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EcoBunker Helps Build Dumbarnie Links Global Reputation



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"THERE SHOULD BE NO BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION, YET IT APPEARS RACISM IS STILL REARING ITS UGLY HEAD"

FAIR COMMENT

A few decades ago, golf in the UK was regarded as an elitist sport, played by white middle-class men who commuted during the week and held court at the clubhouse bar at the weekends.

It took a lot of effort from the authorities – and the passing of many a year – for that perception to be changed.

There should be no barriers to participation, yet it appears racism is still rearing its ugly head. The news that former England footballer Kieron Dyer had resigned from his club, Hintlesham GC, near Ipswich, did not come as a surprise to me – it's the club at which I'm a member. Everybody was talking about it because the reason behind his departure was that he was allegedly the subject of racial slurs.

There is no room for racism in golf, or in wider society. Both golf clubs and their members can ensure this is the case. If allegations are proved the members concerned should be dismissed immediately. If necessary, clubs' constitutions should be rewritten to accommodate such a clause.

Financial considerations should not come into the decision – for every member golf clubs consequently dismiss they'll pick up a couple more who can join safe in the knowledge that race, colour or creed will not prevent them from enjoying their sport.

Members, too, have an obligation to uphold the standards of your club, so if you witness racism in your club, do the right thing and report it. **END**



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

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FEATURING

AUTUMN 2020



MICHAEL BRAIDWOOD

EDUCATION CITY

"When we reopened we doubled the number of our memberships in the space of a couple of months. Okay, we're a new facility and we've only been open for 18 months, but as regard volume of rounds, July has been our busiest, which is great."

18



ANNA DARNELL

THE GROVE

"In line with many venues, we have seen some larger corporate bookings move to later in the season, but the leisure business has been robust, bouncing back quite quickly, and this is hugely encouraging for the future."

24



DAVID MACLAREN

JCB GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

"I decided at that stage, before I exhausted myself and completely keeled over, [that] it was time to just step back. And there were some internal and personal politics as well, as there always are in these situations."

28



DAVID SCOTT

DUMBARNIE LINKS

"It didn't really excite me, seeing all these fancy jets, because I'm not really into jets, but I love golf, and I love talking to golfers. So, when the opportunity like this came up, on a brand-new golf course, there wasn't a question in my mind."

36



JAMES IBBETSON

FARLEIGH

"I really bought into Marc and, while the club was a big reason for making the move, it was more Marc. I like him; I like his vision; I liked the way and the direction he wanted to take the club in. And I thought I could definitely help with that."

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"WE THANK CLIVE CLARK AND THE DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM FOR THEIR VISION AND THE TRUST THEY HAVE PLACED IN ECOBUNKER"



COVER STORY

ECOBUNKER.CO.UK



The brainchild of former Ryder Cup player, and BBC golf commentator, Clive Clark, Dumbarnie Links opened for play in May 2020 after two-years of construction.

Clark, a California based golf course architect for the past 20 years and part of the US consortium funding the project has realised a lifetime ambition to design and build a true, traditional links in his Scottish homeland.

The links comprise a full array of design features that you would expect to see along the Scottish coast and features 53 menacing revetted pot bunkers which is where the developer and contractor, Landscapes Unlimited, decided to make a very slight break from tradition.

After first seeing the EcoBunker revetting system on several projects in the USA, notably Seclusion, The Medalist, Greenbrier and various TPC venues, the Dumbarnie Development team were fully aware of the beautiful natural aesthetics and the fact that golfers are simply unaware of the synthetic nature of the bunker walls.

After preliminary discussions with Clark, and a meeting with EcoBunker at GIS 2018 in San Antonio, a cost benefit study was undertaken, comparing the performance of EcoBunker's system, with all other options including the traditional natural sod construction method.

Richard Allen, CEO of EcoBunker was able to provide proof of major maintenance savings at clubs that had already installed

EcoBunker and the unrivalled engineered resilience of the product, which has survived the most severe hurricanes with no damage whatsoever. In April 2018, Landscapes Unlimited commissioned EcoBunker as a sub-contractor to build all 53 bunkers on the golf course.

EcoBunker provided a full-time site based six-man team, led by project manager, Llewellyn Matthews – a former Walker Cup golfer, qualified greenkeeper and one of the world's most experienced golf bunker construction specialists.

Supporting Matthews were a highly-skilled team, featuring Patrick Hothersall, a veteran of New South Wales GC, Pine Valley (USA) and Ellerston (Australia) as the deputy project manager and other local staff drawn from Panmure and Bruntsfield Links.

EcoBunker were responsible for all the bunker construction tasks throughout the two-year build process, and Allen is delighted with the installation at Dumbarnie Links.

"Some of the bunkers already look as if they have been in place on the Fife coastline for 100 years or more," he said proudly. "Building a brand-new genuine links, at the home of golf has to be a once in a lifetime opportunity for all those involved.

"We thank Clive Clark and the development consortium for their vision and the trust they have placed in EcoBunker. Their wise investment will further prove that this product has a place at even the most traditionally minded golf clubs." **END**

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"A RECENT TRAWL THROUGH MY 1,700 OR SO LINKEDIN CONNECTIONS SHOWED ME A LOT OF THOSE I KNOW FROM GOLF ARE NOW OUT OF WORK, PRIMARILY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19"



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ON THE FRINGE

I am a man of limited skills, and, certainly, soothsaying in not one of them. But I am inclined to think that the effects of COVID-19 may be with us for much longer than just 2020.

Very few sectors have been left untouched – and, as we all know, to our own cost, golf was hit hard and quickly at the outset. And despite the unexpected, but more than welcome increase in golf participation, not to mention the surge in new members joining golf clubs across Europe, the ripples of the initial rock in our particular waters are still being felt on the periphery.

I've been working in, and writing about, golf since this magazine launched back in 1997. In that time I've met many genuine individuals who are very competent in their roles, whether that's in agronomy or – like yours truly – in the communications side of the industry. Sadly, a recent trawl through my 1,700 or so LinkedIn connections showed me a lot of those I know from golf are now out of work, primarily as a consequence of the effects of COVID-19.

Many of them worked in sectors which leaned heavily on golf and golfers: PR, travel and hospitality, for example. It's very disheartening to see so many good people having to suddenly enter a job market, which, for a lot of them, will have changed considerably since the last time they had to look for a position. Yet, if it's disheartening for me to see it, I know it's ten times worse for them to live it. I've been in a similar position myself and I know it can put a strain on both one's mental health and close relationships.

Currently, there will be a surfeit of people with similar skill-sets going for, maybe, one or two jobs. And a CV which would almost certainly have guaranteed an interview a year ago may not warrant a second glance in the next few months. But mortgages have to be paid; kids still need to be fed.

It is demoralising to trawl job sites day after day, applying for jobs for which one knows one is more than qualified – often on a much smaller salary – only to not even make a short list and not even receive an acknowledgement. At the moment it's very much a buyer's market, but don't lose heart.

If you're an employer in the golf industry, please help support these people – even if you can't offer them a job or an interview please contact them to acknowledge their application. If you're a golf club manager, don't forget that you still need to promote and market your club, and ensure that you look after your new and long-standing members.

If you are one of the thousands who have been thrust into the job market don't suffer in silence. Talk to loved ones or a professional if you're suffering. Please don't let the consequences of COVID-19 damage your mental health... if you're hurting, don't keep quiet. **END**

NEWS IN BRIEF

GOLFMANAGEMENT.EU.COM/NEWS



THE R&A APPOINTS PHIL ANDERTON AS CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

The R&A has appointed Phil Anderton as chief development officer, who brings a wealth of experience and business acumen to the executive management team role having held a number of senior positions in sport. Following Duncan Weir's recent retirement after 35 years with The R&A, Anderton will take on Weir's strategic and operational responsibilities for Golf Development and Amateur Championships. He will also assume responsibility for Sustainability, the British Golf Museum and for The R&A's international offices in Singapore and Argentina.

