



VONNIE'S GOLDEN RULE

County Longford stalwart and rules expert on her role as ILGU President

Irish Independent

Thursday 9 February 2017

Tee to Green

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CITY SLICKER

How picturesque Dublin club Stackstown has retained its family feel



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T2G BRIEFS

GUI well covered with new Under Armour clothing deal

EYEBROWS were raised in 2015 when Irish amateur international Paul Dunne appeared wearing an Under Armour cap and clothing in the Open Championship at St Andrews.

According to those close to the now European Tour professional, he simply loved the brand, and a family friend in the apparel business had provided some new clothing for what turned out to be a career-changing week at the Home of Golf.

Fast forward less than two years and the Golfing Union of Ireland has announced an "exclusive, technical partnership" with the American apparel and footwear brand.

"From March, the GUI's coveted green shirts will be the only team colours to carry the Under Armour logo on the international stage," the GUI announced in a press release this week.

"Playing at home and abroad this

season, Ireland's elite will wear Under Armour's leading product innovations from head-to-toe. These include golf's first full-stretch GORE-TEX PacLite Rainwear and Under Armour's latest footwear release, the Spleth One."

The deal is a mesalve help to the GUI, which was previously sponsored by TaylorMade-Adidas.

"The GUI sends more than 30 squads and teams to compete overseas annually," said the GUI's CEO, Pat Finn. "We look forward to working with Under Armour to ensure that our players are optimally prepared for success when representing Ireland."

Kevin Ross, General Manager of Global Golf for Under Armour, revealed the company's intentions, adding: "Ireland has a rich history of golf talent and we share the GUI's excitement at the current crop of players making their moves towards the professional ranks."

WIN FULL UNDER ARMOUR KIT AND GUI COACHING SESSION

Win a full Under Armour kit and a GUI coaching session. The kit includes a green polo shirt, shorts, socks, and shoes. The coaching session is a one-on-one session with a GUI coach.



Warrenpoint pair to defend Dublin Scratch Foursomes

WARRENPOINT'S Colm Campbell (pictured) and Ryan Gribben will be back at Grange on April 9 to defend their title in the popular Dublin Scratch Foursomes.

The Co. Down club will be sending several pairs to the Rathfriland club as they prepare to defend their All Ireland ADG Barton Shield title this season.

The Island is also sending a strong representation to an event that provides team managers with the perfect environment to test out their Barton Shield pairings on Grange's demanding par-71 Centenary Course just a few days before the first major of the year — the West of Ireland Championship.

Grange has big plans for the 38-hole event

this year and aims to have 50 pairs going off in shotgun starts at 8.30am and 1.30pm.

Revived in 2010, past winners of this prestigious event include former Walker Cup player Gary Hurlley, who was victorious with both Co Sligo's Barry Anderson and Esker Hills' Alan Lowry.

The lowest combined handicaps will qualify to tee it up and entries, which costs €80 per pair, can be made by phone to Grange Golf Club at 01 4832889, ext 8.

GUI numbers and exact handicaps are required as no booking can be made without this information. Email

administration@grangegolfclub.ie for more details.



THE rising road brought back memories of my far-flung days as a Boy Scout, trudging up to Larch Hill to camp and dream and stare out at the flickering lights of Dublin city down below.

Little did we know back then that a few hundred feet below us, an army of volunteers that included a future three-time Major winner, was creating its own dream by shaping a golf course from poor, agricultural grazing land.

They would call it Stackstown. Some 140 acres of rubble, rocks and stones had to be cleared from the mountainous site at the foot of Kilmeshogue, using little more than hand tools and enthusiasm.

There was no machinery and the greens and fairways were fashioned by the manual labour of men and boys, such as Cork-born Garda Paddy Harrington and his five sons.

"When I was five," Pádraig recalled in his book *Journey To The Open*, "there must have been fifty or more people out there. We were in wellies and we were just told to go out there and tramp on the greens."

"My brothers were out there too, but they were older and had to pick up stones from the ninth and eighteenth fairways on their hands and knees. I was the privileged one."

While it is now a members club — 1,000 strong — less than 50 of them are current, serving members of the Garda Síochána, who were the original creators of this magnificent club in the foothills of the Dublin mountains on the southside of the capital.

Back in the early 1970s, the then Garda Commissioner, Edmund Gervy, acquired acreage on some of the most rugged land imaginable with the intention of building a sports complex for the exclusive use of an Garda Síochána.

