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NUMBER 148 | AUTUMN 2024

Club Car Proud To Supply Custom Vehicles For The 2024 Solheim Cup





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"NOT EVERYBODY IS ABLE TO INFLATE THEIR NET WORTH – LEGALLY OR ILLEGALLY – IN ORDER TO STUMP UP A GRAND TO PLAY 18 HOLES OF GOLF WHETHER AT TRUMP TURNBERRY OR ANYWHERE ELSE"

FAIR COMMENT

Of all the things Donald J Trump does in his life, chances are charging £1,000 for 18 holes of golf on the Ailsa course at his Turnberry resort, won't create the most concern around the world – but it's certainly caused ripples within the golfing community.

For the past few decades, golf and its many constituent organisations and associations have worked tirelessly to shed the sport of its elitist reputation, and, while there is still work to be done to remove entirely that perception, things have certainly changed for the better.

Those efforts won't be helped by the introduction of a four-figure green fee, albeit if the justification for it is that it will affect only non-hotel residents in peak season who wish to tee-off before 1.30pm. It is believed to be the highest green fee currently on offer in the UK.

Bunkered, Scotland's national golf magazine, quoted Trump Turnberry's general manager, Nic Oldham, as saying: "Staying in the hotel and playing the Ailsa will come in some way under £1,000, so it's better value to do it that way.

That's better for the golfer, because they're getting a full five-star experience, but it's also better for Turnberry."

Of course, it's better for Turnberry as the resort gets the best of both worlds. But not everybody is able to inflate their net worth – legally or illegally – in order to stump up a grand to play 18 holes of golf... whether at Trump Turnberry or anywhere else, for that matter. Let's be honest, though; it's hardly likely to reduce the number of rounds played on the course...

READ THE FULL COMMENT ONLINE
golfmanagement.online/comment/148



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

 **portman**
publishing and communications

FEATURING

AUTUMN 2024



JOSÉ IGNACIO OLEA

FINCA CORTESIN

"Golf teaches invaluable life lessons – patience, discipline, and respect for others. It's our responsibility to ensure these values are passed on, making the sport more accessible and inclusive for all."

22



NUNO SEPÚLVEDA

DETAILS

"What we are doing is deferred investment. It should have happened in the past, a little bit every year. Now we are doing everything that didn't happen in 15 years – and we have to do it in a few years."

26



STUART COLLIER

STOKE PARK

"Obviously, our initial plan was to close for a couple of years as we were keen to get on with the works immediately, but we ran into stumbling blocks in terms of what we could start and how quickly we could do it."

30



ASHLEY NORTHRIDGE

KINGSWOOD GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

"I said 'sorry' and she then started crying saying that we've all been fired. So then next morning, after about five bottles of Rioja, I went to San Roque and the then acting general manager confirmed what I'd be told."

34



HANS DE KORT

AQUA AID EUROPE

"What we see happening now is water has become scarce, the cost of water is going up dramatically – people say water is going to be the gold of the future. The average 18-hole golf course takes about 250,000 cubic metres of water a year."

42

"CLUB CAR IS THRILLED TO SUPPORT THE WORLD'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS WOMEN'S TEAM GOLF COMPETITION"



COVER STORY CLUBCAR.COM



Club Car, a global industry-leading manufacturer of small-wheel, zero-emissions electric vehicles, is proud to announce that it will serve as the Official Golf Car of the 2024 Solheim Cup, to be staged at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in Northern Virginia, USA, between September 13-15.

"Club Car is thrilled to support the world's most prestigious women's team golf competition," said Jeff Tyminski, vice president, marketing, product management and customer experience at Club Car.

"Driving exceptional experiences is our mission, and joining the celebration of excellence at the Solheim Cup is truly remarkable. The teams and loyal golf fans will see the unparalleled quality and innovation that is the Club Car difference on and off the golf course."

The announcement for the 2024 Solheim Cup highlighted the custom Club Car Onward vehicles that will be manufactured for each team, with Matt Hoover, 2024 Solheim Cup tournament director saying: "The Solheim Cup sets the stage for the world's golfers to compete for country pride.

"To be the best takes hard work, commitment and discipline, which is also what makes Club Car vehicles stand out. This partnership embraces what makes our Solheim Cup Teams special and will display it in these unique cars for the big stage."

This year's Solheim Cup will not only feature the 12 custom team cars but also an additional fleet of 90 Club Car utility and

transport vehicles. These will play a crucial role in event set-up and tournament operations, ensuring that everything runs as smoothly as a well-oiled putt.

The team cars are Club Car's award-winning personal transportation model Onward, known for its comfort and superior handling.

Customised with the Solheim Cup logo and the teams' colours and flags, the vehicles will ensure captains Stacy Lewis (USA) and Suzann Pettersen (Europe) comfortably and safely keep up with all the on-course action during the week.

The last three Solheim Cups have been thrillingly close, with Europe narrowly edging nailbiting affairs at Gleneagles, Scotland in 2019, and Inverness Club, Ohio in 2021 before a 14-14 draw – the first in the event's history – at Finca Cortesin, Spain last year allowed them to retain the trophy.

The event switches back to even years from this year to avoid clashing with the Ryder Cup, which moved to odd years after the Covid-enforced postponement in 2020.

The first edition of the Solheim Cup was played at Lake Nona Golf Club in 1990 and the USA dominated the early years, winning five of the first seven. Overall they lead 10-8.

Club Car has been synonymous with elite golf competition for decades.

A long-term partner of the PGA of America and the PGA of Great Britain and Ireland, Club Car has also been a trusted supplier to the Ryder Cup since 1995 and to the DP World Tour since 1999. **END**

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"BUT THERE'S A REASON THE OLYMPICS DOESN'T RESULT IN
A BIG PAY CHEQUE – IT'S MEANT TO BE FOR AMATEURS"



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KEEP OLYMPIC DREAM FOR AMATEURS

It was interesting to read the participants' views on the Olympic golf tournament – not least those of Rory McIlroy, who has recently – according to Golf.com – “played the role of five-star General in the golf establishment’s fight against oil-fueled (sic) riches and shotgun starts.” He believes the Ryder Cup remains golf’s pinnacle – and I’m not going to take issue with that – but that, ultimately, the Olympic competition might rank up there alongside it. He said: “(If) ... you think about the two tournaments that might be the purest form of competition in our sport, we don’t play for money in it. It speaks volumes for what’s important in sports and what’s important.”

Again, difficult to argue with him. But there’s a reason the Olympics doesn’t result in a big pay cheque – it’s meant to be for amateurs. That’s become something of a grey area – or even a murky black one – over the past few decades, as the NBA’s top stars compete for basketball gold and top athletes become professional sports stars. Now, I know I can be a luddite, but professional sportspeople receive plenty of media coverage and financial gain already, so why can’t we just allow amateurs to have their day in the sun for a couple of weeks every four years?

Athletics, swimming and cycling, for example, have their world championships; golf and tennis their four Majors; and football its European Championships and World Cup. The majority of competitors will appear in these and the Olympics if they peak at the right time.

The original values of the Olympic Charter were to ‘encourage effort’, ‘preserve human dignity’, and ‘develop harmony’ – qualities not solely reserved for the non-professional ranks, but one can see why it was intended to be for amateurs. So, could we not return to those days? Golf, in particular, has a massive talent pool in the amateur ranks – the Walker and Curtis Cups generate enormous interest and provide a springboard to a life among the professional elite.

As a kid I used to love the Olympics. When it came around, I was almost as excited as I was for football’s World Cup. Now, in my early 60s, I dip in and out of the athletics, swimming, and cycling, and pay very little attention to the football or golf, my two favourite sports – although I will admit to watching the US basketball team, just to see LeBron James and, my hoops hero, Stephen Curry, play competitively on the same side.

