

**PITCH & PUTT IRELAND**



## **Munster Matchplay Finals 2026**

**May 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>**

### **Official Venues**

**Fermoy Pitch and Putt**

**St. Stephen's Pitch and Putt**

**Championship Previews by John Manning**

## Gents Senior Preview

**John Cahill** defends his Munster Senior Matchplay crown on his own Fermoy course this weekend. Cahill's 2026 opening round assignment on Saturday is a match against former two-time provincial Matchplay champion **Chris Scannell** (Collins).

That pair are drawn in an ultra-competitive third quarter, which also features two more former champions along with former Irish Matchplay kingpin **Stephen O'Reilly** (Hillview) who has been in ominously good early season form.

1997 winner **Liam O'Donovan** (Bruff) faces 2024 National Strokeplay runner-up **Jason O'Regan** (Tralee) while O'Regan's clubmate **Jason Cregan** (Munster Matchplay champion in 2023 and 2024) tackles Lakeside's **Brian Cahill**.

First match out sees 2004 victor **James Cleary** (Larkspur Park) clashing with last year's runner-up **Eoin Walsh** (Collins). **Ray Murphy** (St. Anne's) will want to add to his lone Munster Matchplay victory, which came away back in 1994. Former National Matchplay champion **Barry Morrissey** (Raffeen Creek), Fermoy's own **Daithi Sexton** and 2023 Munster Intermediate Matchplay champion **Phillip Burns** (Brinny) are also fancied to do well.

The second quarter is brimming with quality. **John Walsh** (Collins) has been crowned champion on no fewer than eight occasions but faces an immediately tricky opponent in 2015 titleholder **Thomas Hanley** (Bruff). 2025 Intermediate champ **Noel Stapleton** (Lakeside) chases a quick double but will first have to deal with 2008 senior victor **Frank Dineen** (St. Anne's). The winner of that one could soon face 2022 winner **Kieran Earls** (Bruff) who must first overcome **Thomas Lynch** (E.S.B.).

The bottom quarter is no less competitive, headlined by multiple All-Ireland champion **Damien Fleming** (Deerpark) who lifted the provincial Matchplay trophy at Listowel in 2019. **Declan Freeman** (Kilworth) who triumphed at Fermoy eight years ago is drawn against Tipperary Inter-County stalwart **Michael Fennell** (Lakeside). Others to watch are former Munster Juvenile Strokeplay winners **Owen Shannon** (Collins) and **Darren Goodall** (Tralee)

The early rounds of the Gents Senior and intermediate and the Ladies Senior will be played at Fermoy. Saturday's Ladies Intermediate and Junior and Gents Junior action will be at St. Stephen's while all semi-finals and finals will be contested at Fermoy on Sunday.

## Ladies Senior Preview

Fresh from her recent Cork Matchplay championship success, **Eleanor Walsh** (Fermoy) plays **Breda White** (Tipperary Hills) in a repeat of last year's senior ladies final. Eleanor won the 2011 Munster Matchplay championship at Fermoy and, over familiar territory, cheered on by the home support, will be bidding to reverse the result of the 2025 decider.

However Breda has claimed this title on ten previous occasions and will have definite aspirations to move on to eleven, having claimed the 2015 provincial Strokeplay trophy at this weekend's venue.

2023 champion **Sarah O'Neill** (Collins) must play her friend and rival **Ailish Sexton** (Fermoy) who was 2018 intermediate runner-up at Fermoy.

**Mary Murray** (Rocklodge) was the 2018 Senior ladies champion at Fermoy and will fancy her chances of a repeat, provided she can first dispose of the challenge from **Sarah Byrne** (Fermoy), who was 2023 Munster Strokeplay winner at Fermoy.

In a small select field, Lorraine Troy (Cunnigar) finds herself already in the semi-finals, in which she will face the survivor of the Mary Murray v. Sarah Byrne clash.

## Gents Intermediate Preview

**Marco Comerford** (Hilview) went all the way to the final green in last year's intermediate final at Douglas and would love to go one better in 2026. He will first have to prevail over former junior (2023) and intermediate (2024) semi-finalist **Korey Murphy** (Raffeen Creek).

Wily campaigner **Tony Blake** (Tralee) and Bishopstown's **Stephen Conlon** have both experienced success at provincial Inter-County and Scotch Foursomes levels.

2024 National Intermediate Matchplay runner-up **Ryan Sexton** (Fermoy) joins his Mum and Dad in the various fields at Fermoy. Ryan's first round opponent is 2023 Cork Matchplay runner-up **David Doyle** (St. Anne's).

Former National Juvenile Inter-County winner **Noel Coonan** (Lakeside) and 2006 main National Matchplay quarter-finalist **Keith Richards** (Fermoy) will both bring their considerable experience to bear on the 2026 Intermediate championship

A mouth-watering intermediate first round clash brings together 2025 Cork Junior Matchplay champion **Aidan Spence-Murphy** (Claycastle) and Raffeen Creek's **Bryan Murphy**, the recent leading Cork qualifier for the provincial Matchplay.