SEARCH 'PHIL ANDERTON' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



HUXLEY GOLF PUTS TRUST IN EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP

Huxley Golf, the well-known specialist supplier and installer of all-weather surfaces for golf, has announced that it is now owned by an Employee Ownership Trust, following the Huxley family's decision to provide for the long-term future of the business. The Huxley family has provided funding for the Employee Ownership Trust to purchase 100 per cent of the shares of Huxley (UK) Ltd, which it holds on behalf of employees. The employees continue to run the company and will benefit from sharing the company's profits.

SEARCH 'HUXLEY GOLF' ONLINE
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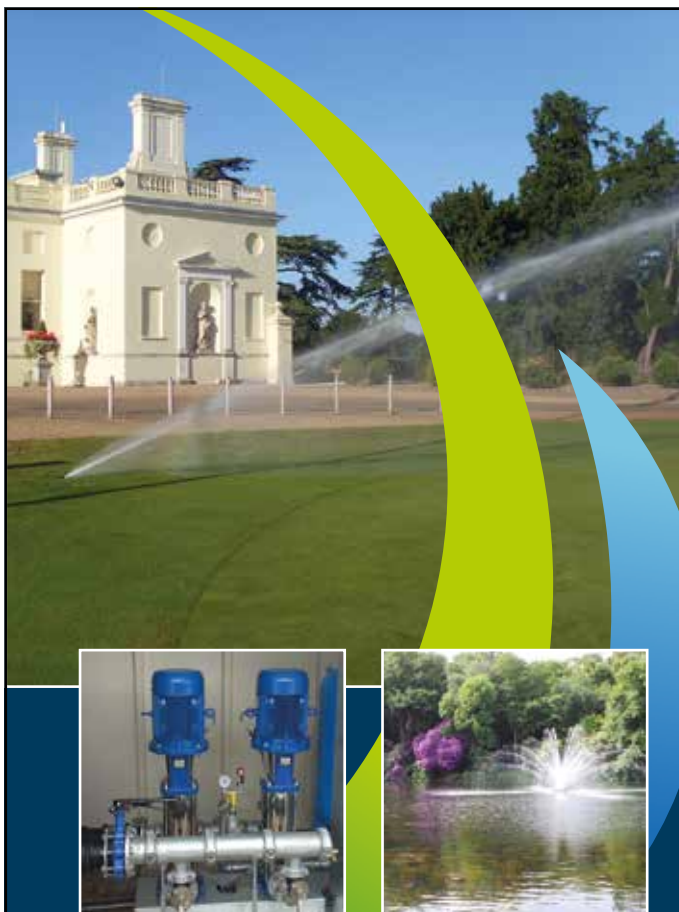
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LA RESERVA CLUB LAUNCHES PRIVATE JET SERVICE AS PROPERTY INTEREST SOARS

La Reserva Club has launched a private jet concierge service to provide prospective residential buyers covid-19 safe access to view and experience the Sotogrande lifestyle first-hand. The club, a private gated community in the heart of Sotogrande, is experiencing a rise in demand from across Europe for its properties since the start of the coronavirus outbreak. To ease comfort of travel, the club is offering a bespoke package to enable safe travel – as well as to showcase all that the Sotogrande lifestyle has to offer.

SEARCH 'LA RESERVA' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



RAIN BIRD EUROPE APPOINTS LUKAS BÖTTCHER AS GOLF SALES SPECIALIST

Lukas Böttcher has been appointed by Rain Bird Europe as golf sales specialist for Germany and Switzerland. Having spent all his career in greenkeeping and golf course management working at golf courses throughout Europe, Böttcher joins the company to strengthen the team in Germany. In his previous role as head greenkeeper, he managed strict water restrictions and focused on water conservation during multiple drought-affected seasons.

SEARCH 'RAIN BIRD' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



VERDURA RESORT TO UNVEIL NEW-LOOK COURSE IN SUMMER 2021

Excitement is building after Verdura Resort revealed that it is set to reopen its second 18-hole championship course next summer following a major renovation programme. World-renowned golf architect Kyle Phillips returned to Sicily last year to start work on improving his original design after a freak flood damaged a number of the championship layout's holes along the coastline at the end of 2018. Having completed all the design and construction work last autumn and winter, reseeding of the fairways, greens, tees and rough began at Verdura this summer.

SEARCH 'VERDURA' ONLINE

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BERNHARD COMPANY PUT ON HOLD ANNUAL BIGGA DELEGATION

Seen as one of the best educational opportunities for green-keepers, Bernhard Company is disappointed to announce that the recruitment for the BIGGA delegation has been postponed. Following the announcement from BIGGA and GCSAA that BTME and GIS will not be taking place in 2021 due to the current health concern, it comes to no surprise that they will be unable to go ahead with the BIGGA delegation. The team at Bernhard is still very keen to promote education and to encourage greenkeepers to think about ways to enhance their careers.

SEARCH 'BERNHARD' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



CROWN GOLF AGREES TO SLIP! SLAP! SWING! THIS SUMMER

Crown Golf has today announced that it will be lending its support to Slip! Slap! Swing! – a sun protection campaign for golf, tackling the issue of skin cancer in the sport. With a new report published this week, revealing that rates of melanoma have more than doubled in the UK in the last 30 years, this could not have been better timed. Crown Golf will have all eight of their clubs signed-up to become Sun Protection Accredited, a scheme which was launched Melanoma Fund this year.

SEARCH 'MELANOMA FUND' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

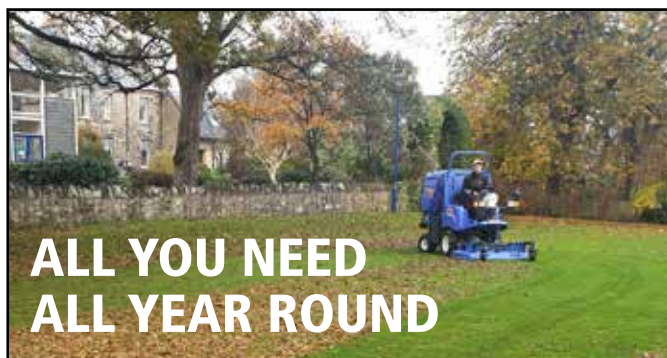


AL MOUJ GOLF ACHIEVES ANOTHER MAJOR SUSTAINABILITY MILESTONE

Al Mouj Golf, regarded by many as one of the Middle East's finest golf courses, is set to further its sustainability credentials by announcing that it has successfully retained its GEO Certified distinction – a marque dedicated to recognising credible leadership in sustainability and golf. Commenting on this achievement was Mr. Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat said: "Al Mouj Golf was first certified in 2017 and this continues to be an important partnership for Al Mouj Golf. I am incredibly proud of the team for successfully earning our recertification.

SEARCH 'AL MOUJ' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



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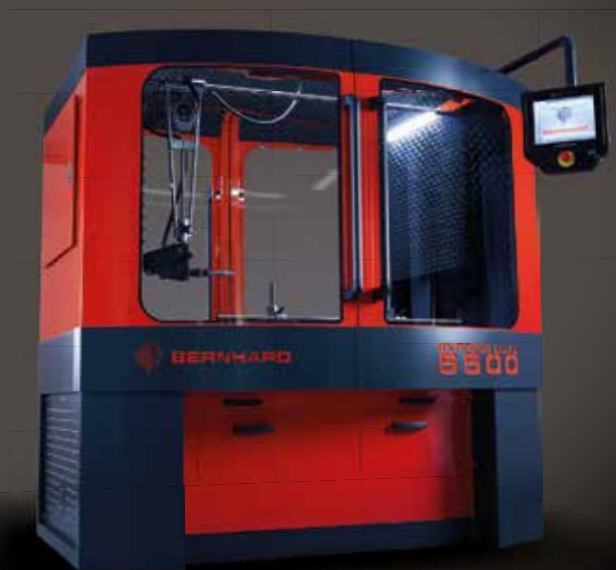


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AUTUMN GOLF IN MADEIRA IS BLOOMING GOOD FUN DESPITE TESTING TIMES

Golf is blooming in Madeira this autumn with the Covid-19 pandemic offering players the unexpected opportunity to indulge in the world-famous culture and history of the island. Travelling golfers can combine golf on three outstanding 18-hole courses with the added bonus of experiencing some of Madeira's most celebrated annual events until the end of September, including its globally-renowned Flower Festival and Wine Festival. Traditionally held each May and centred around the island's capital of Funchal, the 2020 Flower Festival had to be postponed and rearranged earlier this year following the outbreak of coronavirus.