Not surprisingly, I also shake my head vigorously when I see the inclusion of ‘sports’ like solo synchronised swimming and break-dancing. Surely, we’d be better off with darts, snooker, and cheese-rolling. Plus, there are any number of sports that, surely, deserve exposure as an exhibition event more than those aforementioned whims: padel, tchoukball, squash, bowls, 10-pin bowling, and netball, to cite just six. And even the likes of cricket and rugby could be included if entry was limited to amateur competitors. While the Olympics might give professionals a warm feeling of philanthropy, in that they’re giving of their normally highly paid time for free, their appearance still blocks the way of talented amateurs gaining valuable exposure. **END**

NEWS IN BRIEF

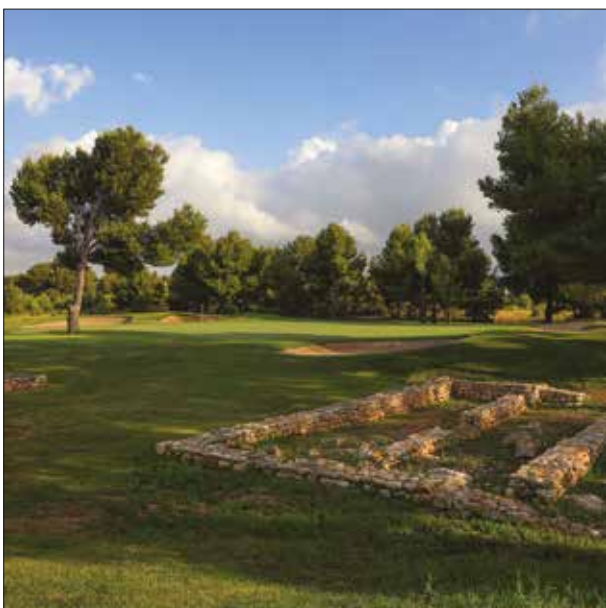
GOLFMANAGEMENT.ONLINE/NEWS



THE R&A SUPPORT UGANDA AND AFRIYEA GOLF ACADEMY

The R&A understands that nurturing talent from the grass-roots level requires age-appropriate equipment, quality training methods and good training facilities, particularly in developing regions where golf is not traditionally played. To this end, The R&A have partnered with Mizuno and GolfWay and collaborated with the Uganda Golf Union, to donate appropriate equipment to the AFRIYEA Golf Academy and its programmes.

SEARCH 'AFRIYEA GOLF CLUB' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



MAJOR RENOVATIONS PLANNED FOR INFINITUM'S HILLS COURSE

INFINITUM, the 45-hole worldclass.golf destination on the Costa Dorada, has announced a major renovation of its popular Hills course that is set to cement the layout's status as one of Spain's best. The Hills golf course, originally designed by Alfonso Vidaor, will be redesigned by European Golf Design led by Dave Sampson, designer of the Marco Simone course in Rome for the 2023 Ryder Cup.

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at golfmanagement.online for the full story



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NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR THIRD ANNUAL WOMEN IN GOLF AWARDS

On November 28, 2024 women — and men — from across the industry will be heading to Foxhills to congratulate the winners of this year's Women in Golf Awards. Nominations for this annual celebration are now open across eight categories and will close at midnight on September 30. The awards recognise the contribution of women at every stage of their careers, across the many disciplines in which they work.

SEARCH 'WOMEN IN GOLF AWARDS' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



THE R&A SUSTAINABLE AGRONOMY SERVICE EXPANDS INTO EUROPE

The R&A Sustainable Agronomy Service has agreed a strategic partnership with SURTEC — a multi-disciplinary agronomy team offering consultancy across the maintenance and development of golf courses — to expand its operations in Europe, with Spain and Portugal regions now benefiting from its expertise. The new partnership will offer knowledge and experience to facilities in the continental European market, providing support in relation to sustainable agronomic practices to golf clubs.

SEARCH 'R&A SUSTAINABLE AGRONOMY' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



EUROPE'S FIRST PHIL KENYON PUTTING ACADEMY OPENS AT GLORIA GOLF CLUB

Gloria Golf Club's vision to develop its world-class facilities has seen the pioneer of Turkish golf partner with leading putting coach Phil Kenyon to open mainland Europe's first 'Phil Kenyon Putting Academy'. Situated within the Gloria Golf Training Academy — the nation's first facility of its kind — the Phil Kenyon Putting Academy is open to golfers of all abilities looking to improve their games on the green.

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ST ANDREWS LINKS CONTINUES TO CHOOSE CLUB CAR

Club Car has extended its long-term relationship with the world's most iconic golf venue after delivering a new fleet to St Andrews Links. The prestigious Scottish venue, where golf has been played for more than 600 years, has received 32 new golf and utility vehicles to complement the 52-strong fleet for the operation of its seven public courses, the most famous of which is the Old Course, a 30-time host venue of The Open.

SEARCH 'CLUB CAR' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



HOW HOLLYWOOD GOLF CLUB IS ONE-STEP AHEAD WITH SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE

Hollywood Golf Club, renowned for its rich history and famous alumni like Rory McIlroy, continues to uphold high standards in course maintenance and club safety with the integration of the award winning, digital safety and compliance platform, Obbi. Both Phillip Shields, greenkeeper, and Stuart Cameron, maintenance manager, have highlighted significant improvements in efficiency, communication, and safety since adopting Obbi.

SEARCH 'OBBI' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



QUINTA DO LAGO AWARDED GEO FOUNDATION CERTIFICATION

Quinta do Lago's commitment to sustainable golf course and environmental practices has been reaffirmed with the Algarve's premier resort being awarded GEO Foundation certification following a three-year sustainability push. An international distinction overseen and managed by the GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation, the coveted industry accolade is presented to clubs and venues across the world who have shown a long-term dedication and priority for green practices across all facets of operations.

SEARCH 'GEO FOUNDATION' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story

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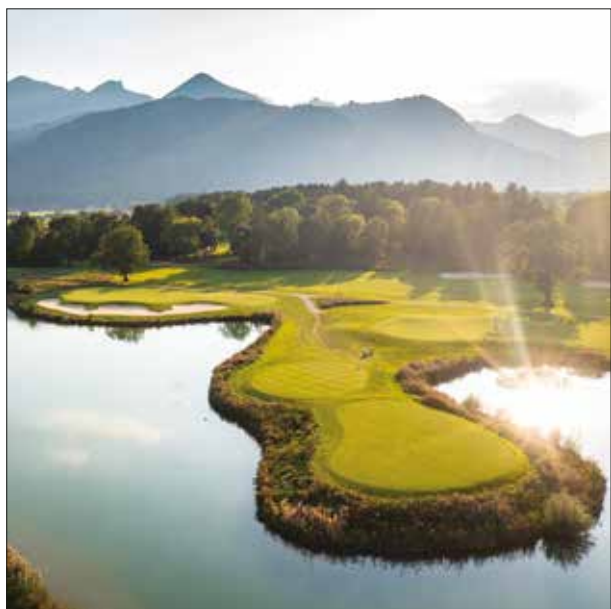


ECOBUNKER'S ANDREW GOULD KEEPING SANGMOON BAE ON COURSE AT FOXHILLS

Andrew Gould, head of operations at bunker solution experts EcoBunker, will be helping to keep Sangmoon Bae on course this week, as he caddies for two-time PGA Tour winner at the Asian Tour International Series at Foxhills. Gould, who has been working with the team at EcoBunker since the start of the year will have a unique insight into the dangers presented by the Longcross course, having worked on an extensive bunkering commission at the venue as one of his first projects for the business.

SEARCH 'ECOBUNKER' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



DAS ACHENTAL GOLF CLUB ENTERS INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH 59CLUB

Building on the momentum of its recent expansion into the DACH region, 59club is delighted to announce its second prestigious partnership with Das Achental, one of Germany's finest golf courses. This collaboration signals an ongoing commitment to excellence in customer service within the region's golf industry. Das Achental, renowned for its stunning natural setting and first-class facilities, has decided to work with 59club to further refine its high quality standards and enhance the overall golfing experience for its members and guests.

SEARCH '59CLUB' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



BLACKMOOR GOLF CLUB COMPLETES COURSE RENOVATION PROJECT

Blackmoor Golf Club has completed an extensive, three-year course improvement project which includes enhancements to all 18 holes on the Harry Colt course. The work has been carried out to upgrade bunkers and to improve drainage, the fairways have been reshaped to enhance visibility and course aesthetics and ancillary work such as new pathways and heather planting have been added. The groundbreaking project which cost circa £500,000 has been implemented in three phases and designed by golf course architects, LOBB & Partners.

