise from the Saturday- the breeze was up and causing some problems, along with pacey greens. Dublin got back very close to Kildare, and at one stage went ahead with a hole-in-one from Ger Ward on the 15th, but literally at the same time, Mary Donnelly also got a hole-in-one on the 17th to level it all up again! Dublin finished poorly and Kildare had their silverware for 2014 as Inter-County Champions with Dublin second. Home team Offaly finished in a very proud third place, with Tracey McGrath posting the best Ladies score of the day on five under par.

Again the Inter-County throws up all types of surprises, and excitement, and a tournament with the new format has made it a bigger, better and exciting competition. Maybe, some ideas can be given from Lady Players to improve on the game, and an idea given that a 'B' division be entered in the Ladies to encourage other counties to enter.

We turn to Cork for next year and hopefully some more teams in the mix.

ORVELTE IN AUGUST - A STORY FROM THE DUTCH OPEN 2014

By Alan Hanlon

One of the things that struck me when I touched down at Eindhoven Airport on a warm Thursday lunchtime last August was the fact that this was my first visit to Holland in six years. For someone regarded as a staunch supporter of International Pitch & Putt, this was a considerable absence away from the land of polders and windmills. In fact, I had to pinch myself to make sure that I was actually on Dutch soil. It was true. This was my first appearance in Holland since Ireland's historic first victory at the World Team Championships in 2008 where maestros Murphy, Courtney and O'Brien had done the business for Ireland at the excellent Papendal course near Arnhem. I was part of the contingent of Irish supporters at that championship. It was a memorable occasion.

My reason for this visit was of no less importance to myself. I was taking part in the Dutch Open in Orvelte. I had only ever played in one Dutch Open previously and that was the inaugural event at Overbetuwe in 2004. As you can imagine, I was really looking forward to the 2014 version. Still, there was quite a bit of work to be done before I even got to hit a ball in Orvelte. First thing on the agenda was the long drive to the Open destination. For me, driving is the best way to get around Europe. So, it has been my custom now for many years to hire a car. I think it represents value in terms of what you can get from a trip. You can go where you want; when you want. You can see places that otherwise you might miss if you were beholding solely to public transport. It is not the cheapest way to travel but neither does it cost an arm and a leg. Get a few of your mates to tag along to share the cost and you really get a lot a value for your adventure.

Within an hour of landing, I had acquired my rental car and was making my way north towards my destination somewhat south of Groningen. It was quite a lengthy journey. I should not have been surprised by that as Eindhoven lies in the south of Holland, reasonably close to the Belgian border. There is not a lot to see on such roads. Holland, for the most part, is pancake flat. Not for the first time, I took a quick detour on my travels. This particular one was across the Rhine, into the country that this great artery of Europe is associated with. Yes... it was Germany for a quick bite to eat. I have a penchant for a Germany speciality. I love the crustiness and taste of

German bread. The sour dough mixture gives the bread a strong and unique taste. I was not disappointed. This detour was quick but it also had an ulterior purpose. Within an hour, I was back in Holland and had managed to bypass the busy thoroughfares that encircle the cities of Nijmegen and Arnhem. Now, it was a straight road to Zwolle and my eventual destination for that night, Havelte.

Havelte is home of Rinus Huberts, one of Dutch Pitch & Putt's leading lights. Rinus had kindly offered to look after me during my stay in his homeland. I arrived at his house in time for a thoroughly enjoyable bite to eat. More importantly, I had arrived in sufficient time to allow us do the one thing we were both passionate about – playing Pitch & Putt. We still had time to get a game in. Rinus took me on the short journey to Koekange Pitch & Putt course. This was both a physical and spiritual event for me. Everyone in Dutch Pitch & Putt knows Koekange. They will tell with great fondness that it is where Pitch & Putt in Holland began. It is the oldest course in Holland. You get that profound sense of history when you stand within the confines of this unique place. The origins of what is now one of the world's biggest Pitch & Putt nations began right here. The moment was not lost on me. I have made many Dutch friends over the years. All their stories bring you back to this place. In truth, Koekange is deep in the heart of the Dutch countryside. It is not near anywhere! My own course of Collinstown is considered off the beaten track but it is still connected to a village that has a church, a few pubs and shops along with a fair few houses.