SEARCH 'MADEIRA' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

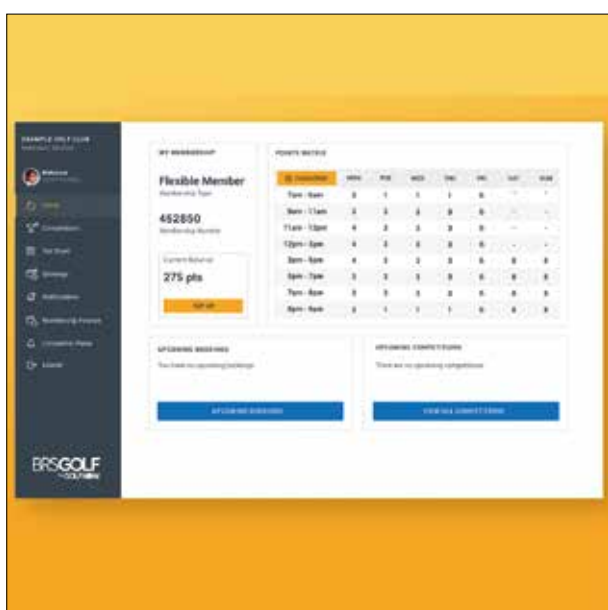


GOLF GENIUS AGREES MULTI-YEAR DEAL WITH ENGLAND GOLF

Golf Genius Software, one of the world's leading suppliers of tournament management solutions, has agreed a multi-year deal to supply England Golf with tournament management software for its calendar of championship events. The new relationship is Golf Genius' first with the governing body and comes soon after the software company was named as CONGU verified to provide handicap and competition products and services to all associated clubs under the new World Handicap System (WHS).

SEARCH 'GOLF GENIUS' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



BRS GOLF LAUNCHES NEW FLEXIBLE MEMBERSHIP SOLUTION

Flexible Memberships, the latest innovation from BRS GOLF by GOLFNOW, allows golf clubs to offer a flexible approach to membership for modern golfers with busy lives and financial and family commitments. In recent years the industry has seen demand for flexible membership grow, and – particularly in the current climate – BRS GOLF wants to help golf clubs cater to this audience by offering its new Flexible Memberships software to its customers for free.

SEARCH 'BRS GOLF' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

MICHAEL BRAIDWOOD

GENERAL MANAGER, EDUCATION CITY



A thirty-year journey towards the exalted status of PGA Master Professional took Michael Braidwood from his native Scotland to as far away as Bahrain, Russia and Qatar – but ended when he could barely take a step at all.

It was the lockdown imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that prompted the general manager at Education City Golf Club, in Doha, Qatar, to continue the process having attained Advanced Fellow Status with the PGA eight years ago.

"It's quite a long process of gathering all the evidence and documentation, so I suppose that's one good thing that came out of COVID, it gave me time to do that, update my submissions and things like that," he said. "It was nice to get it through."

"I first applied back in 2012 and got awarded Advanced Fellow status. So I kind of said to myself, I'll leave it a few more years and do a few more things and add some further strings to my bow and reapply round about now."

"That was really my plan, and that's what I did and all the evidence I'd submitted of all the different things I'd done in the industry, although it was through people management as well as club management, obviously added up in the eyes of the panel, so they awarded me a Master Professional."

His current position is a long way, both metaphorically as well as geographically, from his first job in professional golf, as assistant to Kevin Stables at Montrose Golf Links back in 1990. But he credits his first boss with having helped him on a path that would lead him into golf management.

"I had dabbled in a pro shop one summer a couple of years before that, but then decided I wanted to play a bit more and I got a real job in a bank for a while, and I hated it, so it lured me back into golf," recalled Braidwood.

"It was great to work for Kevin, who was a really superb player, one of the best players on the domestic circuit in Scotland. He was also involved on PGA committees and things like that, so I learned a lot from him, and because he played a lot and travelled a lot he trusted me with running the shop and the business, which gave me probably more experience than other assistant pros would get."

"Again, because of his playing commitments he didn't teach too much so I got to teach a lot. That gave me really good grounding and I got exposed to a lot in a short period of time working with Kevin. He's a great guy and still a really good friend, and it was a positive start to my career."

It was such an impressive grounding that Braidwood's next career move took him to one of Scotland's most prestigious golfing venues, Gleneagles, where he played a big part in establishing a new golfing academy, one of the first of its kind back in the mid-1990s.

Braidwood explains: "The hotel had taken the golf shop in-house and they decided to really try to leverage the lessons side of the business for hotel guests, corporate groups and such like, so I joined under the new head professional Greg Schofield with the responsibility to set up the new golf academy, so again that was tremendous experience."





"THE RUSSIAN STYLE, WHICH IS ALMOST BLAME AND PUNISHMENT, DOESN'T GO DOWN WITH MY ETHOS OF NURTURING TALENT AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE"

"They were probably among the first in the country to use video technology and a lot of teaching aids and such like, and the key thing at Gleneagles was we weren't afraid to charge, so we were charging top dollar for a high-quality experience for the guests. I learned a huge amount there again in a short space of time.

"The other opportunity was to learn about some of the operations within the hotel, so I was forever volunteering to cross-train or do some different things in different departments just to gain a bigger understanding of how the hospitality industry works."

He says at the time he was "hell-bent on being the next David Leadbetter", but bosses at Gleneagles had spotted his flair for management and he undertook a project in Bahrain at one of their facilities, the Royal Golf Club, where he assisted in the development of Bahrain's first 18-hole championship standard golf course and golf club.

He was off in a new direction whose route saw him pass through Moscow while working as operations director for Braemar Golf, a post that had allowed he and wife Judy to return to Scotland so that children Ben and Hannah could go to secondary school in Scotland.

"Braemar Golf had offices in St Andrews, which is close to where I grew up, and so it worked really well," said Braidwood, who later volunteered to pack his bags and head east for six months as Braemar's interim general manager in Russia after a would-be recruit changed his mind.

"Russia was great and I really enjoyed it. I tried really hard to learn Russian and I was reasonably successful at it, but if you're going to work in a foreign country where English is not the main business language – the Middle East is easy because everyone speaks English here – but it's very hard to be an effective manager if you're having to do it through a translator.

"It's very challenging and I also find the Russian style, which is almost blame and

punishment, doesn't go down with my ethos of nurturing talent and developing people, so I kind of said, 'Look, my values don't align with the company I'm working for here and I'm not as effective as I should be because I don't speak Russian' so that helped my decision.

"But I found it a fascinating country, I found it really exciting. Russia probably doesn't sit on many people's golfing bucket lists, but it should because there are some great golf courses there."

He is about to start his fourth year at Education City Golf Club and is both proud at the progress being made and encouraged at the response from the Qatari populace to the club's aim of providing world-class facilities that will enable the beginner to graduate to playing on a championship course via intermediary steps at their academy and on their six-hole and par-3 courses.

"We're starting, slowly but surely, to get more Qataris into the sport," he added. "We're doing well with getting kids and more Qatari people playing. So far, so good. It's going in the right direction.

"COVID-19 was like a sledgehammer hitting us. But because of travel restrictions in and out of the country here, people aren't going on their usual holidays, and we've never been busier," he said.