SEARCH 'BLACKMOOR' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story

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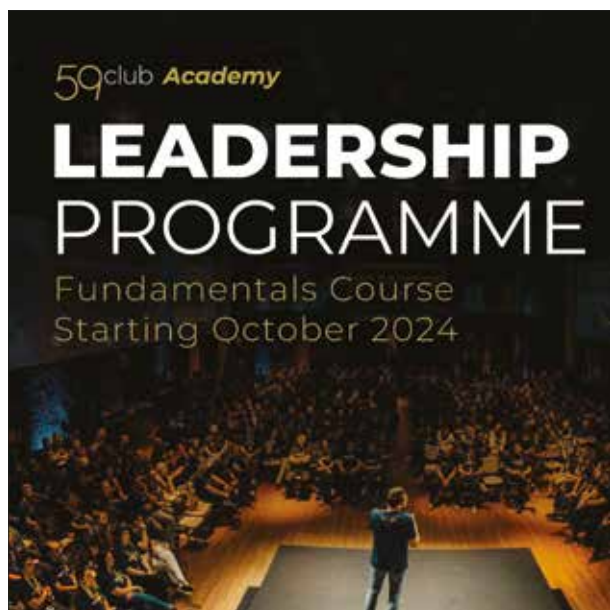

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59CLUB PARTNER ROBINCROFT TO DELIVER LEADERSHIP COURSE

59club has commissioned a live in-person education course, with the sole purpose of supporting the industry's current and future leaders — and its unlike anything witnessed in golf before. Starting in the UK & Ireland in October 2024, the creators behind this bespoke Leadership Programme are Andy Siddall and Paul Chapman of Robincroft Consulting, both highly regarded as experts in their field having supported many FTSE 100 companies to develop successful leaders under their direction.

SEARCH 'ROBINCROFT' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



CARNOUSTIE GOLF LINKS RECERTIFIED BY GEO SUSTAINABLE GOLF FOUNDATION

Carnoustie, Scotland: Carnoustie Golf Links is proud to announce its recertification by GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation, reaffirming its status as a global leader in sustainable golf course and business management. This prestigious recognition highlights Carnoustie's ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship, responsible use of natural resources and social value within the golfing community.

SEARCH 'CARNOUSTIE' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



TROON EXPANDS IN ASIA WITH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH SMARTSCORE

Troon's International division has announced a strategic partnership with South Korean company SMARTSCORE, which will see Troon provide advisory services to five premier golf courses across Asia. A collaboration, which underscores its continued expansion in the continent, the new partnership will see Troon International work with Artitaya Bangkok, Artitaya Chiang Mai and Artitaya Kanchanaburi in Thailand, Borneo Country Club in Malaysia and Kingsrock Country Club in South Korea.

SEARCH 'SMARTSCORE' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



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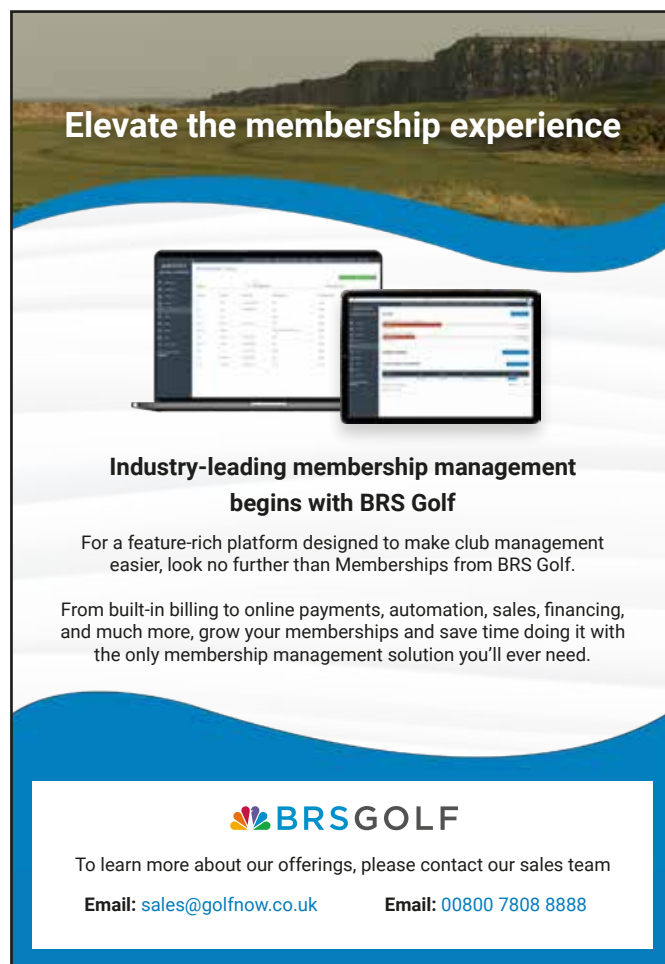


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NEW DESTINATIONS

WORLDCLASS.GOLF



Cape Kidnappers in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, has become the first destination in the Asia Pacific region to join the expanding worldclass.golf portfolio of the world's premier golf courses, destinations and resorts.

Completed in 2004, the spectacular New Zealand golf course has been hailed as one of the great modern marvels in golf.

Built on a ridge-and-valley landscape and with stunning sea views, Cape Kidnappers plays high above the ocean atop dramatic cliffs, and in partnership with Doak's Renaissance Golf, the course underwent a full renovation of all 18 greens and fairways in 2022 with outstanding results.

With cliff-edge fairways perched 140 metres above sea level and a surface that remains firm and fast, this course offers holes unlike anything you find elsewhere in the world.

While every hole has a spectacular view of the bay, some play cautiously alongside deep ravines as others intimidate golfers with deep cliff top bunkers and sheer drops off the very edge of the earth.

Commenting on the addition to the portfolio, CEO, Michael Lenihan said: "With amazing views across the fairways and out to the Pacific Ocean, Cape Kidnappers offers breathtaking views, and an exceptional visitor experience.

"I'm beyond thrilled to welcome Cape Kidnappers as the first destination in the Asia Pacific region and I look forward to working with the golf ops team in the years head."

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JOSÉ IGNACIO OLEA

DIRECTOR OF GOLF, FINCA CORTESIN



There's a palpable excitement when stepping onto the meticulously maintained grounds of Finca Cortesin in the heart of Spain's picturesque Costa del Sol.

This excitement is mirrored in the passion and dedication of the director of golf, José Ignacio Olea, who has spent his career sculpting exceptional experiences for golfers around the globe. His journey through the golf industry, spanning decades and continents, reads like a meticulously planned round of golf, each stroke purposeful and aligned towards success.

During the 90s in Spain, a country then experiencing a surge in golf popularity due to the legendary Seve Ballesteros, Olea was inspired by the game's growing status and its influence on the nation's sporting culture.

"My love for the game in the early years," he recalls fondly, "ignited my interest in a career within the golf industry." This burgeoning passion was not just about playing the game but also about the people and the shared experiences that define golf.

Olea saw an opportunity to blend his love for golf with a burgeoning market, making it an enticing career path.

Olea's career trajectory took a significant turn when he received a scholarship to attend college in the United States. As part of the PGA of America's educational program, this opportunity required him to complete a paid internship within the golf industry.

"I joined the outside operations team at Wild Wing Plantation," he recalls. This facility, with its 72-hole layout, was an impressive training ground where Olea honed his skills and gained experience in golf operations,

and this early exposure to the industry's operational side laid the foundation for a career that would see him taking on increasing responsibilities and leadership roles.

The breadth of Olea's experience in the golf industry is vast, a testament to his adaptability and vision. His role as general manager at Santa Maria Golf Club & Country Club in Panama stands out as a significant milestone.

Here, he successfully increased membership sales by 50 per cent and enhancing the club's facilities, a move that culminated in it being named a host venue for the prestigious Latin American Amateur Championship in 2024. "Managing two of the best private clubs in Latin America was a testament to our vision of elevating Santa Maria to a resort of international calibre," Olea explains.

Before his time in Panama, Olea served as assistant general manager & director of golf at Valle del Este in Spain. His tenure saw a significant increase in golf and hotel sales, marking the best financial results since the company's inception.

"We partnered with a local chef to organise events and created new golf packages for diverse markets," Olea notes. This approach not only boosted sales but also fostered a vibrant community within the club, enhancing the overall member experience.

His journey also led him to Desert Springs Resort & Golf Club, where he was instrumental in increasing golf rounds and revenues despite challenging economic conditions.

At Quinta do Vale Golf Resort in Portugal, Olea structured the entire golf operation from scratch, setting high standards that



"BEING A SPANIARD AND RETURNING HOME TO SUCH A SPECIAL VENUE IS A PRIVILEGE"

aligned with the Algarve's reputation as a golfing paradise. His strategic partnerships and innovative marketing efforts significantly increased the resort's visibility and profitability. "We saw a 19 per cent increase in overall revenues, which was a remarkable achievement in a competitive market," he recalls.