Koekange has only itself for company. In a strange sort of way, this adds to the mystical nature of the place. After all, it should be a place of pilgrimage for those of us who believe in International pitch & putt and of course, every pilgrimage requires a fair amount of effort to justify the journey. In this regard, Koekange does not disappoint. For one thing, it has the most beautiful clubhouse that I have ever been in. The old Dutch barn style building embossed with wooden décor on the inside lends greatly to the experience that you are on holy ground.

The course is simple. It is akin to Stackallen only in orientation in that it goes straight out for nine holes

on its left-hand side and makes the journey back home in similar fashion on its right. Unlike Stackallen, it is as flat as the previously mentioned pancake. It is not a difficult course but at the same time it deserves respect. It is so Irish in its feel. The greens are relatively small and all shots are within 70 metres. You could be forgiven for thinking that you were in Ireland but the tee boxes betray that illusion. All Dutch tee boxes consist of a rubber mat (that we are accustomed to) in the middle of the box. Positioned either side of the mat are two strips of AstroTurf. These are for players that do not like the unique effect that teeing from a rubber mat brings. Our Catalan and Galician friends appreciate this type of teeing ground. This is only my opinion but it should be an aspiration for us in Ireland to have such combined teeing grounds.

Rinus and I were accompanied by the great Rolf Kwant. Everyone knows Rolf in Holland. You can agree or disagree as to whether he is the greatest player to date that the Dutch have ever produced but one thing is for certain, he would always be mentioned in such a debate. Rolf was playing in the Dutch Open but his form coming into the event was not great. That said, form is temporary and class, as we know, is permanent! Some of that class oozed out in the second round. Yes... we actually got to play two rounds, mainly due to the whirlwind play of my Dutch playing partners. A drink and a bit of a chat in the wonderful Koekange clubhouse followed. It was the perfect end to an enthralling day. It was back to Rinus' place for a well-earned sleep.

Friday was an early start. Breakfast was followed by the 35 minute drive to the Orvelte complex. Orvelte is like Koekange in as far as it is equally in the proverbial "sticks" but in fairness, there is a lot more happening in it. It is not solely a pitch & putt outlet. There is a leisure complex for kids on the site. It is also furnished with a fair deal of accommodation, of which the majority of Irish players were availing of. Also, a modern busy Dutch village found itself adjacent to the course. Nevertheless, the numerous fields of corn and woodlands left you in no doubt that you were still very much in the countryside.

I took on the course for practice early. Orvelte is a challenging course. The land around is flat but the greens have been raised and tilted to make it a tough track. In fact, some of the greens are tilted in the extreme. The 5th, 11th and 13th holes spring to mind. In fact, the 11th hole is boarding on the ridiculous. It was

unfair that day and it would be that way all weekend. Holes like this are not solely a Dutch issue. In fact, it is a very Irish problem as well. There are quite a number of courses in Ireland where there are holes that are simply tilted too much for the size of the green. Too often, we have seen cases where if you miss a hole at dead weight pace, the ball runs off the green. This should never happen. It is akin to crazy golf and it is wrong. Unfortunately, the 11th hole in Orvelte (which is a decent tee shot) took on all the hallmarks of a crazy golf green. There were to be one or two other holes that came close to the crazy golf tag but fortunately did not achieve that status. Just for the record, the 11th cost me no dropped shots that weekend unlike plenty of other holes! Still, I get a bee in my bonnet about unfair holes. One is too many and unfortunately in Ireland as elsewhere, we have way too many in Pitch & Putt.

Despite all this, I like the course, I like it a lot. It has the appearance of a young course that in its early years is conspicuous by the absence of shrubbery and trees and hence the feeling that you are in a windswept location. The course is cleverly laid out. Water hazards are cunningly placed. They especially feature around the 11th, 12th and 13th holes. The 12th is a daunting but fair shot to a green surrounded by water and shrubbery on three sides where the green slopes greatly to the water. It was to cause a lot of problems at the weekend. The course has its fair share of easy, medium and hard holes as should be the case with any championship course. Orvelte is definitely that. In fact, the 2015 European Individual Strokeplay championships take place at this worthy venue.

