

PITCH & PUTT IRELAND



National Matchplay Finals 2026

May 30th, 31st & June 1st

Junior Gents Official Venues

Bishopstown Pitch and Putt

Rocklodge Pitch and Putt

Championship Preview by John Manning

Gents Junior Preview

Gerry O'Connor won the newly-restored National Junior Matchplay championship two years ago and the Larkspur Park man looks to regain that title as he plays the opening match of the 2026 championship against 2023 Loughlinstown Scratch Cup winner **John Boyle** (Loughlinstown) who has been runner-up in this season's Meath Masters and Royal Meath Scratch Cup.

The survivor of that duel will next tackle whoever emerges victorious from the **Kieran Kenneally** (Claycastle) versus **Nicholas O'Toole** (Larkspur Park) skirmish. Kieran claimed Best Nett at Cork's 2025 Over-55 Strokeplay championship while Nicholas was 2025 Munster Juvenile Strokeplay runner-up.

Paul Walsh (Collins) won the Munster Matchplay in 2024, the year he reached the National Matchplay quarter-finals. Here, Walsh is confronted by Bagenalstown's **Patrick O'Neill**, who finished third in National Junior B Strokeplay championship of 2024, a season in which he was also Leinster Junior B Strokeplay runner-up.

The passage of former Clare Inter-County player **John Mulqueen** (Ardnacrusha) is blocked by reigning Offaly County Matchplay champion **Robert Minnock** (Erry).

2025 Munster Scotch Foursomes winner **Paul Boreham** has qualified to contest the early rounds of the championship on familiar territory. He plays fellow Corkman **Patrick Torpey** (Claycastle), a final day qualifier in last year's National Strokeplay championship.

Claycastle have no fewer than six hopefuls in the field and **Peter Roche** of the Youghal club is paired with Carlow Inter-County team member and proficient Scratch Cup performer **John Kelly** (Bagenalstown).

Completing the top half of the draw are 2024 National Junior B Strokeplay runner-up **Brian Andrews** (Ardnacrusha) and Deerpark's **Paddy Murphy**, a consistent supporter of and prize winner in Opens across Kerry and Cork.

Brimming with confidence after his impressive Munster Matchplay success, **Aidan O'Rourke** (Cunnigar) lines-up alongside Claycastle's **Michael Hayes**.

The winner of that encounter is drawn to meet either 2021 Johnny Shoer Junior Scratch Cup runner-up **Anthony Harding** (Tipperary Hills) or 2024 Leinster Inter-County runner-up (with Carlow) **Kenneth Hickey** (Bagenalstown).

2024 National Over-55 Junior B grade Strokeplay champion **John Long** (Claycastle) will fancy his chances of making the semi-finals from the bottom quarter of the draw.

Long will need to cope with strong opposition from the likes of **Gary O'Neill** (Riverdale), who has qualified for the second successive year, **George Walsh** (Cork County League runner-up with Claycastle in 2026), Ryston's **Craig Mallinson**, a Cork native who collected the Carrolls Club Tournament with a previous affiliation (Garrettstown) in 1995 and **John Kavanagh** (Ardnacrusha), a National Junior Strokeplay qualifier in 2021.