Throughout his career, he has consistently prioritised education and professional development, a commitment reflected in his double major in Business Management and Marketing from Coastal Carolina University, USA, and his PGA of America Class A Professional status.

"The PGA of America program is comprehensive," Olea remarks, "covering courses from tournament operations to cub fitting and repair, giving me the tools to navigate the complexities of golf management."

In his current role as director of golf at Finca Cortesin, Olea brings a wealth of knowledge and experience. His transition into this position has been seamless, aided by his familiarity with Spanish culture and the support of a dedicated team.

"Being a Spaniard and returning home to such a special venue is a privilege," he says. Olea's immediate focus has been on maintaining the course's top-tier status and integrating sustainable practices to address global climate challenges.

"We irrigate 100 per cent with recycled water," he emphasises, "ensuring our agronomy conditions remain optimal."

The recent Solheim Cup at Finca Cortesin has been a highlight, and Olea is keen to leverage the legacy of this prestigious event. "The Solheim Cup has significantly elevated Finca Cortesin's profile on the global stage," Olea explains. He and his team are developing strategies to enhance the Finca experience, capitalising on the increased brand awareness and global recognition.

His vision for Finca Cortesin revolves around three key pillars: the quality of the golf course, the holistic journey from arrival to departure, and the venue's legacy and mystique. "It's about crafting an experience that's comprehensive, consistent, and unique," he says.

Reflecting on the success of the Solheim Cup, Olea highlights the event's role in showcasing not just Finca Cortesin but also Spain and the Costa del Sol as premier golf destinations.

"The recognition of Spain's hospitality and top-notch facilities has been incredible," he states. Olea sees this as an opportunity to grow the game, particularly women's golf, a cause close to his heart. In his eyes, promoting diversity and inclusivity in golf is not just a professional duty but a personal mission, inspired by his early experiences and the values he holds dear.

Fostering the next generation of golfers and instilling in them a love for the game that goes beyond competition is a priority. "Golf teaches invaluable life lessons – patience, discipline, and respect for others," he says. "It's our responsibility to ensure these values are passed on, making the sport more accessible and inclusive for all."

As Finca Cortesin continues into a future bright with promise, he remains committed to enhancing the visitor and member experience. "We're exploring new opportunities to evolve under our unique philosophy," he affirms. With his vast experience and forward-thinking approach, Olea is well-positioned to ensure that Finca Cortesin remains a beacon of excellence in the golfing world, a place where every round played is part of an unforgettable journey.

The journey is as rewarding as the destination, and his home on the greens is where he continues to drive forward the future of golf. His leadership, shaped by a blend of global insights and a deep respect for tradition, promises to keep Finca Cortesin at the forefront of the industry, guiding it through the challenges and triumphs that lie ahead.

Looking ahead, Olea is not just content with maintaining the high standards already set at Finca Cortesin. He envisions an era where the club becomes a model for sustainable golf course management, integrating cutting-edge technologies and practices that minimize environmental impact while maximizing player experience.

"The future of golf lies in sustainability and innovation," Olea asserts, pointing to ongoing projects aimed at reducing the course's carbon footprint and enhancing biodiversity across the property.

Moreover, Olea is keen to expand Finca Cortesin's influence beyond its borders, establishing it as an international hub. "We want Finca Cortesin to be a place where golf meets culture, where every visitor leaves with memories that transcend the sport itself," he shares. **END**







Words Christopher Stratford
Online details.net

NUNO SEPÚLVEDA

CO-CEO, DETAILS

DETAILS

HOSPITALITY • SPORTS • LEISURE

Details Hospitality Sports & Leisure knew they had a man who could both accept and overcome a challenge when they appointed Nuno Sepúlveda as Co-CEO to restore their Dom Pedro Golf portfolio of five courses and six hotels to its former standing among the best golf destinations in Europe.

He had just spent six years as general manager at Costa Navarino in Greece, arriving when it was virtually unknown in the golf travel market and leaving with it just having laid claim to two prestigious golf accolades.

In 2022, Costa Navarino was named the World's Best Emerging Golf Destination and the resort's International Olympic Academy course at Navarino Hills was acknowledged as the World's Best New Golf Course.

But the clock needs to be turned back almost 30 years to reveal the true levels of his strength of character, resolve and abilities, to 1997 when he left his native Portugal to study at a university in England – without being able to speak English.

"I went to UK to study and I couldn't speak English. I enrolled in the wrong course because I didn't do the enrolment correctly," laughs the 47-year-old, "so I went to university to do landscape architecture and I ended doing turf science.

"When I asked someone to help me out with the translation so I could change the course, the head of department for turf science convinced me to do turf science – and I'd never been on a golf course in my life.

"So my whole life in golf, it's just a whole mistake, a very pleasant mistake. This was the beginning of my life in golf."

He might not have been on a golf course, but he had spent a lot of time on a rugby pitch.

"The reason I went to the UK is because I wanted to play rugby and Myerscough College in Preston had a very good rugby team. We had an exchange programme with my college back in Portugal, I went to the UK for 15 days, and I wanted to go back there to study.

"I did my internship, did my Masters degree at Cranfield, then it's always been golf, always sport, always hospitality. It's just by a pure mistake."

A year into his new job and Sepúlveda and the Details team are already a long way down the road to identifying and rectifying the mistakes that led to a decline in Vilamoura's stature as one of Europe's first destinations for golfers 'chasing the sun'.

"We're talking about 200,000 golf rounds per year at Vilamoura and with that amount of usage, with very little investment, it just got tired," he reasons.

"The cart paths were broken, the club-houses are very old, the kitchens don't fit in with today, the driving range technology was non-existent.

"What we are doing is deferred investment. It should have happened in the past, a little bit every year. Now we are doing everything that didn't happen in 15 years – and we have to do it in a few years."

Complacency also took hold, he believes, possibly because Portugal could virtually guarantee its visitors from northern Europe their main requirement – playing golf in warm, dry weather.



"WE NEED TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT THAT IT'S NOT AN ELITE SPORT AND, ACTUALLY, FOR THE ECONOMY THE GOLF INDUSTRY IN PORTUGAL CURRENTLY REPRESENTS €4.5BN A YEAR"

"It was always that easy. People were just coming regardless of what we were doing with the golf courses or in the hotels. People got this feeling that we can keep rising prices because people love to come here and we don't need to put on a product.

"We've now got to a point that, because there are so many other options out there, in flights and accessibility, we realise it's the end of the line for that concept, it's time to improve the product."

Hotel improvements will involve renovation of Dom Pedro Marina and the Dom Pedro Vilamoura and will extend to development of new hotels, in Palmares, on the Old Course and on the Millennium course.

The Victoria golf course, home to the Portugal Masters from 2007 to 2022, is already under refurbishment.

The rehabilitation will extend beyond golf with the services provided by Vilamoura's equestrian centre being upgraded and there are plans to create a "much-needed" sports centre.

"For many years things were over promised and not delivered," says Sepúlveda. "Now we are underpromising and hopefully overdelivering. That's going to be our concept here. People are willing to pay more if you deliver the product and if there's value in it.

"We want to cater for everybody, and have different products, different hotels, different golf courses for different segments."

Sepúlveda is also president of the National Council of the Golf Industry, a non-profit association founded in Portugal in 1995 that gives the industry a voice in liaisons with government and local authorities.

"It's been a great challenge and our team at CNIG represents different areas of Portugal, different golf courses, including the island, so I think we have a very representative image of golf in Portugal and we've been very well received by the government, by the local authorities, to let us help build a future for golf.

"We need to set the record straight that it's not an elite sport and, actually, for the economy the golf industry in Portugal currently represents €4.5bn a year. It's much more than sport; it's an economy, it's an industry and we want to be seen as that."

Given all his commitments to both job and family – wife Rosario, daughters aged 21 and 18 plus a son of 14 – it is small wonder he has little time to play golf. This was not a problem until this year when visits to two of the sports iconic venues, Augusta and the Old Course, St Andrews, reignited his desire to play.

"This year I went to Augusta National on the Sunday for the Masters and I fell in love with golf again, and then I went to play the Old Course in St Andrews as well," he enthuses. "I'm playing golf every week now. For the first time in 15 years I'm crazy about golf again.

"I'd seen the Masters on television for 20 years, but it was 100 times better than I expected. I would encourage anyone who has the chance to go there to go because it's mind blowing.

"I thought I knew everything about Augusta National, I'd been there before for business. But to see the event, to see the grass, to see no mobile phones allowed on the site," he enthused.

"First time I was without a mobile phone for 12 hours straight. I remember everything. I can speak vividly about my experience there better than any pictures.