"When we reopened we doubled the number of our memberships in the space of a couple of months. Okay, we're a new facility and we've only been open for 18 months, but as regard volume of rounds, July has been our busiest, which is great.

"Once we get into September and October when our season starts off again after the hot summer, we aim to get people to become what I classify as real golfers.

"What I mean by that," clarifies Braidwood, "are golfers who are going out on the golf course, getting themselves a handicap and becoming competitive. When that happens, then I think we've got them hooked on golf for life." **END**



"IMG'S AGRONOMIC SUPPORT HAS BEEN INVALUABLE, IN WHAT IS A
NEAR UNIQUE CLIMATE IN A COUNTRY WHERE THERE IS NO EXISTENCE
OF A GOLF MAINTENANCE INDUSTRY"



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AGRONOMY

IMG maintains some of the finest golf courses in the world and prepares them for professional events as demanding as the WGC-HSBC Champions in Shanghai. In order to support clients, we assist in the recruitment process and work very closely with our on-site course superintendents to ensure they have the advice and support needed in order to make those critical decisions.

One of our main concerns is to really train our personnel well, so we are on-site regularly to develop the training programmes and work on any areas for improvement identified during our audit process.

During a new golf course development or renovation project, we collaborate with the design teams from an early stage, providing multiple agronomy services related to the construction. We often assist in reviewing construction specifications to guarantee that the course is built to the highest possible level of quality. One of these examples is Michlifen in Morocco, where we worked very closely with the Nicklaus team during the pre-opening phase. We now undertake regular agronomy visits to the club and support the on-site superintendent, Jonathan Ducou, making sure the first ever Jack Nicklaus Signature in North Africa is always in pristine conditions.

Standards are set very high at all IMG clubs, and if you take Michlifen for example, the course was officially opened by HRH Prince Moulay Rachid, which shows the level of course conditions we must present at all times. The same kind of process happened with another Jack Nicklaus Signature project, but in Russia. IMG has been working closely with the owners at Raevo for many years, and agronomy has been one of the key aspects of the project. The club is set to offer the best membership experience in Moscow with unbelievable course conditions.

Golf course improvement and presentation are another important part of the support we offer to clients. Royal Golf La Bagnaia in Italy, is managed by IMG and features a stunning Robert Trent Jones II. layout. We've been working on improving the course presentation and it's always great to hear golfers talking about how much better the course plays and looks today, compared to when we started managing the club in 2018.

Our focus is always on delivering a premium golfing experience, but doing it in a way which respects the surrounding environment, trying to limit the use of pesticides and growing healthy and strong turfgrass. Martin McGavock, course superintendent at IMG-managed Dreamland Golf Club in Azerbaijan commented: "IMG's agronomic support has been invaluable, in what is a near unique climate in a country where there is no existence of a golf maintenance industry and no conferences to share ideas with, specific to fine turf management in Azerbaijan.

"The past experience Sylvain has as a superintendent coupled with many years of working with high-end IMG facilities allows him to understand my position well and share very accurate knowledge when it comes to agronomic direction, advice and solutions." **END**





Words John McKenzie
Photography John McKenzie, Kevin Murray

ANNA DARNELL

DIRECTOR OF GOLF & LEISURE, THE GROVE

THE GROVE

Mirroring golf courses and resorts across the UK, The Grove has seen an influx of guests since reopening its doors after lockdown.

Regularly welcoming over 200 golfers each day throughout the summer season, it proudly covets its position as a premium open-to-all leisure facility, located just minutes from the M25, and 18 miles from central London.

By the nature of its prime location, breadth of facilities and its focus on five-star service, it has become a hotspot for guests seeking an escape from the fast-pace of life surrounding this 300-acre parkland oasis.

Alongside its award-winning 18-hole championship golf course – host venue of the European Tour's 2016 British Masters, in association with Sky Sports – The Grove has built an enviable reputation among the business community, fuelled by its world-class conference and events facilities.

In addition, The Grove continues to invest heavily in its leisure proposition, expanding facilities that support and complement its contemporary hotel, and its broad customer demographic.

Anna Darnell, director of golf & leisure, commented: "What the last few months have shown us is that our leisure market has rapidly bounced back from nearly four months of lockdown.

"In line with many venues, we have seen some larger corporate bookings move to later in the season, but the leisure business has been robust, bouncing back quite quickly, and this is hugely encouraging for the future, as we continue to invest."

Whilst training to become a fully qualified PGA professional, Darnell enjoyed seasonal work at Loch Lomond and Riffa Golf Club before accepting a full-time position in Bahrain with Riffa.

However, her time in the Middle-East was short-lived, returning to the UK 18-months later, when, after a brief spell with Marriott Hanbury Manor, she joined The Grove in 2005 as an event co-ordinator.

Two years later she assumed the position of head golf professional, and in March 2011 was promoted to director of golf, a role that has since seen her broaden her remit with additional responsibilities in the leisure and food and beverage side of the business.

This has included the management of the hotel reservations team, the development of a detailed children's activities programme, and on-site crèche.

Her current role as director of golf & leisure includes revenue responsibility across the estate, which has included a full bunker renovation programme on the golf course; a significant extension and reinvention to the much-loved Glasshouse Restaurant; sleek individual makeovers to the luxury lounges in the 18th Century Mansion, and the beginning of a bedroom refurbishment project in the hotel's modern West Wing.

These investments are fuelling The Grove's long-term positive outlook, and have provided a platform for the launch of the new Clarendon Collection, a frequent player, dynamic points-based programme that unlocks significant savings across its golf operation, including green fees, tuition, retail and selected food outlets.



"THE LEISURE BUSINESS HAS BEEN ROBUST, BOUNCING BACK QUITE QUICKLY, AND THIS IS HUGEY ENCOURAGING FOR THE FUTURE"

It is an evolution of its popular Green Book scheme, but is now managed via its own online portal and app, where customers can use their points from one of two available packages to pre-book golf on the pristine Kyle Phillips-designed parkland course, at preferential rates.

"With all the challenges that businesses and families are facing at the moment, you could argue this is a strange time to launch, but based on what we are seeing every day at The Grove, the timing is perfect," added Darnell.

The previous Green Book programme (a paper-based voucher scheme) was, essentially, a summer-only initiative and quite challenging to administer, both for the customer and for The Grove. By taking Clarendon Collection 'digital' the transformation has been incredible.

Customers now use a flexible points system all-year-round and have greater control of when they wish to play golf, and what savings they can make. The dynamic real-time nature of the portal means customers can choose when they redeem points, with a slightly higher value required to play during peak hours, while off-peak tee times require the use of less points.

"We have no members at The Grove, however this is our way of offering an attractive, pre-purchased package to golfers that frequently play their golf with us. It is also the perfect platform from which customers can plan smaller group golf outings – that may be with clients, colleagues or friends – as up to eight rounds per day can be redeemed by each customer," added Darnell.

"Because we do not have a traditional membership like many clubs, Clarendon Collection allows us to think differently about how we care for our customers. We have a lot of regulars, so this programme gives them a sense of belonging, and a sense of 'home' when they visit," she added.

Clarendon Collection has also highlighted the rise in the number of nomadic golfers in the South East, who want to experience the best of what golf has to offer, but are not attracted to private clubs where there can be administrative layers to becoming a

member, including a significant joining fee in addition to first-year fees.

"We are basically giving the market what it wants with Clarendon Collection... ease of use, complete flexibility, the ability to offer playing points to guests, friends and relatives, top-up points for more golf, and an always-open 24/7 portal and app from which to manage it from," said Darnell.

As an added incentive, in addition to savings on rack rate green fees, Clarendon Collection account holders also receive significant added value, including money off food and drinks purchased in The Stables and Halfway House; savings on golf tuition, retail and rental items, and a playing lesson and Trackman session with a member of the PGA Golf professional team.

Account holders even have the ability to maintain a handicap at The Grove.