One thing that was to prove a nuisance was the weather. It threatened and rained a little during the Friday morning practice. However, it was a total downpour during the afternoon Matchplay competition so much so that the competition was cancelled. As I watched the greens disappear under this watery Dutch deluge, all I kept hearing around me was that we, the "Irish" were used to this. I am convinced now that my Dutch friends must have thought that I was mad when I replied that I had seen more rain this particular day in Orvelte than I had seen during the previous two months in Ireland. Mad or not... it was a fact. Still, I have no fault with the Dutch reaction. The very same people had experienced a deluge of monstrous proportions on the Saturday night of the Irish open in Glenville back in May. Apart from rain talk, there was nothing else

left to do but chat and drink beer for the rest of the afternoon. The Dutch are equally as good at doing these tasks as the Irish are. That was the one noticeable thing about the weekend – the atmosphere. It was good. Plenty of laughter and banter permeated the place.

The rain transferred itself, albeit with less gusto to the opening day of the event on the Saturday. There were high hopes of an Irish victory. This was not without reason given the fact that Ray Murphy, Damien Fleming and John Crangle were in town. However, the tone of this event was set by the excellent Rolf Kwant. Maybe, the Koekange air on the previous Thursday night sparked something in this great player. Kwant was simply awesome. He carded an opening round of 44 and he backed this up with a second round 46 to lie on -18 overnight. This gave him a five shot lead over David Ahern. The quietly spoken Corkman had gone about his business efficiently with rounds of 47 and 48 to post a clubhouse score of -13. A shot further back was Damien Fleming. He had started sluggishly but not for the first time, the brilliant Kerryman produced a scintillating round(44) of pitch & putt to put him right in the hunt. Ray Murphy (-11), Trevor Ahern (-10) and James Fleming (-9) were the only others players who could allow themselves harbour any ambitions of a win or at the very least a podium finish. The rest of us could only hope for a better day on the Sunday and a place higher up the leader board.

Apart from that, there was fun time to be had. The vast majority of the Pitch & Putt fraternity didn't need a second invitation for this. There was food a plenty and beer flowing. This all took place amid banter, laughter and song. The blame for the banter and 'craic' lay squarely at the hands of the Glenville contingent that had travelled to fulfil the invite that had been bestowed upon them in May at the Irish Open by Dutch Open organisers RJ and JAnne's Bos. The South Dublin Mafia made their presence felt greatly all weekend. If you were fortunate to find yourself in the company of Paddy Murphy (Glenville Club Captain), Eugene Notaro, Keith Phelan, Joe Flanagan, Declan Potter, Mick Keenan and Paddy Ryan, you could not help but be infused by their infectious appetite to enjoy themselves. You certainly left that table in a positive mood. The Glenville mob were aided and abetted by Ed Janssen and his Dutch crew who were equally adept at creating a lively and enjoyable atmosphere. There were plenty of songs, both official and unofficial. Officially, the music was

more than capably provided by Noel Shannon and his partner Lynne. They were professional, very good but also wickedly mischievous. When a much needed performance break was due, they preyed upon some less fortunate souls in their audience to provide cover in the misguided belief that those same said souls were capable of entertaining the crowd successfully whilst holding a microphone in one hand. One of those unfortunate souls was me. I have a limited capacity for such tasks but I managed to get through it unscathed.

I am sure that when the sun decided to shower itself across the flat fields of Orvelte early on the Sunday morning, there was many a sore head to be found in the vicinity. That said! The serious task of trying to win a coveted International Open title was the order of the day. In truth, over a hundred players would sign off on their final rounds that day. These were mainly Dutch players with a fair showing of Irish ones. There were a few German, French and Catalan players present. Most notable of these was Victor Moscatel, the current President of FIPPA. Given the turbulent events that our sport has recently seen, Moscatel has a sizeable job in hand to unite all within our sport. However, there is no doubt that he has great capacity to do this. This Catalan has a stately presence about him while at the same time, he is very approachable and amenable to anyone who so chooses to engage with him. Above all, he has a passion for Pitch & Putt and a clear vision for its future development. I found my time spent in his company enthralling.