"I loved the Old Course. I study a lot of Old Tom Morris because of the greenkeeping and the design as well and so it's a place to go for a guy with my background. It was one of the best experiences I've had in my life – and yet I was treated so bad by the golf course!"

One passion that has never waned concerns education, a process that Sepúlveda has continued throughout his career and this year he earned a certificate in leading with finance, online at the Harvard Business School.

"I was not busy enough, so I tried to keep myself entertained with something else as well," he smiles. "I've always studied for my career... consultancy management, project management, lots of languages and a lot of ways of doing business, and I was not familiar with some ways of business.

"So I thought I needed to learn a bit better for some of the conversations I was having here in Vilamoura, so that's why I went back to school again." **END**

STUART COLLIER

DIRECTOR OF GOLF, STOKE PARK



When you spend a substantial amount of investment on a UK golf club and facilities that dates back almost 250 years, it takes some cojones to temporarily close it for three years.

But that's exactly what the owner of Stoke Park, Reliance Industries Limited, did back in 2021 – and the then 27-hole venue, which was immortalised in the 1964 James Bond film *Goldfinger*, reopens temporarily this year with limited facilities.

If one's role is as director of golf at such a venue, it would be understandable to be apprehensive about a three-year hiatus; but Stuart Collier has been at Stoke Park, in Buckinghamshire, since 1999; he's seen ups and downs, previously, and he hasn't been sat around doing nothing.

In fact, he believes he's developed and honed new skills which will prove beneficial when the resort eventually opens fully, with the aim to establish itself as one of the country's premier high-end, pay-and-play facilities and hotels.

He explained: "I think the job's evolved massively. Obviously, our initial plan was to close for a couple of years as we were keen to get on with the works immediately, but we ran into stumbling blocks in terms of what we could start and how quickly we could do it.

"A lot of that was because we need to ensure we have a scheme that is acceptable to all the stakeholders. Ultimately, the decision was taken that everything had to go in for planning submission.

"It became an opportunity to take some self-reflection and ensure I'm the new ver-

sion of myself, Stuart Collier 2.0, if you like when we reopen. While we're moving the product forward you also want to move forward the people at the same time and I felt that this was my opportunity to develop.

"At the start of 2022, I became engaged with the CMAE and started on its MDP pathway. I've really thrown myself into that over the last two-and-a-half years. I've completed my CMDip, attended the World Conference in the US, and am now working towards completing my CCM, Certified Club Manager, qualifications.

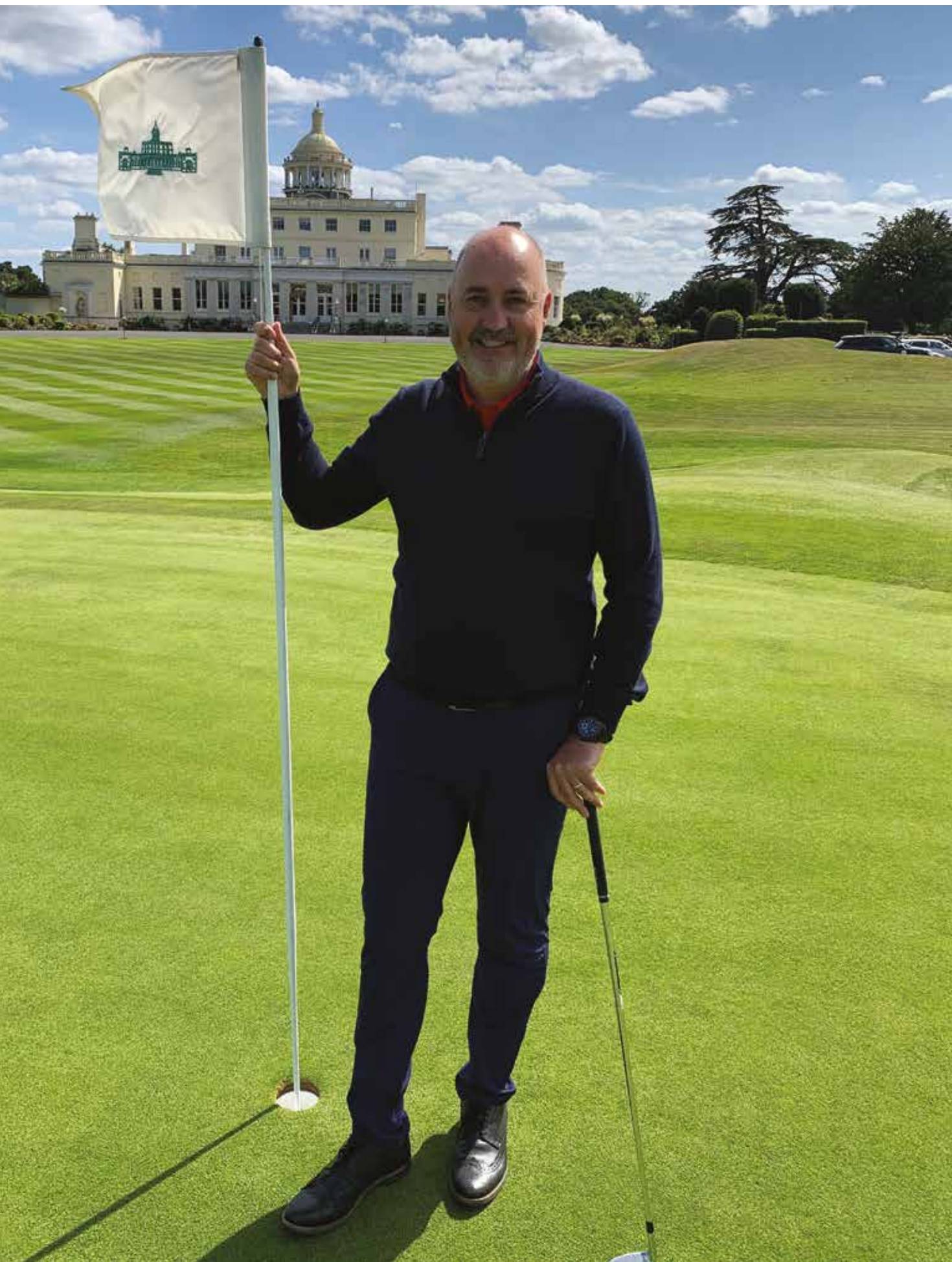
"When you're running a busy golf resort on a day-to-day basis it can be challenging to find the time to do that. Having this pause in normal operations has enabled me to expose myself to lots of new skills and experiences and invest in my own personal development and education."

He continued: "I think there's probably some regret that I didn't do that previously. I've learned a huge amount over that period with the CMAE that will stand me in great stead when we reopen again. I'm keen to try to take what I have learned and start putting it into practice.

"It's to my advantage, obviously, but also to the advantage of Stoke Park in the future. It's been a great process; it's a good organisation. You meet some great people on the MDPs.

"You're talking to, and working with, like-minded individuals and are organically broadening your network of people, which can help through this phase, because we do move more from an operational role into a project management role.







"WE'RE NOW IN A SITUATION WHERE THE NEW OWNERS WANT TO ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT OVER A MUCH SHORTER PERIOD OF TIME, AND THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE THERE"

"At that stage you're working much closer with course architects and, with the master plan, the architect team for the entire estate.

"I've been involved in community programmes, stakeholder meetings, Parish Council meetings, and exhibitions – just learning a whole new set of skills; using things you've perhaps developed along the way in the past when dealing with members, clients, and committees, for example. Perhaps we don't realise the skills we pick up along the way."

In addition to the refurbishment of the nearly 250-year-old mansion and the Pavilion, plans for the golf course involve re-routing and making the best possible 18-hole course, in the 1,000-year-old estate and 'Capability' Brown landscape, with the help of Tom MacKenzie, from course architects Mackenzie & Ebert.

This will necessitate the construction of a purpose-built new clubhouse, as the golfers' ingress will be through the East Gate, rather than the main entrance. In the meantime, the commercial decision was made to temporarily reopen 18 holes for pay-and-play this autumn – albeit without clubhouse or F&B facilities.

Relocating and finding another director of golf role following the closure was not an option for Collier. Where some might have seen a problem, he saw a massive opportunity and declared himself there for the long haul... though it's turning out to be longer than he had perhaps initially envisaged.

Collier, 51, added: "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with a product you know intimately, and where you can create a wish list of everything you would like to do.

"We have an owner, in Reliance, that says 'we share that vision, we want to fulfil those ambitions with you'.

