

PITCH & PUTT IRELAND



National Matchplay Finals 2026

May 30th, 31st & June 1st

Intermediate Gents Official Venues

Bishopstown Pitch and Putt

Rocklodge Pitch and Putt

Championship Preview by John Manning

Gents Intermediate Preview

Darren O'Leary (St. Anne's) will return to Bishopstown with good memories of his 2022 Munster Matchplay championship win at the Murphy's Farm venue. Darren's first round opponent in this year's National Matchplay is Killineer's **Gerard Thornton** as the pair renew their rivalry from the 2023 National Intermediate Inter-County, won by Cork over Louth.

Another principal from that provincial Matchplay of four years ago is **Alan Keating** (St. Anne's) who met Darren O'Leary in that year's final. Keating is drawn in the final match out, against **Ciarán White**, 2025 Munster Scotch Foursomes winner.

White is the fourth of the four Bishopstown representatives in the field to take to the tee.

The first is early round host club Chairman **John O'Sullivan** who faces 2022 National Juvenile Strokeplay champion **A Jay Barrett** (Listowel).

Next is 2025 National Junior Inter-County winner **Stephen Conlon** who is up against 2025 National Juvenile Strokeplay champion **Jason Kelly** (Bagenalstown), himself a National Inter-County victor, with Carlow juveniles last term.

Donal Duggan (St. Anne's) will be hoping to make it to Rocklodge where he was runner-up to Ray Murphy in the 2013 National Strokeplay championship. Initially, he has to deal with 2023 Leinster Junior Strokeplay champion **Stephen Behan** (Killineer).

Ger Guerin (Listowel) reached the 2022 provincial Matchplay semi-finals at Bishopstown, experience he will hope to put to good use against **Danny Kilduff**, of the famous Lucan family, who was 2018 Dublin league runner-up with his club.

Yet another playing hoping to utilise past good vibes at Bishopstown is **Colin Hennessy** (St. Anne's) who reached the Munster Junior semi-finals at the early rounds course four years ago before claiming the title in 2023. Hennessy's opening round adversary is reigning Munster Intermediate Matchplay kingpin **Michael Cronin** (Deerpark).

The very first match in the intermediate brings together two men with extensive Inter-County success in their respective lockers, 2015 and 2016 National Inter-County Division B silver medalist **Billy Griffin** (Cill na Móna) and 2026 Leinster Matchplay runner-up **Joe McGrath Junior** (Erry), 2001 National Inter-County championship Division B silver medallist at Rocklodge.

The battle of the **Michaels, Lynch and O'Connell**, sees the serial qualifier for the national majors from Douglas lock horns with the 2013 Leinster Junior Matchplay runner-up from Tullamore.

2025 Meath Matchplay semi-finalist **Lorenzo Rinaudo** (Royal Meath) will dispute a second round slot with 2024 Leinster Scotch Foursomes session winner **Martin Flynn** (McDonagh).

A similar quest awaits 1975 Cork Juvenile Matchplay and Strokeplay champion **Bernard Moylan**, now playing out of Custume, and 2025 Ryston Intermediate Scratch Cup winner **Ben Phelan** (St. Bridget's).

The draw dictates that the **Ahern** brothers from Collins, **Trevor** and **Morty**, couldn't meet until the final. For that to be a possibility, the siblings must first survive a couple of all-Cork clashes, Trevor against 2025 Bishopstown Scratch Cup runner-up **John Fitzgerald** (Raffeen Creek) and Morty versus 2025 Cork Matchplay finalist **Colm O'Donnell** of the Saturday and Sunday host club.

Another all-Cork first round showdown sees two-time County League winner with St. Anne's, **Chris O'Brien** challenge 2018 County Matchplay runner-up **Mark Roche** (Collins).

2026 Leinster Scotch Foursomes winner and a man making his presence felt in recent Scratch Cups, **James McLoughlin** (Mellows), will be fancied to do well here. His first task will be to play Hillview's **Haydn Cashman**.

2011 Dublin Rumble winner **Derek Courage** (Ierne) opposes 2015 Cork Junior Matchplay champion **Mark Crean** (Douglas).

2024 National Scotch Foursomes Session winner **Alan Sutcliffe** (Hillview) and three-time Cork League winner with E.S.B. **Barry Cusack** will be in opposition as will 2026 Leinster Strokeplay bronze medalist **Paul County** (Lucan) and 2024 National Inter-Club winner **Ian Leech** (St. Anne's).

Former Cork Junior and Intermediate Matchplay champion **Bryan Murphy** (Raffeen Creek) is challenged by this year's Dublin Matchplay finalist **Stephen Finn** (Loughlinstown).

2025 Munster Strokeplay runner-up **Martin O'Sullivan** (St. Anne's) is another player to watch in the top half of the draw.

2025 National Junior Inter-County winner with Cork, **David O'Leary** (Lakewood) jousts with **Gavin Craig** (Prosperous), a qualifier for the second successive year.

In yet another skirmish involving two Leaside representatives, Collins man **Colin Hammond**, a member of Cork's 2024 Inter-County team plays 2023 Munster Strokeplay champion **Darren Temple** (St. Stephen's).

Tralee's **Michael Creagh** placed 3rd in the 2023 Munster Junior Strokeplay while **Alan Walsh** (Bagenalstown) was a 2022 Leinster Matchplay semi-finalist.

Reigning Leinster Junior Strokeplay champion and last year's National Junior Matchplay semi-finalist **Paul Core** (Bagenalstown) is sited at the bottom of the third quarter where he is joined by 2025 National Mixed Foursomes winner **Adrian Anglim** (Hillview).

2025 Leinster Inter-County championship winner with Kilkenny, **Owen Tubritt** (Ashgrove), takes on 2025 National Inter-Club winner **Aidan O'Sullivan** (Bruff).

Sean McCormack (Lakeside) will hope to build on his recent Munster Matchplay runner-up performance in his standoff with Ardnacrusha's **Cyril Bourke**.

2011 Cork Matchplay runner-up **Jamie O'Brien** (E.S.B.) will have his hands full with the ultra-experienced **Tony Blake** (Tralee), a serial high achiever in Foursomes and Inter-County events, in particular.

Cill na Móna's **Niall Seery** boasts one win and two second places in the National Inter-County Division B but 2024 Munster titleholder **Dylan Moroney** (Cunnigar) has some impressive recent form, including a 2025 national Inter-Club silver medal and 5th place in last year's National Strokeplay championship.