To say that the presence of John Hudson at this open was significant is an understatement. The naturalised Frenchman was to the vanguard of International Pitch & Putt development in the early years of EPPA/FIPPA. However, as the sport grew, differences of opinion as to where the sport should go became apparent. Such differences lead to the eventual and sad split of our sport in 2009. FIPPA remained intact but weakened by the loss of two of its main contributors in France and Italy. IPPA was born. It still exists today. One of its leaders is John Hudson. I have plenty of time for Hudson. He is passionate about Pitch & Putt. Perhaps, I don't agree with his methods of how we should develop further but there is no doubt that behind his actions lies the desire to make our sport bigger and better. This is not the time to theorise on the split and its aftermath. It is suffice to say that FIPPA and IPPA now exist separately in their own right but their common theme is the same, i.e. the playing of Pitch & Putt and central to that are players. I, strongly,

believe that players should be able to play Pitch & Putt tournaments anywhere. In this regard, it was good to see Hudson, an IPPA player taking part in a FIPPA event.

Back to the tournament! I would like to report that there was a thrilling finish to the Open but this never materialised. Rolf Kwant continued where he left off on the Saturday. He produced a final round 47 for a final total of -25 and a massive 8 shot victory over his nearest rival Ray Murphy who carded a 48 to pip Damien Fleming for second on the final 18. Fleming had carded a 49. Dutchman Marcel Ahuis shot the round of the day (46). It earned him fourth spot. Corkman Trevor Ahern had played steady all weekend and finished in 5th place on -14. His namesake David Ahern finished sixth on -13. John Crangle finished seventh on -11. His first round 57 cost him dearly. Nevertheless, 94 shots for his final two rounds was impressive and a mark of the character and brilliance of this fine player. Kerryman James Fleming was the only other Irish player to finish in the top 10 and that was in tenth spot. The eighth and ninth places went to the excellent Melvin Slaats and Stephan Van Den Berg.

Irish players did actually record victories in the various class events of the tournament. Glenville's Mick Keenan pipped club-mate Joe Flanagan for the Seniors title. Cian Murphy claimed victory by two shots in the juvenile event over Michel Van Zijl, son of Orvelte greenkeeper Rob. For once, the bragging rights in a certain Murphy household did not belong to Ray. In fairness, the great man was as proud as any father would be and had no problem relinquishing any champion's tag to his son. The Ladies' event was always going to be decided by the two giants of Dutch ladies' pitch & putt, Esther De Schiffart and Herma Kleinlugtenbeld. It went down to the wire with Esther claiming victory by two shots.

The presentations and speeches followed. Then, it was all over. Many parted company while some lingered. Friendships were made; others were solidified. I, myself, had to leave early in the evening for a pre-arranged engagement in Northern Belgium. It was a long drive and it gave me plenty of time to consider what had taken place over those last four days. There was no denying that this had been a superb Open. The organisation was top class as it tends to be in Holland. We could learn a lot from our Dutch friends in that regard. My over-riding feeling was that I had experienced all that is good in

International Pitch & Putt. We witnessed some of the world's best players ply their trade on a truly international stage. We were treated to a master class from the brilliant Rolf Kwant. There was a mixture of friendships, music, banter, politics and laughter conducted in a multitude of languages. In many ways, we were cocooned in a sporting realm that epitomised where this sport can take us whilst outside in the Pitch & Putt world, things were not so good. As we know now, events have come and gone that will haunt the Pitch & Putt world for some time to come. Such happenings may cast doubt on where we are headed and make the steps to a better future unsure. For me, there is a lot to be hopeful for. While there are people from various nations prepared and willing to come together in the manner that they did in Holland then our sport has a bright future.

That is what happened at the 2014 Dutch Open. Our sport is thriving better than we give it credit for. When we embrace it, it is a wondrous thing and therein lies the path forward to follow. I hope that we all experience such moments because we can only be so much better for them. "Orvelte in August" was definitely one of those moments.