"I'm just desperately keen to deliver that because it's not an opportunity that's going to come along anywhere else. It's a unique setting. It was always a stunning place, but we want to take it to a higher level.

"We want it to be one of the best hotel and golf resorts on the planet and we do have the financial support from the owner to enable us to deliver that. I think they'll be as ambitious as you can with what we want to deliver.

"From a personal point of view, I'm very much invested in this because I've spent 22 years operationally here with another three to five years to deliver a huge refurbishment project. Again, it will broaden my skill set," continued Collier.

"I'll learn a lot more in that five-year period than I would have done in the previous ten, because we were just tweaking and making small changes. This is root and branch – heart surgery stuff.

"We're now in a situation where the new owners want to accelerate the development over a much shorter period of time, and the financial resources are there. It's a matter of us seeking and gaining permission and then getting it done and implementing it – and I'd like to get on with that. Why not?"

Collier hopes that many of his previous team, who he helped to build and nurture, will look to return when the venue reopens fully.

"From the golf team perspective, they all moved on to other employment pretty much immediately and were well looked after by our new owners – and to some good roles following the temporary closure.

"They'd gained great experience here – including twice winning 59club's Ultimate Members Club award – and their CVs demonstrated their value as an asset to Stoke Park and to new businesses.

"We've retained good contact with the team, so hopefully some will look to return. And, in the time I've spent with CMAE I've realised there are some great young people out there coming into the golf industry; some ambitious people and people with fresh ideas as well."

Chatting with Stuart Collier, his passion for the project at Stoke Park is palpable. And anybody who has worked with him previously or got to know him in the last 25 years in his role as director of golf will understand why Reliance were keen to retain his services.

And he's not the only one: Nick Downie, the resort's director of communications, and award-winning estate director Alex Millar have also remained in post throughout the closure. The Stoke Park family is still at home, and they hope, soon, to be able to get the full band back together. **END**





Words Michael Lenihan
Online kingswood-golf.co.uk

ASHLEY NORTHRIDGE

GENERAL MANAGER, KINGSWOOD GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB



Ashley Northridge is a man on a mission, but unlike one of his most famous students, the chances are it's not an impossible one.

A fully qualified PGA professional, 54-year-old Northridge started his career with spells at Chevin Golf Club and Royal Mid-Surrey before graduating in 1995 to Wentworth, where he served as shop manager and head professional working alongside the great Bernard Gallacher.

And as he explains, one of his most famous students was none other than Tom Cruise, laughing: "He was awful. He used to have a box of a dozen Titleist professional balls, and he'd stand on the first tee and one would go way right, and then the second would go way left. He was good fun though and was filming Mission Impossible in Spain at the time so would come back at weekends for some lessons."

And like Cruise, whose character Ethan Hunt has the uncanny knack of always getting himself out of impossible situations, Northridge must have picked-up a thing or two from their time together, which evidently came in useful when an opportunity to leave Wentworth and work at San Roque presented itself a few years later.

Northridge spent six happy years at Wentworth, recalling his time in the club shop saying: "Everything was just on a different scale, and in some cases, you could just about get away with anything. If we had a pink shirt with blue spots on it – and it had the Wentworth logo on it – you kind of knew it was going to sell."

But with a desire to progress his career, he accepted a position to take over the reigns

at San Roque in Cadiz, Spain just before Christmas 2000. But what turned out to be a dream move rapidly descended into chaos.

"When I was at Wentworth, I got to know the European Tour guys quite well and mentioned that at some point I'd like to move abroad. And then one day, they came back to me and said that San Roque – which was under the European Tour Courses umbrella at the time – was looking for a new director of golf, and would I be interested.

"So, I got offered the job, and rented out my house back in Bagshot and made the move. I rented a lovely little flat overlooking the ninth hole at Valderrama, and vividly remember arriving around five o'clock in the evening in Spain and standing on the terrace looking across the course thinking 'I've made it... this is the life'.

"And then at nine o'clock the same evening, I received a phone call from the PA of the managing director at San Roque saying that they'd just been told that we've all been fired!

"I said 'sorry' and she then started crying saying that we've all been fired. So then next morning, after about five bottles of Rioja, I went to San Roque and the then acting general manager confirmed what I'd be told."

Many faced with this scenario would have taken the next flight back to the UK, but unperturbed by the scale of the challenge, Northridge decided in true Ethan Hunt style, to ride it out and look for a new mission.

He found himself in the heart of Sotogrande, with no job, so leaning on his retailing experience, looked to open a golf superstore.



"I WANT TO GET KNOWN FOR THE CONDITION OF THE PLAYING SURFACES HERE BECAUSE THERE'S NOT A LOT WE CAN CHANGE WITH THE DESIGN OF THE COURSE"

"I found an empty retail unit that had no concrete on the floor and no plaster on the walls and thought this would be a perfect golf superstore. So, I got involved with somebody from Golfers Paradise in Portugal that I knew, and they came on-board with their funding. It was great fun decking the place out and getting the store up-and-running, but I soon realised that I missed the greenery of working on a golf course."

So, when a role as director of golf at Palheiro Golf in Madeira became available, Northridge decided to negotiate an exit with his investors, and moved to work for the Blandy family – famous for Blandy's Madeira wine – who own Palheiro Golf, the spectacular golf estate perched on top of the volcanic island.

But his stay was short-lived, and after three years in 2005 was approached about a new development in Cadiz, Spain, which not only captured his attention, but also his heart.

Arriving at the future site of Arcos Gardens, Northridge remembers that he was looking at just a large piece of dirt, but knowing what the plans for the project were – and the track-record of the constructors – he knew it was too good an opportunity to let slip by.

"It was such a pleasure to be part of the construction and development of Arcos Gardens," he recalls, which was backed by a Spanish family business. "It all started so well, and we sold 80 townhouses [around the course] really quickly and got the course open to a really high standard.

"To have the opportunity to get involved with a brand-new build was simply amazing, and I learnt so much."

But, as with so many other Spanish projects post the 2008 financial crash, Arcos Gardens suffered, although it was sometime afterwards that Northridge was told that the project was coming to an end.

"Although the family hung on for a number of years, they eventually pulled the plug and decided to cut their losses," he added. That was in 2014, after Northridge had poured nine years into the project, and the demise of Arcos Gardens still hurts today.

"It was like my baby," he says, "and I really fell for the place.

"I was so proud of getting into the top 100 European golf courses and the quality of the playing surfaces, and the golf experience were different in so many ways."

But it wasn't just the course, but the people who Northridge had a soft spot for, admitting that he hasn't returned to Arcos Gardens since leaving as it's too painful.

"I think at one point I had 70 people working for me, and I basically selected all 70 people myself. They'd all grown with me so when I had to turn around and say to them that they were losing their jobs, it was difficult."

After bidding adios to his Spanish adventure, Northridge headed to Canada at Galt Country Club, and after a three-year stint as GM, returned to the UK as head of golf operations at Burhill Golf Club.

But a yearning to return to a senior management role, and one with responsibility for more than 'just' golf, tempted Northridge to take-up the general manager role at Kingswood Golf & Country Club three years ago.

Set in the rolling hills looking out to the Surrey countryside, Kingswood boasts a newly refurbished clubhouse with beautiful, modern event spaces, a comfortable modern 18-room boutique hotel and a challenging 18-hole Surrey classic golf course designed by James Braid.

"What was interesting about the role and what really caught my eye was that before I came, the business was kind of failing, and when I had my interview, they really wanted me to turn the business around. And I think, knowing that I like a challenge, that was what really attracted me to it."

Initially focusing on the hospitality side of the business, Northridge's attention has now turned to more familiar ground and working with senior agronomist Simon Watson from the R&A, is looking to improve the playing surfaces on the course.

"I want to get known for the condition of the playing surfaces here because there's not a lot we can change with the design of the course," he said.

Northridge appears content in leafy Surrey, and Kingswood may well turn out to be the final chapter in his distinguished career. Unless of course, he is offered a new mission, one which he chooses to accept. **END**

THE ROYAL GOLF CLUB

THEROYALGOLFCLUB.COM

Words Michael Lenihan

Location Riffa, Bahrain

Ask anyone who has ventured to the Middle East to play golf, and I'd be willing to bet that the vast majority of golfers will have played in Dubai, and probably, Abu Dhabi too.

But look a little further away from the glitz and glamour of the UAE, and you will discover that Bahrain – the tiny Kingdom Island situated just off Saudi Arabia in the Persian

Gulf – has a lot to offer, and not just when it comes to golf.

