

PITCH & PUTT IRELAND



National Strokeplay Finals 2026

Junior Gents

August 8th

Junior Gents Official Venue

Kilbeggan Pitch and Putt

Championship Preview by John Manning

Gents Junior Preview

It's really unusual for the holder of the National Gents Junior Strokeplay title to play in the championship the following year.

However, **Pat Sheehan** (St. Anne's) will have the privilege of attempting to go back-to-back at Kilbeggan and repeat last year's runaway success at St. Anne's.

Adding further novelty to the 2026 renewal is the presence of 2025 runner-up **William Fitzgerald** (Fermoy). Impressive winner of last Monday's Fermoy Scratch Cup, William is drawn in the final group of the morning session alongside 2026 National Matchplay semi-finalist **Paul Boreham** (Bishopstown).

Completing a triad of anomalies is **Chris O'Donovan** (Collins), who returns to the championship two years since he triumphed at R.G.S.C. Chris will have an opportunity to set the early pace from 09.24 in the company of **Michael Cunningham**, who helped Kilbeggan quartets to runners-up spots in the 1991 Carrolls Club Tournament and in the 2007 National Mixed Team Event.

Michael is one of two home club representatives. The other is **Lee Stynes**, the 2013 Westmeath Matchplay champion. Lee's fellow competitor will be 2025 National Over-55s Junior grade Strokeplay champion **Brendan Moloney** (Ardnacrusha).

2026 Gowran Scratch Cup winner **Michael Maher** (Bagenalstown) played all four rounds last year at St. Anne's and finished eighth.

Richie Walsh (Rathfeigh) was a Leinster Matchplay runner-up in 2018 and a session prize winner in the 2023 National Scotch Foursomes.

Richie Walsh is quickly followed by Rathfeigh club colleague and 2019 Leinster Strokeplay runner-up **Raymond Fay**, a provincial Scotch Foursomes winner in 2022.

Ciaran McCormack (Loughlinstown) claimed the Best final 18 prize in the recent Leinster Strokeplay championship at Laytown, having a provincial Junior B bronze medallist a couple of years ago.

Ken Butler (Loughlinstown) won the 2026 Dublin John Smith Junior Scratch Cup and reached the capital's Junior Matchplay final.

Fifth in this championship three years ago, **Michael O'Donoghue** (Tipperary Hills) was a 2022 Munster Strokeplay silver medallist.

Paddy Barry (St. Anne's) finished third in the recent National Over-55s Junior grade Strokeplay championship. Paddy joins reigning Leinster Junior Strokeplay **Glenn Fortune** (St. Patrick's) on the first tee. Glenn was also crowned provincial Junior Matchplay champion back in 2016, the year he added a third place finish in the National Junior Strokeplay championship.

2023 National Scotch Foursomes victor **David Moran** (Royal Meath) tees up with 2023 Loughlinstown Scratch Cup winner **John Boyle** (Loughlinstown), who has contended in a number of Scratch Cups this season.

Tommy Lacey (Custume) claimed the Best Last 18 award at the recent Paddy Carton Memorial Scratch Cup at Kilbeggan.

Ken Hickey (Bagenalstown) has been a provincial Junior Inter-County bronze medallist with Carlow.

2019 Leinster Mixed Foursomes winner and this year's provincial Matchplay semi-finalist **John Gilsenan** (Trim) features alongside **Paul Walsh** (Collins), winner of the Munster Matchplay in 2024, the year he reached the National Matchplay quarter-finals.

2026 Shandon Scratch Cup winner **Jonny McKee** (Cloghogue) is in the field as is his clubmate **Neil Barr**, a 2025 National Inter-County runner-up with Down.

2022 Munster Strokeplay bronze medallist **Rick Harty** (Ardnacrusha) plays with **Gerry White** (Athgarvan), who finished runner-up in the recent Paddy Carton Memorial Scratch Cup at Kilbeggan.

2022 National Intermediate Inter-County winner with Cork and multiple Leaside County champion, **Robbie Donovan** (Fermoy) is confronted by 2024 Offaly Matchplay runner-up **Kieran Claffey** (Erry).

2025 Cork Strokeplay runner-up **Tom Cantwell** (ESB) partners last year's Munster Juvenile Strokeplay runner-up **Nicholas O'Toole** (Larkspur Park).

Simon Drummey helped Cunnigar to second spot in last year's National Inter-Club tournament while **David Harnett** (Deerpark) reached the 2026 National Matchplay semi-finals at Rocklodge.

A couple of top ex-juveniles with chances are 2024 Munster Boys Plate runner-up **Luke Ryan** (Tipperary Hills) along with 2024 National Intermediate Matchplay semi-finalist and 2013 National Juvenile Inter-County winner with Cork, **Ryan Walsh** (Collins).

Alan Walsh (Bagenalstown) was a 2022 Leinster Matchplay semi-finalist while **Paul Hayes** (Listowel) claimed third slot in the 2023 Munster Junior B Strokeplay championship.

The last player of the 80 into action will be 2025 Munster Strokeplay runner-up **Ian Murphy** (Claycastle).

With no past National Gents Junior Strokeplay history to draw from, players should probably be aiming in the region of 151, which made a 9-hole play-off for the Leinster Junior Strokeplay championship in 2001.