The Grove's own market research is also showing that while Clarendon Collection is proving incredibly popular for SMEs and individuals, larger companies are also seeing it as an attractive product they can use to entertain their most important customers, 1:1.

"We are seeing a market trend towards larger businesses wishing to communicate with customers in smaller 'pockets', and spending four hours of quality time on the golf course with a small group of high value customers – managed via Clarendon Collection – is proving very attractive.

"Of course, our larger corporate golf days will continue to happen, often with a money-raising charity angle, but we are seeing some corporates now evaluating the purpose of their days in more detail, and we are well-positioned to adapt to this evolution in the market," added Darnell.

So, the old adage that 'business is done on the golf course' is still true?

"With the continued uncertainty of a global pandemic that is definitely true," she adds. "The open green space of a golf course is seen as a relatively safe environment and, since re-opening our facility, we have definitely seen visitors combine the pleasure of 18-holes of golf with a meeting on the fairways," concluded Darnell. **END**

DAVID MacLAREN

GENERAL MANAGER, JCB GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB



On the first page of the brochure for the JCB Golf & Country Club is a quote from JCB founder, Joseph Cyril Bamford, stating that there is “no place for second best.”

So, when his son, and heir, Anthony – now Lord Bamford – decided to construct a golf course on land adjacent to JCB’s headquarters in Staffordshire, UK, it was evident that the board of JCB had high expectations.

A non-golfer, Lord Bamford looked upon golf as the “perfect fit for JCB as a global manufacturer” and added that his “vision for this golf course is for it to build an even stronger awareness of the JCB brand around the world and help drive increased demand for our products.”

With a clear vision, the JCB board appointed Robin Hiseman of European Golf Design (EGD) to create a tour-ready masterpiece crafted from 240-acres of agricultural land amid the lush rolling countryside.

And since opening in 2018, the course has won widespread acclaim from those fortunate enough to have played the 7,308 yard, par 72 layout.

With membership mainly limited to dealers, suppliers and customers of JCB – the course is not open to the public – the task of managing the Country Club has fallen to former deputy chief operating officer of the European Tour, David MacLaren.

Appointed as general manager in November 2019, MacLaren has significant experience of working within the industry, but has returned to his roots to directly manage a golf operation for the first time in 15 years.

MacLaren, 55, hails from a golfing family, and modestly puts his career to date down

to chance. “I always think whatever success I’ve achieved in my career, is largely down to two or three things that happened that were absolute flukes, or absolute accidents or coincidences that then lead you down a particular path,” he said.

And his first flirtation with golf came about by virtue of a ‘stroke’ of good luck. Studying modern languages at Edinburgh University, and a member of the university golf team, MacLaren was selected to play in a match against the R&A, and was drawn against the late David Duckering, the owner of Stroke-saver who produced yardage books.

“We played our singles match and then, as happened in university golf, consumed obscene amounts of gin and tonic in the R&A clubhouse. David said he was looking for somebody to introduce Strokesaver into France and Germany, and of course my degree was in French and German.

“As a first job in golf, it was the most incredible role that then logically led into golf club management, because working for David, I spent two years traveling the world, either measuring golf courses, or trying to sell Strokesaver to golf clubs,” he said.

“That then enabled me to make so many contacts within golf clubs, that it was absolutely logical that the next thing that I would do, would be to go to work in one of those golf clubs.”

And four years later, MacLaren accepted the position of director of golf and leisure at Hanbury Manor, which at the time was privately-owned and not part of a group. And again, lady luck played a role in MacLaren’s career progression.





"THE COURSE WAS BUILT PRIMARILY AS A SALES AND MARKETING PLATFORM FOR OUR BRAND AND OUR COMPANY"

"[I joined] in the early nineties, so this was during a pretty heavy recession. I definitely think we wouldn't have survived as a business, were it not for the fact that Whitbread was looking to expand its golf portfolio and came along and bailed us out.

"I think I might have been shown the door, because Whitbread needed to make significant cost savings, [but] thankfully, one day Alan Parker who was the MD of Whitbread, was on his way to Hanbury from London in his chauffeur-driven car when he switched the radio on and listened to me giving an interview on LBC about Hanbury Manor.

"And legend has it that because he thought, 'here's somebody who's clearly prepared to put himself in the frontline,' I stayed at Hanbury when Whitbread took over."

As Whitbread morphed into Marriott Golf, MacLaren progressed to director of golf operations for all of Marriott's 15 venues, before accepting the position of chief executive of the PGA European Tour Courses in 2005, and what MacLaren describes as "a very entertaining two years" working for Irish billionaire, Denis O'Brien.

MacLaren worked for O'Brien until, in 2007, the Irishman sold the rights to European Tour Courses back to the Tour in a deal brokered by George O'Grady.

"It was a good deal for Denis, because he'd got what he wanted and made a profit, and it was a great deal for the Tour because they got back their brand... they got back this brand of European Tour Courses.

"And again, for me, that was a happy accident because that took me from working for Denis into working for the European Tour, which was probably a dream for a lot of people working within golf."

When recollecting his 12-year tenure with the European Tour, culminating in commercial responsibility for the Challenge Tour, Senior (Staysure) Tour and Main Tour for Europe and the Middle East – not to mention still heading Tour Properties – MacLaren is evidently proud of his achievements.

"The Senior Tour will always be one of the most important things in my head, when I look back," he says. "It was an amazing three years, and of course, the other thing was

to find a title sponsor in Staysure for senior professional golf, [which] was just incredible."

But life was starting to take its toll and constantly globe-trotting across the world was having an impact.

"So, I decided at that stage, before I exhausted myself and completely keeled over, [that] it was time to just step back. And there were some internal and personal politics as well, as there always are in these situations. But from my point of view, I needed to recharge my batteries."

During his sabbatical, MacLaren caddied for his daughter, Meghan, on the LET, before JCB offered him the opportunity to "come full circle."

"As part of my role at the European Tour, I was a director of EGD for five years, and of course, JCB had appointed EGD to design the golf course."

As a result, when the position of general manager at JCB Golf & Country Club became available last year, MacLaren was in pole position to succeed his predecessor, Euan Grant.

But with the club predominantly for the sole use of dealers and suppliers of JCB – and with no memberships currently available – how much scope does MacLaren have to put his own stamp on the club's direction?

"I think that the membership model here is absolute genius, and I think the reason I can say that without it sounding as self-praise is because I didn't invent it," he smiles.

"And again, I can say that because I was on the outside looking in, but I think one of the reasons why the feedback that we get from people that come here is genuinely incredible, is partly because of the quality of the facility, but it's partly because there's this mystique – if you're not a member, it is impossible to play golf here.

"The course was built primarily as a sales and marketing platform for our brand and our company, so those constraints are very, very deliberate constraints.

"We are a venue that aims to provide world-class facilities for corporate members and customers with an attachment to JCB. And that actually make it's quite a clear vision in some ways." **END**



EMPORDÀ, SPAIN

EMPORDAGOLF.COM

Words Pete Simm

Photography Nuri Busquets, Steve Carr

It's fair to say that 2020 has been a memorable year in more ways than one for golf venues across Europe.

From the disappointment of having to lock their doors to the joy of reopening and seeing playing numbers soar following the lifting of the COVID-19 lockdown, golf clubs and resorts across the world have certainly experienced the full range of emotions over the last six months.

But when Empordà Golf Resort on Spain's famous Costa Brava comes to look back

at the period in the years to come, it's likely that it will have fonder memories than most, and view 2020 as the year when the resort transformed itself from being a top Spanish venue into one of the continent's premier 36-hole golfing destinations.

Having been bought by the Emesa Corporation, the holding company of top Spanish lawyer and businessman Emilio Cuatrecasas, for a reported €20m, Empordà embarked on reinventing itself and creating a new vision for the future this spring.







"EMPORDÀ HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE RATED ALONGSIDE THE VERY BEST GOLF VENUES IN EUROPE"

With two 18-hole golf courses designed by Robert von Hagge and an 86-room hotel and extensive leisure facilities, it was already good. But the resort's new ownership and management team is taking the resort to an altogether different level, taking advantage of the coronavirus situation to press ahead with a multi-million-euro improvement plan.