Bahrain has a rich cultural heritage, and although has only one golf course – unless you include the sand course at Awali – holds a unique place in the region with one of the most liberal cultures in the Middle East. With three UNESCO world heritage sites, Bahrain is often referred to as the pearl of the Gulf.







"THE LONG-TERM STRATEGIC VISION FOCUSES ON ESTABLISHING THE CLUB AS A PREMIER DESTINATION FOR GOLF ENTHUSIASTS"

Factor in that the living costs, and therefore the cost for visiting tourists, are significantly lower than Dubai – with some reports stating that Dubai can be as much as 62 per cent more expensive – what Bahrain lacks in the number of golf courses, it more than makes up for away from the greens.

And with only one golf offering at the moment – although more are in the pipeline – the Royal Golf Club (RGC) excels at offering a world-class visitor experience, on par with some of the more established destinations in the UAE.

Designed by Colin Montgomerie, and opened originally as Riffa Golf Club in 2008, the Royal Golf Club as it's now known, is nestled in the very core of Bahrain, a short 20-minute drive from the capital Manama – the same distance as it is from the Saudi-Bahrain Causeway which links the two Kingdoms together like an umbilical cord.

Designed by Montgomerie in collaboration with European Golf Design, the 18-hole course is a links-style experience in the desert with fast running fairways and open approaches into huge, contoured greens.

The aptly named Wee Monty nine-hole, par three course, is a scaled down version of its big brother with holes ranging in distance from 60 to 140 yards, designed specifically for less experienced golfers, and beginners.

In recent years the club has invested heavily on-and-off the course, and last year completed a significant renovation project ahead of hosting the DP World Tour in February 2024 – which returned to Bahrain after a hiatus of 13 years – with South African Dylan Frittelli winning by two shots with a score of 275.

Speaking prior to the Bahrain Championship, Captain Waleed Abdulhameed Al Alawi, chairman of Bahrain International Golf Course Company and the Royal Golf Club (RGC) said: "Our team has undertaken a major project of renovation of the golf course, aligning it with international standards.

"This renovation not only enhances the playing experience but also positions RGC as a key player in Bahrain's burgeoning tourism sector.

"The return of the DP World Tour to the Kingdom after 13 years is a historic moment for RGC and Bahrain as a whole. Achieving this milestone required meticulous planning,

collaboration and a dedicated team. We have worked closely with the Bahrain Olympic Committee, event organisers and local authorities to ensure a seamless experience for players and spectators alike.

"Operationally, RGC has invested in state-of-the-art facilities and services to meet the demands of such a mega event, including major course enhancements with a number of greens on the front and back nine being redesigned along with all the bunkers.

"The changes are aimed at creating larger, less undulating playing surfaces which will enable more pin positions to be available.

"With less undulation there will also be an opportunity to increase the firmness of the greens, which will lead to tour-standard green speeds.

"The exciting journey that the renovations have brought to the club aims to challenge the best golfers in the world whilst also providing the highest quality experience for those that play the course throughout the year."

As part of that commitment to upgrading the visitor experience, the club recently took delivery of an 80-strong fleet of Club Car Tempo golf cars complete with Visage GPS technology and comfort seats.

"The long-term strategic vision focuses on establishing the club as a premier destination for golf enthusiasts around the world," added Captain Waleed Abdulhameed Al Alawi. "It will undergo several positive changes to achieve this vision, starting with the course enhancement and redesign that took place last year.

"The enhancement project focused on implementing advanced sustainability practices such as water conservation, organic maintenance techniques and other sustainability initiatives. To encourage player development, we will introduce comprehensive programmes tailored to different age groups and skill levels, including coaching clinics, junior golf camps and beginner-friendly initiatives.

"Delivering exceptional family-friendly experiences will be our focus by offering personalised services, exclusive programmes and an array of social activities.

"We aspire to become a beacon of excellence, fostering a love for the sport and enriching the lives of our members and the wider community." **END**



HANS DE KORT

MANAGING DIRECTOR, AQUA AID EUROPE



Those whose home courses have been frequently shut in the last year or so because of flooding – or risked drowning by playing in severe downpours – might not be surprised to hear Hans de Kort warn that golf is facing a serious problem with water.

What may cause surprise about the admonition from Aqua Aid Europe's managing director is that it is focused on the cost, availability and quality of water rather than any abnormal meteorological conditions.

Aqua Aid Europe, a leading company in the field of sustainable water management, serves and supports sports turf industries, with 60–70 per cent of its turnover golf related.

Courses that come under its care include Le National in Paris, stage for the recent Olympic Games golf, Real Las Brisas Golf Pedrena – where Seve Ballesteros grew up – 2023 Solheim Cup venue Finca Cortesin, and Bernardus and Haagsche, the latter pair both rated among the top ten courses in his native country, the Netherlands.

Ten years on from single-handedly starting Aqua Aid Europe, de Kort sees golf clubs' greenkeeping and management teams battling an economic crisis over successful irrigation of their courses. And those not combating it now will do so inside the next two years, he believes.

"Water in the past was never a problem. Every golf course had its well or its inside lake, where they could take water, or they had a mains from which they could take water whenever they wanted," said the 60-year-old. "There was not so much of a budget issue because most of the wells

were not really expensive, they didn't need to pay the local government a lot of money for that.

"What we see happening now is water has become scarce, the cost of water is going up dramatically – people say water is going to be the gold of the future. The average 18-hole golf course takes about 250,000 cubic metres of water a year. Even at a cost of just €1 a cubic metre, that's €250,000 that has to come from somewhere and that's an additional cost, because in the past they didn't have to pay for it."

De Kort outlined the three main issues causing increased risk and concern. "There is the cost of the water itself and of electricity for the pump house etc. Then there is the availability.

"A course can face a ban or reduction put up by the local authorities. Most courses don't even know how much water they use and that makes it even more complicated.

"Also, the quality of water in general is going down around the world. More salts and bicarbonates in the water going round have a negative effect on agronomic behaviour as these salts and bicarbonates are not used by the plant, but stay behind in the soil profile once the water is used. This causes an imbalance in the soil – and opens the door for diseases and plant stress.

"At some moment all of these three points will hit greenkeepers – so they had better be prepared by learning to reduce water consumption and reduce the potential issues in future."

De Kort's call to action might be seen as springing from a well of vested interest,



"WHAT WE SEE HAPPENING NOW IS WATER HAS BECOME SCARCE, THE COST OF WATER IS GOING UP DRAMATICALLY – PEOPLE SAY WATER IS GOING TO BE THE GOLD OF THE FUTURE"

given that Aqua Aid's products can provide a minimum of 35–40 per cent water savings. But it is as much to do with his natural inclination, having been an engineer for most of his life, to search for a solution when encountering a problem.

"My father was a multi-discipline technician, so engineering sort of has always been in my blood. We built a model railway on the top floor of our house. I played there with the trains and so I made my first steps in mechanical and electronics engineering," he said, adding with amusement: "I had my first 220V shock when I was 12 years old.

"While growing up, I moved more towards mopeds and speeding them up for friends. We had some sort of workshop in the yard, so you understand I grew up in the middle of all kinds of techniques."

After working in the automotive industry for many years as program manager for Ford Europe, working on high-tech welding robotic lines, he took his first steps in the agricultural and turf maintenance industry with Imants BV in 2004, eventually becoming director/owner.

"I had a minority of shares and my partner had more shares, so I could push the boat, but I was not able to steer it," he recalled. "I wanted to grow the company further and faster and my partner did not, and of course with his majority he had the last say.

"Then he asked me to slow down development – that's where my heart is, to develop things. And that made me feel not really happy and my wife Monique said, 'Well, you can do anything, Hans, so why don't you stop this and just do something else?'"

The 'something else' was the creation of AquaAid Europe, which in a decade has grown from a one-man operation to a company dealing with distributors in 42 countries across Europe, the Middle East and northern Africa.

Underscoring its growing reputation is the fact that a couple of years ago two out of 18 football clubs in the German Bundesliga numbered among its clients. Now only two out of 18 do not.

Helping care for golf courses presents more of a challenge than football pitches because of their large acreage and variety of plant life.

One of Aqua Aid's first steps towards helping reduce water consumption involves assessing the growing profile with a moisture meter establishing a soil's field capacity – how much water a given volume of soil can retain until it starts to flush – and its wilting point – the moment when a plant growing in the soil is no longer able to extract water.