Rolf Kwant - Dutch Open Winner 2014.

INTER CLUB FINALS DAY REPORT

By Jason O'Connor and Paul O'Brien

Ladies Handicap Competition

This year's event was all decided on one day as four teams (Lakeside, Riverdale, St Bridgets & St Bridgets/Poulaphouca) did battle for the honour over two courses. The first semi-final in Erry was between Riverdale and St Bridgets. Both doubles matches went down to the 18th with both sides sharing a point apiece as Margaret Keogh and Chrissie Byrne claimed the Kildare side's point before the two Margaret's Clear and Forde levelled the tie up at one apiece with victory in their encounter. The Nenagh club powered through in the Singles with wins for Margaret Forde (21st), Margaret Courtney (4&3) and Margaret Clear (3&2) while Tara Dillon (1up) claimed St Bridgets' sole Singles point in a 4-2 defeat.

The second semi-final was also a 4-2 scoreline in favour of a Tipperary side as Lakeside got the better of St Bridgets/Poulaphouca. Bernie Dunne and Dina Dillon (2&1) won the first doubles point for the combined clubs while Lily O'Brien and Elaine Quinn (6&5) tied the match up after 18 holes for the Tipperary side. Lakeside were dominant in the Singles with Helen McMorrow (4&3), Bridget Shelley (3&2) and Mary Quinn (19th) giving them the wins they needed to set up an all Tipperary decider. Mairead

O'Toole (2&1) won St Bridgets/Poulaphouca's sole point in the Singles.

It was a unique decider in some respects as players who had been team-mates earlier on in the summer in the Tipperary colours were now doing battle for their clubs. Proceedings now moved to Tullamore where the 2014 winners would ultimately be crowned. Riverdale took the early advantage by winning the first two doubles matches as the combinations of the two Margaret's (Clear and Forde) along with Catherine Dunne and Margaret Courtney both won the two matches by a score of 5&4. When Margaret Courtney followed up with a 2&1 win in her Singles match, Riverdale were now just one point away from the title.

However they were hit by a barnstorming comeback by their fellow Tipperary side as a 3&2 victory for Lily O'Brien coupled with 1up wins for Mary Quinn and Bridget Shelley meant that the decider was incredibly tied at three apiece after the regulation 36 holes. A sudden death playoff would now take place between one representative of both teams to decide the eventual winner. Mary Quinn stepped forward for Lakeside with Margaret Forde doing likewise for Riverdale. Both players halved the first hole but Mary won the second to give Lakeside the title for 2014.



Lakeside, Templemore, captained by Elaine Quinn winners of the Ladies Inter Club Competition for 2014.

Gents Inter/Junior Handicap Competition

Three Leinster and one Munster clubs battled to be crowned the second ever winners of this event with all teams having various different paths in getting to Finals Day. St Pats of Wexford were beaten semi-finalists in the first staging of the event, Bagenalstown of Carlow had defeated the 2013 runners-up Deerpark in their quarter-final, Collinstown of Westmeath had looked very impressive in seeing off Clare Road in the last eight while Lakeside of Tipperary had seen off McBride of Louth in the closest quarter-final by 5-4.