They have invested heavily across all facilities, with the golf courses, hotel and leisure amenities all receiving a major overhaul, and the final result is sure to impress, and lead to a stampede of golfers from all over Europe descending on this corner of the Costa Brava to experience the new, modern face of Empordà for themselves.

Overseeing the redevelopment plans is Miguel Girbés, recently appointed as the resort's general manager and a man well-qualified to deliver Empordà's vision for the future, having previously played leading roles in making Finca Cortesin Hotel, Golf and Spa and PGA Catalunya Resort two of the household resort names in Europe.

"With numerous facilities including two outstanding golf courses, Empordà has the potential to be rated alongside the very best golf venues in Europe," said Girbés.

"It's a name that's highly regarded and well-known within golfing circles, and it presents us with the perfect foundations for our ambitious project.

"Empordà has always been seen as a resort purely for golf and that's how it has always operated. We realise that and golf will remain at the heart of the complex, but we want to take it a step further and develop many other activities to go with golf.

"We are driven by the idea of offering an experience embracing sport, food and culture, the three best values that Spain has to offer, so that the resort becomes a place to meet and entertain and is 'the heart of the Empordà.

"We have some big plans for the future and I'm confident that, with the level of investment that is taking place, we will quickly transform Empordà Golf Resort into one of the most enticing facilities in Europe for travelling golfers."

Set 30 minutes from Girona in the heart of the Costa Brava, Empordà features two 18-hole courses, Empordà Links and Empordà

Forest. Reminiscent of many seaside courses in the UK and Ireland, Empordà Links sways between dunes, lakes and strategically placed bunkers throughout its 18 holes.

In contrast, Empordà Forest winds through a traditional Mediterranean pine forest where players must navigate their way through a series of rolling fairways that have been carved through the trees.

Both courses offer all the characteristics associated with von Hagge, requiring players to employ a variety of strokes and techniques to overcome the challenge posed, and both are undergoing significant investment to elevate the golf experience being offered to members and guests.

As part of the extensive renovation plans, all the bunkers are being reconstructed using the Better Billy Bunker method. In addition, a comprehensive tree clearance programme has been undertaken while the purchase of new greenkeeping equipment will improve the all-round condition of tees, fairways and greens.

Golfers can also look forward to an improved experience in the redesigned clubhouse, including a remodelled golf reception, a spacious new pro shop and upgraded changing rooms. An outdoor swimming pool is also being installed and the upgrades are just as impressive away from the fairways.

Hotel Empordà Golf – which was first opened in 2006 and relaunched at the start of July – has been transformed with a modern and contemporary new look, with the bedrooms, communal areas and restaurant all being redesigned and renovated, with an updated Spa to follow in the near future.

Girbés added: "With its combination of dramatic scenery and magnificent Mediterranean coastline, the Costa Brava has so much to offer for a sunshine golfing break, and the privileged location that we enjoy at Empordà means that we are right at the very heart of it.

"With the investment that is taking place, not only will we be able to provide a golfing challenge that rivals many of the most celebrated venues in European golf, but a place where people can experience the very best that Spain has to offer in a relaxed atmosphere that will make our guests want to return again and again." **END**

DAVID SCOTT

GENERAL MANAGER, DUMBARNIE LINKS



If ever there was a general manager in the golf industry that has the experience to cope with the coronavirus pandemic, surely David Scott would be your man.

Scott by birthright and surname, the 57-year-old has spent his entire career at golf clubs in Scotland, and in December last year landed the role of general manager at Dumbarnie Links, five months before the links were due to open for play in May 2020.

A self-confessed “home bird”, Scott has always worked in and around St Andrews, so when the opportunity to take over the helm at one of the most anticipated new courses in world golf presented itself, he had little hesitation in accepting the invitation.

Heralded as the ‘new’ Kingsbarns, and the Pebble Beach of Scotland, Dumbarnie Links boasts unparalleled panoramic views across the Firth of Forth and has all the characteristics to become one of the finest links courses in the world. And with previous experience of opening Kingsbarns, Scott was the perfect man to launch Dumbarnie Links.

Most of Scott’s early career was spent learning his craft at clubs like Rosemount, Letham Grange and Balbirnie Park before stepping up a notch when he secured the position of director of golf at Kingsbarns.

That was back in November 1999, before Kingsbarns opened in 2000, and as Scott recalls, chairman Mark Parsinen effectively gave him carte blanche to shape the golf operation.

“Basically, Mark gave me a blank piece of paper and said, ‘All right. Tell me what stock you want in the shop. Tell me what type of

course guide, scorecard and team uniforms and most importantly, what team you want.’

“He liked what he saw, and we really just went straight off from there,” recalls Scott.

“We opened on July 17, 2000, with 1,426 golfers in week one. There was a great deal of demand on the golf operations, as well as the caddiemaster which I was also involved with – I wanted to ensure that there was a consistency in our caddie program that wouldn’t let our guests down.

“So, we were off to a flyer, and within 15 months of opening, we’d gone to top 50 in the world, and hosted the Dunhill Links.”

And then 9/11 struck, and the US market that was so important to Kingsbarns literally disappeared overnight.

“It was a tough year or two, no question about it,” recalls Scott. “We just tightened everything down and watched our expense lines. Thankfully, there was still a great deal of interest in Kingsbarns, as we had opened with some good media coverage and had also hosted the Dunhill. So, when a lot more tee times became available because there wasn’t any international travel, the Scottish market grew pretty quickly.

“At the time, Kingsbarns was almost unique in the levels of experience that it was offering – almost like an American style – which we didn’t really do in the UK. Whereas now, of course, that has become not the norm, but it’s more expected, especially at the price point that you’re looking for.”

Scott spent nine happy years at Kingsbarns before moving just down the coast to the Home of Golf, St Andrews, where he spent 11 years working for the Kohler family





"AS OUR REPUTATION IS STARTING TO BUILD, WE'RE GETTING WELL OVER 100 GOLFERS A DAY FROM SCOTLAND"

of Wisconsin – owners of The Duke's Course, as well as the world-famous Old Course Hotel – in various different roles.

Five years were spent as manager at The Duke's, before moving away from golf as director of operations at the Old Course Hotel at the personal request of Mr Kohler.

"I started at the Old Course Hotel in 2008 at the Duke's [Course], and then in 2013, I was asked by the chairman, Mr. Kohler, to oversee the hotel and resort as director of operations because the general manager was leaving.

"My role at the hotel included overseeing the food and beverage for the resort, which included seven restaurants in total," said Scott. "I learned a great deal about service, F&B and management, which was a fantastic learning curve for me. I also learnt a great deal from my one-to-one conversations with Mr Kohler. It was an opportunity money couldn't buy, and it was terrific."

A move to director of Leuchars – the aviation arm of the Kohler empire – followed, which included responsibility for landing private jets, sometimes worth up to \$75 million, but with golf in his blood, Scott was always destined to return to the fairways.

"It didn't really excite me, seeing all these fancy jets, because I'm not really into jets, but I love golf, and I love talking to golfers.

"So, when the opportunity like this came up, on a brand-new golf course, there wasn't a question in my mind that I wanted to go for it. And when I did get it, I was thrilled, and I've not looked back."

Dumbarnie Links is the brainchild of Clive Clark, who was introduced to the land upon which the course now resides by former editor of *Golf Monthly*, Malcolm Campbell. The land forms part of the Balcarres Estate, and keen to explore the possibility of creating a world-class golf course, Clark and Campbell approached the landowner, Lord Balniel, and struck a deal.

The design incorporates three potentially driveable par-4s and features several holes that engender 'risk and reward'.

The course is designed to inspire rather than intimidate golfers and its dual elevations provide the opportunity to create a number of tees where holes play directly towards panoramic views of the expansive Firth of Forth.