"Anywhere between fill capacity and wilting point is where the moisture level of a profile needs to be to keep a plant healthy and happy.

"If you take too much water it becomes too wet and it will go through the profile and you will lose it for ever. You've wasted it," explained de Kort.

"With our technology, we can increase the water retention capacity over that profile, so if we provide water to that system we will keep it there for longer and keep the plant available for longer. The interval of the number of irrigation rounds can be stretched out."

De Kort has huge sympathy for demands made of greenkeeping staff to meet the expectations of both golfers and club management.

"An average greenkeeping team is always under pressure, and there's a very wide variety of things every head greenkeeper needs to know, from agronomy, to machinery, to managing staff, to managing expectations for the golf course, working around the golf course management and their ideas for special golf days or events – and budget, don't forget that."

De Kort, a father of three daughters and a son, all in their twenties, is an occasional golfer, only playing around ten times a year, possibly because of his compulsion to work.

"Sometimes it is hard not to work," he said, although he does enjoy hiking in the mountains, biking, and outdoor fitness sessions twice a week.

He has a link with former England footballer David Beckham in that each, in their professional life, has trodden the turf at both Manchester United and Real Madrid.

But while Beckham has been restricted to watching tennis from the Royal Box at Wimbledon, de Kort has stepped out onto its world famous Centre Court. Advantage de Kort. **END**

GLASS TO SAND BOTTLE CRUSHER

AN OBVIOUS WAY TO CUT COSTS AND REDUCE WASTE AT YOUR CLUB



The travel, hospitality and golf industries all carry the perception of a relatively large waste footprint and environmental impact.

In some cases, single destinations or groups are viewed as major contributors to global warming, whilst in most cases, management is becoming more environmentally conscious, and sustainability is now at the forefront of operations that are looking at their existence through a longer-term lens.

The Ranch at Laguna Beach is one example of a luxury resort with a focus on sustainability and really solidifying their place as an early adopter of many hotel and travel related sustainable practices.

The Bottle Crusher System is one of the most impactful elements of the sustainability program at The Ranch. The novel and cool idea of crushing bottles and turning them into sand was an easy sell to general manager, Kurt Bjorkman, who maintains he is no expert and is just someone trying to do the right thing.

"I'm not a trained environmentalist by any means," Bjorkman said. "I'm just somebody trying to do the right thing, that happens to run a hotel and golf facility. The Expleco glass crushing system is saving us hundreds of thousands of dollars."

Glass doesn't get recycled as much as people think and thousands of pounds of glass is put on trucks at a pretty big impact to our carbon standpoint.

You don't have to move the product any great distance to a recycling facility or unfortunately in many instances a landfill to render the process financially and environmentally pointless.

It also makes little sense when sand is the second most consumed resource in the world, second to only water. Every year the Ranch Crushes about 70 tonnes of bottles into sand and then screen it, mix it and blend it into a consistency that's perfect for golf course bunkers and divot repair products.

It is one thing to be labelled a sustainable Resort... it's another to have a golf course that's sustainable. A typical golf course bunker has about 30 tonnes of sand and often much more in larger fairway or waste bunkers.

The Ranch has removed glass waste bins from their bottom line and is now importing less sand from outside sources. Being able to reduce costs and improve sustainability on both sides is extremely helpful, especially in the golf world where resources to maintain a golf course are dramatic.

Wanting a regenerative world doesn't mean sacrificing a way of life, it just requires making a few shifts that feel good and have incredible impacts for the environment. In the case of glass to sand, and bottles to bunkers, this can all be achieved while saving money, which is not always the case when implementing solutions for the greater good of the environment.

Expleco – which is short for Explore Eco – was founded in 2009 in a New Zealand Naval Architecture office by father son team, Tim and Geoff Barnett. The company mission was to develop sustainable solutions for the waste industry.

Expleco co-founder Tim Barnett has always viewed true sustainability as a balance between environment and economy.





"ONE OF THE MOST COMMON QUESTIONS IS 'WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE CRUSHED GLASS,' AND WITH GOLF, THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUS"

"Too often in our journey we have stumbled across idealistic solutions or processes that ultimately fail due to financial limitations or in some cases, blanket solutions not fit for purpose from one geographic location to the next," he said.

"The result of such failures is often financially catastrophic, and the environmental outcome is often worse than doing nothing at all.

"Our approach to sustainability is a balance between economic and environmental outcomes. If a solution puts financial pressure on an operator, the environmental outcome is often far worse."

Expleco, now 15 years on is exporting to more than 100 countries, providing glass waste solutions to basically any business or industry that creates glass waste from single feed equipment to large scale conveyor fed plants.

The company is fortunate to have most of the top hotel and resort brands operating the equipment in at least one of their sites and many like Six Senses and Four Seasons are using the technology in more than one location.

Some of the largest breweries, wineries and liquor companies trust the equipment to reduce their waste footprint and fittingly the equipment from a marine design office is also well utilised by cruise lines and shipping companies, and even more widely by luxury yacht builders including the likes of Feadship and Lurssen.

"Golf like many industries served by Expleco is constantly evolving. In the early years 95 per cent of our sales strategy was around cost savings alone," added Barnett. "Installations in golf were few and far between with only a handful ahead of their time in Pelican Hill and The Ranch in California, Anahita in Mauritius, Turtle Bay in Hawaii and handful of courses in New Zealand.

"Over time the gap between economics and environment has narrowed. Sustainability is now a notable reason to adopt a glass to sand approach. One of the most common questions is 'What do we do with the crushed glass,' and with golf, the answer is obvious.

"The upside only becomes more prevalent when you research the characteristics of the perfect golf sand."

High angularity (jagged rather than smooth), low sphericity (elongated rather than round) and uniformity coefficients (variable size rather than same size blends) are words commonly associated in golf sands with optimal performance, drainage and compaction characteristics.

Glass from the Expleco equipment is a perfect combination of angular, low sphericity sand and through the screening process affords a golf course the flexibility to create the right blend for their conditions.

Glass (silica sand, soda ash, lime) is also what is deemed an amorphous silica which is far safer from a health standpoint than it's mined crystalline silica counterparts from river sources. Albeit the risk from the latter is still very low unless you hit your ball in every bunker for the next 20 years and make a conscious effort to eat the sand.

"Glass sand looks and performs amazingly well," said Geoff Barnett. "There will always be perception hurdles in an industry entrenched with tradition, but the industry is facing some tough sustainability questions and innovation will be key in preserving the sport for future generations."

It is an exciting time for Expleco. A recent bottle's to bunker's feature by VODA Films in California has generated a huge volume of interest in the glass to sand technology from the golf and hospitality industry.

Expleco co-founder Geoff Barnett is an avid golfer and is passionate about providing solutions to ensure the sport that has brought him so much pleasure is preserved for future generations to enjoy. There will always be perception hurdles to overcome within the golf industry that is entrenched with tradition, particularly at clubs with 2,000 plus members and 4,000 opinions to answer too. Those that adapt and innovate will likely win the race and answer the more challenging sustainability and cost increases

The glass to sand process is simple. In a matter of minutes Expleco will be able to assess cost savings on your current waste collection and add in any additional savings that can be achieved from reducing the sand you bring on site from outside sources.

Those that adapt and innovate will likely win the race and navigate the more challenging sustainability hurdles and cost increases successfully. **END**



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glass to sand

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"THE HUMAN CONNECTION IS IRREPLACEABLE AND FUNDAMENTAL TO
THE SUCCESS OF ANY ORGANISATION"



Words

Gareth Macklin
CEO
Obbi Golf

GUEST BOOK

GARETH MACKLIN



This may sound counteracting coming from me, a CEO of a software company, but in the height of innovation, rapid increase of technology and AI in our daily lives, we can't lose sight of the people behind it all.

At the heart of any successful company, club, community or family are the people who work together to make it all happen. Technology can never replace the act of human connection, and while technology can enhance our capabilities, it is the people behind the technology that truly drive success.

It is the collaboration, creativity, and dedication of individuals that bring technology to life. Teamwork is the foundation of this human connection, and when individuals work together towards a common goal, they create a synergy that technology alone cannot, and never will, achieve.

Collaboration encourages the exchange of ideas, problem-solving, and mutual support. It builds trust and camaraderie, which are essential for any team to thrive. The human connection is irreplaceable and fundamental to the success of any organisation.

So don't forget to switch that text back to a coffee meet up; that operational meeting to a team day out and turn the work phone off and put the laptop away in the evenings to build the most important human connections of all – family time! **END**

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