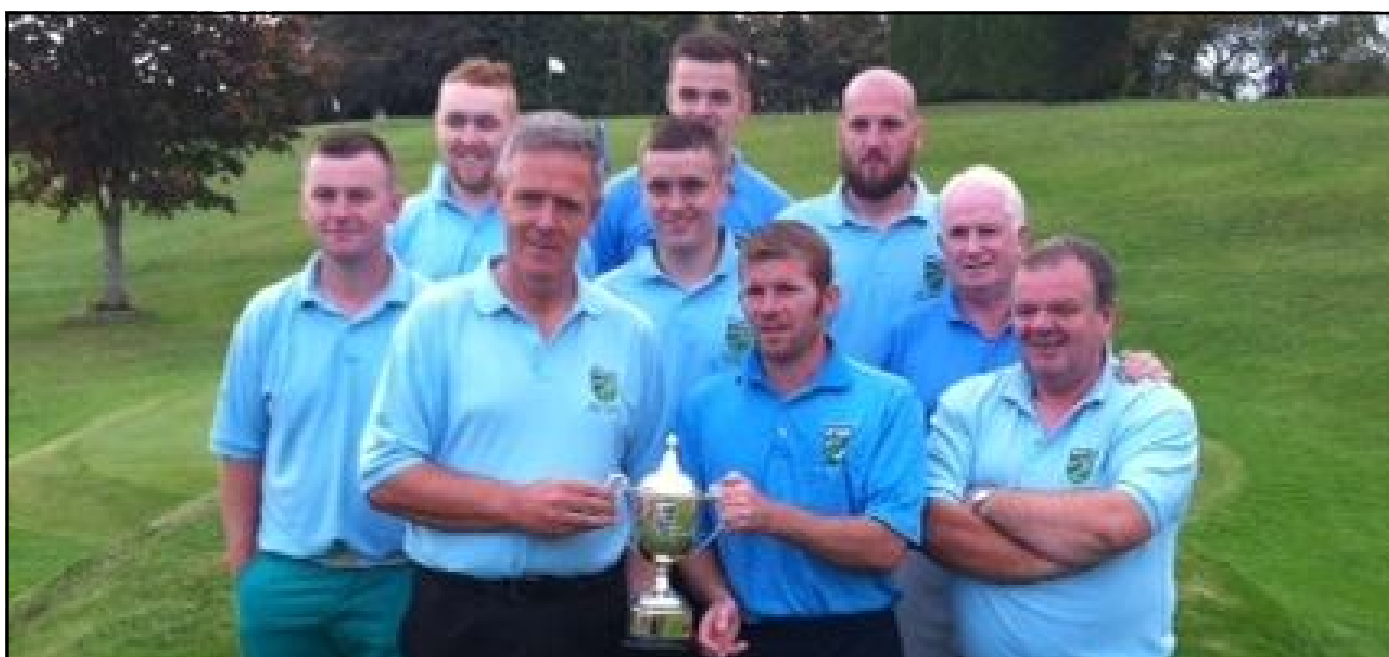
In the battle of the towns of Collins and Bagenal, the Westmeath side took the lead after the Doubles by 2-1, the combinations of Gary Middleton & Declan Penrose (6&5) along with Darren Reilly & David Penrose (3&2) picking up their points with Roy O'Neill and Darren McNally (2&1) securing Bagenalstown's sole point. The Singles was fiercely competitive with four of the six matches all going to the last hole but Declan Penrose (2&1), Darren Reilly (1up) and Stephen Ruane (3&2) getting the points Collinstown needed to secure their place in the decider. Patrick Robinson Jnr, Derek McNally and Liam Shinnors (all 1up) won Bagenalstown's Singles points but the Carlow club's great run to the last day was now at an unfortunate end.

The second-semi-final was a somewhat more one sided affair as St Pats really turned on the style against Lakeside. Ian Delahunty and Paddy Murray

(3&2) may have won the first Doubles point of the match for Lakeside but wins for Kevin Doyle & Gavin Kenny (2&1) and Derek Ryan & Richard Grannell (1up) had St Pats 2-1 ahead after the first 18 holes. Lakeside were hit by a 'tour de force' from St Pats in the Singles as the Enniscorthy side won all six of the Singles encounters through Ruairi Fortune and Richard Grannell (both 4&3), Gavin Kenny (3&2) as well as Kevin Doyle, Derek Ryan and Glenn Fortune (all 2&1) for an 8-1 overall victory.

When you consider the final contained players who were involved in the victories for Westmeath (Intermediate) and Wexford (Junior) in the inaugural graded Leinster Inter-Counties it certainly added to the sense of occasion and connection between what the new competitions introduced for Intermediate and Junior players have done to invigorate the game in recent years. Collinstown won the first Doubles match through Gary Middleton & Declan Penrose (2&1) before Kevin Doyle & Gavin Kenny (4&3) and Derek Ryan & Richard Grannell (5&4) had St Pats 2-1 in front at the halfway stage.