Managed by OB Sports, Dumbarnie Links was built by US-based Landscapes Unlimited and project managed by Paul Kimber. Like Kingsbarns, Dumbarnie Links is US-centric in its management and approach to service and had earmarked the North American sector as a key area for growth.

But then, like 9/11, the world changed when COVID-19 forced the closure of the clubhouse which is still under construction, and the link road onto the 345-acre site.

However, rather than delay the opening of the course, Scott opted to open as planned in May – fully adhering to social-distancing guidelines – and drawing upon his previous experiences, re-wrote the business plan to switch the focus onto the home market of Scotland.

"Right now, we're most fortunate," sighed Scott. "We've been open just a couple of months and have hosted over 5,000 golfers.

"As our reputation is starting to build, we're getting well over 100 golfers a day from Scotland. It would be great to have the English market up here too, but, frankly, with COVID-19, we're actually very happy with keeping it local. We're happy keeping it really quite safe, and hopefully, providing a really great golfing experience."

The green fee for non-Scottish residents is £235, reducing to £115 if you're local, so, perhaps it is little surprise that currently 80 per cent of visitors live in Scotland.

As to the future, once the pandemic has passed, Scott will be looking west towards the North American market for more visitors but is happy to stay closer to home from a personal perspective.

"I'll be here until I retire and have no desire to be chasing money around the world," he says. "I just love the area; I love the people and I get great joy with working here." **END**





JAMES IBBETSON

GENERAL MANAGER, FARLEIGH

Farleigh 

It must be a difficult decision to leave the weather and luxury of Yas Links, in Abu Dhabi, for the less temperate environs of the UK, even if it is 'leafy' Surrey.

But to have made the move only for coronavirus to shut down the golf industry just a few months after getting one's feet under the desk must be highly frustrating. So it's to the great credit of James Ibbetson that he remains so positive and confident as Farleigh Golf Club takes tentative steps back into a post-COVID-19 golf industry.

Ibbetson, 31, replaced Sunningdale-bound Adam Walsh as general manager at the 27-hole Surrey club – which is part of the Foxhills group – at the tail end of 2019. To call it a baptism of fire is probably understating the situation – and Ibbetson hadn't even been looking for a move.

He said: "I wasn't necessarily looking, but when the job became available, I started having the conversation. I knew a few of the guys who worked at Foxhills very well through university and previous positions and started to sound them out and it sounded like a good fit for me. And then, I had a telephone interview – with the HR director initially – and then a Skype call with the owner Marc Hayton.

"I really bought into Marc and, while the club was a big reason for making the move, it was more Marc. I like him; I like his vision; I liked the way and the direction he wanted to take the club in. And I thought I could definitely help with that.

"Although it might have seemed to some like a bit of a strange move, look at the places that the general managers before

me have gone on to: Russell Stebbings, to Frilford Heath, and, obviously, most recently, Adam to Sunningdale.

"Coronavirus was challenging," he recalls. "When we closed the doors at the end of March, we still hadn't even sent out our membership renewal letter – our membership runs May through until the end of April.

"We didn't know what our member support was going to be like from a renewal perspective. So we took a few days, chatted through the various options we felt we had available at the time and then put a real strong membership renewal offer together, giving members 12 months' access for the price of ten, basically two free months.

"And then, any period of time lost due to Covid or self-shielding, etc, was to be credited to them at 2021's renewal. So that really helped us. And we had a really, really strong membership renewal.

"I would say a high percentage of the people who normally pay monthly, put their hand in their pocket and paid annually, and it was also good to see a strong shift in those who normally pay by direct debit, making the move to annual pay. And the response was beyond my expectations.

"We didn't plead with them and say "If you don't support us now, the club might not be there on the other side", but we sent out some strong messaging and some strong communications, and it was amazing to see the support we got."

Paradoxically, like quite a few businesses Ibbetson expects Farleigh to actually benefit from the changes it was forced to implement during the shutdown.



"I WAS MAKING PERSONAL PHONE CALLS TO ALL THE MEMBERS, CHECKING UP ON THEM, TO SEE HOW THEY WERE"

He explained: "I think out of COVID, like a lot of businesses, we will come out of it much stronger. Because I'd only been in the role a couple of months the communication channels we opened up came about through the lockdown process.

"I was making personal phone calls to all the members, checking up on them, to see how they were. And so was my membership and sales guy, and as a result, we're so much closer to the members than we've ever been before. And that's continued with the new members we've signed up. I'm not saying we weren't a club before, but we do have a real club vibe now.

"People are really using Farleigh – not just for golf; they're using it for everything. It's a real social hub in a world where, at the moment, there's a lot of uncertainties. One thing that is certain is that you'll always be greeted with a smile here and there's always going to be someone for them to play golf with. So I think, like a lot of businesses, we will come out of this stronger."

While the golf course is fully open other areas of the business still need to get back to full 'fitness' and the issues they face are still something of an unknown quantity.

"The area that's hurting the most is F&B – we rely heavily on our food and beverage business," added Ibbetsen. "And obviously we were closed for a considerable time, reopening loosely on July 4, but we're still without the main money earner for the club with the functions, particularly weddings and larger parties and events. So hopefully we'll be able to get those back online in the near future."

For Ibbetsen, coping with COVID-19 was just another step on a career path that started when he went to the University of Birmingham. He wasn't even sure what he wanted to study, but thought, as he enjoyed golf, he would take the applied golf management studies degree. He graduated in 2010 and immediately started work at Marriott Forest of Arden as its golf co-ordinator.

"Initially this involved three days per week in the operation looking after members, the golf shop and corporate golf events with the remainder of time spent teaching.

"However, I quickly realised that teaching wasn't for me as I had more of a passion for events and golf days. I like being in the mix, being in the thick of it and ultimately getting things done. I get great satisfaction from helping the team put on a great event for the members."

Following promotion to golf operations manager in 2014, he eventually left Marriott Forest of Arden to become director of golf at its sister property Marriott Tudor Park, in February 2015, and, 16 months later he was on the move again, this time a little further afield, joining Howie Roberts at Yas Links, a worldclass.golf destination.

He recalled: "Howie was amazing, really, really good to work with; extremely knowledgeable in all aspects of the golf industry, which is quite rare, I think. He was very knowledgeable in the agronomy side of things – he probably knows a lot more than a lot of course managers and superintendents.

"So I learned a hell of a lot from him on that side of things, some of which we've been able to bring back to Farleigh, not only changing some of the agronomic principles that we've had in place, but also the service levels.

"Howie's a perfectionist. He's worked at some top properties throughout the world and he has a certain level of service. That's definitely instilled in me, and a lot of the service principles and things we put in place there we tried to bring back here."

Ibbetsen has not been afraid to move to progress his career but is not yet sure of what the future holds for him.

"Farleigh is getting more of a name and more prestigious," he added. "I'm not saying I'm using it as a springboard, but I'm not going to be here forever. The last few months when it was just a golf course, has kind of reignited my passion for just the golf side, so whether it's another director of golf position or another GM-style role, I really don't know.

"We've just got to put the fundamentals in place, and that will take Farleigh to the next level. I'm normally a two-and-a-half-to-three-year guy in a role, so I think Farleigh probably has another couple of years of me yet." **END**

SLIP! SLAP! SWING!

CAMPAIGN AIMS TO INCREASE SUN AWARENESS



Getting golf sun savvy, is the key phrase for Michelle Baker, CEO of the Melanoma Fund which aims to raise awareness of the disease and other forms of skin cancer.

Although she does not play golf, Baker is keen to raise awareness of sun protection for golfers and is passionate that every golf club should get involved in her campaign for better sun protection.

"Target the golfers was something I heard again and again from melanoma surgeons and oncologists at the conferences and events I attend each year," she states.

"As I create the charity's national skin cancer prevention campaigns – working with gardeners and children in sport – the opportunity to expand into golf was certainly a possibility.