The winner of that one could soon be facing former National Inter-Club winner and two-time Cork Matchplay runner-up **Ian Leech** (St. Anne's) or **Pat Kirwan** (Douglas), the 1983 Munster Gents Senior Strokeplay champion!

2023 Munster Juvenile Matchplay champion **Nathan Cronin** (Deerpark) faces the practised performer **Trevor Ahern** (Collins), a regular podium finisher though the years, particularly in Foursomes and team events.

Other players to watch could be 2025 Cork Intermediate Matchplay runner-up **Colm O'Donnell** (Bishopstown), former two-time Cork Junior Matchplay champion Colin Hennessy (St. Anne's) and a couple of former Kerry Juvenile Inter-County stars, **Michael Cronin** (Deerpark) and **Michael Creagh** (Tralee).

## Gents Junior Preview

2024 Munster Junior Matchplay champion **Paul Walsh** (Collins) returns for a tilt at the 2026 trophy. Walsh will first have to overcome the challenge of **Niall O'Loughlin** (Deerpark).

The winner of that one will next be up against the winner of the 2013 provincial Intermediate Strokeplay runner-up **Aidan O'Rourke** (Cunnigar) versus **Paddy McGrath** (Larkspur Park) showdown.

First group out in the junior championship is the match-up of Lakewood's **Mark Spillane** and **Brendan O'Connor** (Ardnacrusha).

**Leon Doyle** (Douglas) is the grandson of the late great Joe Doyle RIP, a three-time All-Ireland Matchplay champion of the past. Leon starts against **Paul O'Toole** (Lakeside).

Looking to build on his recent runner-up performance in the Cork Matchplay championship, **Jordan Murphy** (Crosshaven) takes on Hillview's **Jerry Bergin**.

The last two Munster Junior Strokeplay runners-up are both in action, Ardnacrusha's **Eugene McNamara** (2024) versus **Ryan Long** (St. Anne's) and Claycastle's **Ian Murphy** (2025) pitted against **John Mulqueen** (Ardnacrusha), a former Clare Inter-County player.

**Shane Horgan** (St. Stephen's) will be bidding to make home course advantage count in the junior early rounds but faces a tough encounter with Claycastle's **Patrick Torpey**, who qualified for the final day of last year's National Strokeplay championship at St. Anne's.

Last match to the tee brings together 2019 Cork Matchplay champion **Colm O'Connor** (Bishopstown) and **Alan Brannigan** (Larkspur Park).

## Ladies Intermediate Preview

There is a couple of cracking preliminary round matches in Ladies Intermediate.

Winner of the National Ladies Intermediate Strokeplay championship and the equivalent graded championship at Over-55 level **Margaret Hennessy** (Riverdale) plays her predecessor as National Over-55s Intermediate grade Strokeplay champion **Paula Nolan** (E.S.B.)

2005 provincial Matchplay champion at senior level and 2024 Intermediate runner-up **Vera McCarthy** (Collins) faces 2022 and 2023 Munster Intermediate Matchplay runner-up **Elaine Quinn** (Lakeside).

Cork Matchplay runner-up and 2025 provincial Junior Strokeplay winner **Gillian Morrissey** (St. Anne's) is opposed by last year's Munster Intermediate Matchplay finalist **Lisa O'Connor** (Tralee). Lisa will bid for a second title having claimed this championship at Tralee three years ago.

Last year's junior runner-up **Megan Ahern** (Collins) now steps up to the intermediate grade in which she will feature in an all-Cork battle against recently-crowned County Matchplay champion **Siobhan Foy** (Rocklodge).

**Eileen McCarthy** (Deerpark) is a former two-time Munster Girls Matchplay champion and faces 2022 provincial Junior Strokeplay victor **Gemma Martin** (Hillview).

## Ladies Junior Preview

2023 champion and 2025 Munster Strokeplay runner-up **Catriona O'Connor** (Tralee) is first out in the junior championship. Catriona's opening round opponent is multiple Cork champion **Eileen Hanley** (The Ranges).

Following the recent Pitch and Putt southern boundary changes, **Michelle O'Connell** (Cunnigar) claimed the 2025 Cork Junior Matchplay championship. Michelle is challenged by Lakewood Juvenile Officer **Teresa Venables**.

2023 semi-finalist **Lesley Gilmore** (Bishopstown) faces 2019 runner-up **Veronica Anglim** (Hillview).

An all-Kerry encounter brings together Tralee's **Bernadette O'Regan** (the 2023 Munster Mixed Foursomes runner-up) and Bernadette's clubmate, the reigning National Junior Strokeplay champion **Charlotte Blake**.

**Georgina Harte** of St. Stephen's (third place finisher in the 2024 National Over-55s Junior Grade Strokeplay championship) awaits the outcome of a preliminary round contest between **Nuala McNamara**, the 2023 Strokeplay champion (at Fermoy) from Collins and Tipperary Inter-County player **Serena O'Neill** (Larkspur Park).

2022 Munster Junior Matchplay finalist **Angela Royer** (Bishopstown) has received a bye into the 2026 quarter-finals where she will face Bruff's **Margaret O'Donovan**, the 2019 Strokeplay champion.