When Ruairi Fortune (19th) and Kevin Doyle (4&3) won the first two Singles matches, St Pats were only one point away from securing the 2014 title. Gary Middleton (3&2) kept Collinstown's hopes alive but St Pats made no mistakes in the final three Singles matches as Richard Grannell (4&2), Gavin Kenny (7&6) and Glenn Fortune (2&1) wrapped up an eventual 7-2 victory for St Pats as they went two better than their performance in the inaugural



St. Patrick's, Enniscorthy, captained by Aidan Whelan, winners of the Inter/Junior Handicap Inter Club Competition.

eventual 7-2 victory for St. Pat's as they went two better than their performance in the inaugural staging of this event.

It was a great success for the South East club, especially considering their geographic isolation in a lot of ways from the main Pitch & Putt centres for the club. This was also their first success in distinctly club colours as all the other great recent triumphs for St. Pat's came in the county colours of Wexford.

Gents Scratch Competition

St. Anne's are a club based in the north of Cork City and boast some of the finest exponents this game has ever seen. Winning the coveted Inter Club title is no mean feat but to retain it is a fantastic achievement for any club. Winning with your club to me is the ultimate, playing with your closest buddies to reach one objective and one goal and to play an important role is what teams are all about. Their wins throughout the campaign were close at times, winning 5/4 on three occasions and even losing their opening match against Tramore in Hillview. A sign of any team is defiance and downright refusal to lose! This was very apparent in the game they had with us. Darren Collins better known as Lazarus pulled a win out of nowhere that day to get them by us after we thought we had them. Successful teams don't roll over and St Anne's can be categorised as one of the best Club Teams to have played the game.

St. Anne's, as alluded to, had a defeat in their opening match. They then beat, Collins/Fermoy to get back on track, scrapped a win over Hillview to set up a rematch with Lakeside/Riverdale in the quarter-finals. It was a massive game for both sides and eventually Darren Collins secured the win on the 19th after being dormie three down to ensure they progressed. The Semi Final saw St. Anne's lead Erin's Isle 2-1 but Erin's Isle won the first two singles to get ahead. It was a real ding dong battle and ended up 4-4 with one match left on the course. Halved after 18 it went to sudden death where St Anne's won and advanced to the Final to face their fiercest rivals in Collins/Fermoy. The final was a fine final with St Anne's taking an early lead 2-1 after the doubles but it was the singles where St Anne's stamped their authority on proceedings where they won five from the six singles to claim a victory of 7-2 and be crowned champions once again for 2014.

They continue to set the bar for all the other clubs to reach and they are extremely worthy champions. The Inter Club is a tournament that should see clubs enter and with a few tweaks here and there this can become the top competition within our sport. Congratulations to all who participated throughout the year and the NEC for running the competition in the latter stages and once again to Niall Reynolds who continued to play no small part in the smooth running of the event throughout the year.



St. Anne's, Cork, captained by Frank Dineen, Inter Club Gents Scratch winners for the second year in a row.



A win for the Banner! Clare were the winners of the Gents "B" Section at the Inter County Championships.

PRODUCTION TEAM FOR THIS ISSUE

Jason O'Connor (Editor), Linda Thomson, Alan Hanlon, John Manning, Paul O'Brien and Paucic Buggy.

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of same. These events will return to a more suitable time next year but it is crucial that we keep offering young people the opportunity to play our game in events such as these. As well as looking at events at home we also have an interesting take from Alan Hanlon on the Dutch Open back in August.

Speaking of matters at an International level congratulations must go to Bruff duo Liam O'Donovan and Pacelli Darcy on winning the International Pairs event in Papendal. We might look more at this event in our next edition before Christmas which we hope will be more a reflective edition of the year just gone by.

I wish to take this chance again to thank John, Paul, Linda & Alan for their work and assistance with these articles. It's also encouraging to take to the world wide web and see our sport have a presence on websites and social media whether it be through club or County/Regional Board based initiatives.

I thank Paucic, Michael and Anne in the office for their continuing assistance with this e-zine along with my NEC colleagues for their support.

Until the next edition prior to Christmas,

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