In the end, wiser counsel prevailed and a group of pioneers that included Paddy Harrington, Paddy Power, Denis Devine, Jim Mahony, Jim McGuane, Dan Buggy, Patsy O'Donnell and others, persuaded the powers that be that what was needed was a golf course.

By 1978 Stackstown was affiliated to the GUI and by the early 1980s, its rudimentary 18-hole course would become Pádraig's playground and the laboratory where he would create the game that brought Ireland its first Major win for 60 years.

"Pádraig and his brothers Tadgh and Colum would be with us," Paddy Harrington recalled shortly before he passed away in 2005.

"They loved it there, chasing rabbits, watching deer and goats and hitting golf balls on the temporary nine holes. It was a magical place for youngsters, especially during the summer holidays."

That pioneering spirit is still alive and well at Stackstown and when I turn up early on a cold February morning to reacquaint myself with the club, it was no surprise to see the club captain Frank McGrath, screwdriver in hand, helping with a little maintenance work.

The course, naturally, is now pristine and the views, even on a miserable day, remain as breathtaking as ever.

"The best view is from the 11th green," said Lady Captain Mary Grogan, who went to the trouble of coming up to the club with a handful of her colleagues to show me around.

"On a clear day, you can see from Baldonnel right across to the Cooley Mountains and the Mourne. It's just magnificent."

HOME AND AWAY PLACES TO PLAY



T2G CLUB FACTFILE

Stackstown Golf Club
 18-hole, par 71
 1978
 140 acres
 Pádraig Harrington

As the vice-captain Michael Kennedy explained, there is no shortage of natural beauty at Stackstown Golf Club, where a trip around the 20-hole course is likely to end up in a casual meeting with some deer, the recently discovered red squirrel population or the pheasants bred by club stalwart Noel Burke and his colleague Gerry Mullins.

The course itself has matured beautifully over the years, with Honorary Greens Officer Roger Clancy and course superintendent Ed Mulligan working in tandem to make sure the fairways are top dressed and the greens immaculate.

With some of the steeper walkways between tees and greens now vastly improved, plans are in place to continue to rebuild more tees and to redesign some greens so that the club remains as attractive to its members and visitors as ever.

With the help of the Confederation of Golf in Ireland and a lot of voluntary work from the members, Stackstown came through the economic downturn and is now embarking on a brave new era.

"When the recession hit, we had to reduce our costs to remain in line with our income," said Honorary Treasurer Brendan King, explaining that the club's annual income plunged from €1.2m to just €700,000.

Like many other Irish clubs, they made cuts across the board, with the secretary manager's duties reassigned to an administrator and volunteers.

Fast forward seven years and the decline in income has now been reversed and, with the help of the CGI, plans are in place for the next phase of Stackstown's development.

"We had an increase in subscription income in 2015 due to macro-economic things, but also due to the work of the Development Committee, coming up with some initiatives on membership, looking at the ageing membership and recruiting younger members," Brendan explained.

"So we then drew up a business plan in January 2016 following a hugely well-attended members meeting. We called for volunteers and got a great response to that."

"We did this in conjunction with

AIG

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VALUES

There's a warm welcome and amazing views at the Dublin club that produced one of our top players. By **Brian Keogh**



The Stackstown club enjoys stunning views over Dublin and was where Pádraig Harrington (below) learned to play the game.

CGI's Gordon Campbell and split up into different areas to look at finance, governance, the course, membership development and marketing, and that plan was finalised in September last year and ratified by the members.

"Our goal is simply to be best in class in terms of structures within the club and contracts with our employees and suppliers. We are also in the midst of a review of our constitution, and from the financial viewpoint, our objective is to have a sustainable business model going forward."

"Communications, marketing and membership retention are three hugely important areas for us, and we have undertaken members survey to see what way members are thinking and the reasons people might choose to give up their membership."

"We understand that much of the time, the reason people give up their membership of golf clubs is time-poorness rather than economic factors. So that's something we have to look at."

Vice-captain Michael Kennerly is thrilled by the turnaround in the club's fortunes and believes the gradual influx of young members has given the club a new lease of life.

It's a trend that's been noticed by Trustee Dan Buggy, one of the founder members, and Lady President Lis Ronaldson.

But none of what has been achieved would have been possible without that great Stackstown pioneering spirit that helped create the club in the first place.

"Many more members are now doing something for the club in a

voluntary capacity and that brings a sense of ownership and pride in Stackstown," Lady Captain Mary Grogan said.