"I started research by visiting golf clubs; organising skin check events; talking to members, greenkeepers and managers on their observations, habits and opinions on sun protection. At one such event an older man came up to me, patted my hand and said, 'Petal, you don't have to worry about me, 40 years playing golf I've never used sunscreen in my life; my skin is bulletproof!'

"Unfortunately, this opinion is shared by many older golfers, the very same who are now seeing their GPs and surgeons for skin cancer, at an alarming rate," explained Baker.

"Many believe their skin is 'seasoned' from years of exposure, or protected by a base tan, however the highest mortality rates from melanoma, are indeed older men who are less likely to use sunscreen; check their skin, or visit their GP with a concern."

Melanoma is one of the most dangerous forms of skin cancer, and has more than doubled in the UK in the last 30 years, with incidence in women having doubled, and for men nearly tripling. It is one of our fastest rising cancers, and although still higher in older people, rates in 25–49 year olds has increased by a staggering 70 per cent over the same period.

And with the average round of golf lasting in excess of four hours, the sport is high on the UV hot spot as a round can lead to prolonged sun exposure during the sunniest hours.

Courses provide little shade, with highly UV reflective surfaces such as grass, water and sand, and golfers tend to dodge sunscreen to avoid a 'greasy grip'.

"I established that although golfers knew the facts, they underestimated the risks and the industry in general, was lacking a positive way to create unified awareness," explained Baker.

So, in 2019 the Slip! Slap! Swing! sun protection campaign for golf was born. And it certainly resonated, as nearly every major golf organisation has since offered official support.

Craig Cotterill, business and partnerships manager at the GCMA said: "I had no hesitation in generating support. It seemed ridiculous that this had not been done before, and as we were able to really help create impact at club level, it was a no-brainer.

"Golf clubs can help to create a safe environment for everyone by offering advice at the right time and in the right place and this campaign offered just that."





"IT IS HIGH TIME THE INDUSTRY RAISED MORE AWARENESS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF SUSTAINED SUN EXPOSURE TO GOLFERS"

This year, Cotterill, whose father died of melanoma in 2014, decided to become a Slip! Slap! Swing! Ambassador, joining a growing team of leading industry experts, all of whom have offered their voices and leveraged their networks to promote a Sun Protection Accreditation scheme, which was launched this year, and designed to be rolled out by golf clubs.

Skin cancer is mostly preventable, and by becoming Sun Protection Accredited, clubs can help members and staff improve their sun protection habits and knowledge. Supported with free resources and up-to-date advice, involvement is quick and easy to achieve, with actions that will enhance current policies, allowing clubs to become part of a growing community.

Clubs can achieve accreditation by pledging five actions which include; nominating a Sun Pro Ambassador; adding a sun protection statement to their terms and conditions; displaying awareness posters; ensuring sunscreen is available in the club, and to display the Sun Protection Accreditation logo.

"They say, 'you never really get cancer, until you get it', so to create a greater understanding, we asked golfers who have had skin cancer to tell us their stories, showing how and why it can affect anyone," stated Baker.

"Always keep sunscreen – at least SPF30 – in your golf bag, together with sunglasses, a hat and a large umbrella, and apply at least 20 minutes before teeing off to ensure that it's effective, reapplying every two hours."

The charity worked with PGA professional, Jamie Cundy who produced a number of short videos featuring real-life stories, and Wayne Mayo, 43, who has played golf for 23 years and is the current men's Derbyshire County captain.

"I always thought cancer happened to other people, but I now know more about the risks," added Mayo. "I kick myself for not listening to my wife, who was always running out the door after me, urging me to slap on some sunscreen."

"Having a cancer diagnosis turns your world upside down. There is no 'just' in skin cancer as I found out. It can spread and

that is where the worry lies. Never underestimate the fear of a diagnosis, or the power of the sun."

Jeremy Dale, PGA professional at Stoke Park added: "It seems that club managers everywhere have acknowledged the need and have been glad for the support offered by this campaign. They have also appreciated the positivity of the Slip! Slap! Swing! message."

Stoke Park was one of the first clubs to sign-up to the campaign and was quickly joined by Royal Birkdale, Royal Dornoch, Royal Norwich, The Mere, JCB and The Grove and a further 160 golf clubs so far.

Director of golf at Stoke Park, Stuart Collier, was quick to put into action the campaign's five simple steps saying: "We are keen to support all cancer charities here at Stoke Park, so it was an easy decision to participate in the Melanoma Fund's campaign."

"We have really heightened awareness this summer, and have made sure everyone applies sunscreen on the really hot days. It helped that it was so simple to sign up, and no one can miss the distinctive 'Slip! Slap! Swing!' logo on the posters, certificates and stickers in the pro shop, changing rooms and starters hut!"

Despite the challenges of a pandemic, the charity aims to get 200 clubs on-board before the end of 2020, reaching a potential audience of 80,000 golfers. Once signed up, all participating clubs will receive a free sun protection pack and support in promoting their work, to help keep them motivated and sun savvy.

Colin Mayes, CEO of Burhill Golf & Leisure, has pledged support across all ten of the group's golf clubs saying: "We are delighted to get behind the Slip! Slap! Swing! campaign, as it is high time the industry raised more awareness about the dangers of sustained sun exposure to golfers."

"Our customers and teams' safety are paramount to us – more than ever in the current climate – with the risks real, and we commend the work undertaken by the Melanoma Fund thus far. Ensuring our members, guests and staff stay safe and protected is not a choice, it is a necessity!" **END**

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Covering over 217 hectares of gorgeous, breathtaking scenery in Slovakia's Záhorie region, Penati is situated less than an hour from the nation's capital, Bratislava.

Featuring 36-holes of golf, including the Nicklaus Studio-designed Legend Course which boasts the longest hole in Central Europe – a 712 metre (778 yard) masterpiece that can be played as either a par 5 or 6 – the Legend Course culminates with a challenging short par 4 onto an island green.

The second course at Penati, the Heritage Course, is located amidst breathtaking scenery of pine forests on land interspersed with white sand dunes.

The nature-friendly resort has been perfectly integrated into the surrounding natural environment and offers a truly unique golfing experience. Golfers can enjoy playing along fairways lined with sand dunes that are natural features in this region, and the course's sandy subsoil lets the landscape retain its original character, even after rain, so the area pulsates with golf from early spring through to late autumn.

The Legend Course has been built according to plans authored by Nicklaus Design and complies with USGA specifications. The Heritage Course, which was designed by Jonathan Davison and shaped by Mick McShane, follows Scottish traditions and the so-called 'traditional island design.'

Penati is a regular host of the EGA amateur championships as well as part of professional European Challenge Tour. **END**



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"IF A CLUB IN DECLINE THINKS THEY HAVE WON THE LOTTERY THEN
THEY NEED TO THINK AGAIN"



Words

David Shepherd
Chief Executive
The Scandinavian

GUEST BOOK

DAVID SHEPHERD



"Golf is booming" and "the resurgence of golf" are just a few of the headlines that I've read recently. But this resurgence comes with a huge caveat, and personally, I wouldn't celebrate just yet, as there is plenty of work yet to do. If clubs can retain the new members and change their opinion about the value of golf club membership then all will be well. If not, the boom will be very short lived.

It's vital to remember most of the new members are not members by choice, but because it was the only way to play golf in spring. New members didn't join because of what clubs offer – they left clubs because clubs didn't offer enough. You have one job... retain them!

Clubs doing well before COVID-19 will no doubt continue to prosper, but if a club in decline thinks they have won the lottery then they need to think again. Unless clubs look after the new members and give them a reason to stay, they will return to their previous position as nomadic players. Committee room discussions about change must now surely be accelerated and implemented.

The golf industry is not normally known for its speedy action and openness to change but if it is to capitalise on this opportunity then it will need to move quickly. Investing in member retention now is money well spent, as if clubs don't seize this opportunity, I fear we will be back to declining membership and price dumping to secure greenfee business in 2021. **END**

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