"Last year, we introduced the 'Get Into Golf' programme, and we recruited 33 women and retained 27 of them this year. We start again on 11 April and we already have 45 ladies on a waiting list."

"It has been fantastic, and those ladies have bought into the ethos of the club and brought a great freshness because they have never been involved with a golf club before."

Club professional Michael Kavanagh and his assistant, Anthony Hanlon, have embraced the Get Into Golf programme and while there are only 25 girls in membership, the club has been selected by the CGI for their Junior programmes, which can only help.

"Socially it is brilliant," said Lady President Lis Ronaldson. "Tuesday is ladies day and while we only have 206 lady members, not including the Get Into Golf group, we will always have at least 50 or 60 remaining afterwards for the prize-giving. The atmosphere is always wonderful."

The club's aim is to increase its quota of ladies by 10pc each year and having won the Leinster Junior Fourtimes title last year, they have high hopes of adding to their haul of pennants.

The club also reached the Leinster semi-finals of the new All-Ireland Fourball and it can always rely on its most famous member to do his bit.

Pádraig Harrington is a huge club supporter, regularly turning up for the captains' drive-in.

Two years ago, he hosted a Har-



rington Day that raised more than €20,000 for the club, returning in the evening for the prize-giving and a two-hour Q&A session with the members and their guests.

He even brought pal Phil Mickelson up to the club for an unannounced visit that year, showing the five-time Major winner where he learned the game as well as the magnificent 'Harrington Room' — an exhibition of the Dubliner's memorabilia that's open to the public.

While the club has always been open to all, it was a Garda-run enterprise until a few years ago. Now, following a change to the constitution, all the former seven-day members

are now full members and can serve on the Management Committee.

Membership is also growing year-on-year, with full members now paying an annual subscription of €1,244.

Other membership categories include six-day (€1,054), five-day (€819) and the hugely successful Young Adult categories, split into those aged 26-30 (€650) and those 20-25 (€350).

With Juniors (11-18 years) paying €120 and boys and girls from eight to 10 charged just €80, the club is thriving at all levels.

No doubt Paddy Harrington would be proud of what has been achieved over the past 40 years.

"There is no comparison between what is here now and what we started with back then," founder member Dan Buggy said with a wide grin.

"There is no one on earth who would have bought this place for a golf course back then. But a lot of us were naive, and we felt we could have a go at it and get it right."

T3G BRIEF

GUI adopts ball-moving Local Rule

THE Golfing Union of Ireland has adopted the new Local Rule eliminating the penalty for any accidental movement of a ball or ball-marker on the putting green for all of its championships and tournaments.

Following the announcement by The R&A and USGA last December, the GUI also strongly recommends that all affiliated clubs adopt this as a Local Rule for their club competitions.

Rule 18-2 provides for a one-stroke penalty if a player causes his ball in play to move unless certain exceptions apply.

Decision 18-2/0.5 explains that when it is uncertain what caused a ball to move, all relevant information must be considered and the weight of the evidence must be evaluated.

If it is more likely than not that the player caused the ball to move, the player incurs a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2 and the ball must be replaced. Otherwise, the player incurs no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies unless some other Rule applies (e.g. Rule 18-1).

Starting on January 1 last, a committee may adopt a Local Rule that modifies Rule 18-2 by providing that there is no penalty if a player accidentally causes his ball on the putting green to move.

For consistency, this Local Rule also modifies Rule 18-3 to eliminate the similar penalty in matchplay when an opponent accidentally causes the player's ball on the putting green to move.

This Local Rule also modifies Rule 20-1 by providing that there is no penalty if a player, his partner, his opponent, or any of their caddies or equipment accidentally causes the player's ball-marker on the putting green to move.

The moved ball or ball-marker must be replaced as provided in Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1.

This Local Rule applies only when the player's ball or ball-marker lies on the putting green and any movement is accidental.

If it is determined that a player's ball on the putting green was moved as a result of wind, water or some other natural cause such as the effects of gravity, the ball must be played as it lies from its new location. A ball-marker moved in such circumstances is replaced.

Exclusive Offer for Tee to Green readers

Enjoy 2 green fees with a buggy for just €39 (normally €75 midweek and €85 at weekends) at Stackstown Golf Club, which is set amidst the Dublin mountains. With its unique wildlife and panoramic views of Dublin Bay and City, Stackstown has a uniqueness of its own.



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