



GOLF MANAGEMENT

SERVING THE GOLF INDUSTRY SINCE 1997
golfmanagement.eu.com

NUMBER 131 | SUMMER 2020

Now Is The Time For Building Customer Loyalty States Club Car



INTRODUCING ICI+

@RainBirdGolf

ACCESS THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY WITHOUT A MAJOR OVERHAUL

The New Integrated Control Interface Plus (ICI+)

From the leader in golf course irrigation comes another game-changing innovation. With Rain Bird's new ICI+ Interface and IFX Satellite Technology, for first the first time ever, you can install the IC System™ on an existing Rain Bird Satellite wire path. Upgrading to new and future technologies has never been easier or more affordable.



One Interface



The Latest Technology



Discover the possibilities of ICI+ at rainbird.com/ICIPlus.

RAIN BIRD®

"MANY CLUBS COULD FIND THEMSELVES IN THE PARADOXICAL POSITION OF SAVING MONEY RATHER THAN LOSING IT"

FAIR COMMENT

How wonderful to be writing this leader with golf clubs all over Europe re-opening their fairways following the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. Oh, golf, how we've missed you...

In a recent discussion with a general manager, I was very interested to hear his take on the necessary closures across the globe. Initially, his view surprised me, but the more we spoke the more I understood his perspective. This was reinforced by a LinkedIn post by Chris Duffy, GM at Huddersfield GC, who propagated a similar theory, viz, that in the short term, some clubs may make more profit this year if they are supported predominately through membership subscription.

Having furloughed staff and closed the kitchen and bar, many clubs could find themselves in the paradoxical position of saving money rather than losing it during a pandemic – albeit, of course, an unsustainable proposition in the long term. Chris made the point that, on average, in a 'normal' year, 40 per cent of revenue goes on staffing costs – remove a large part of those costs, while retaining the membership income, and perhaps things don't look quite so grim?

Likewise, profits – if any – from F&B are generally small beer, so it is quite feasible that upon reopening many clubs might choose to scale back their F&B offering, especially if they are a private club with little or no wedding and/or function income.

Of course, it remains to be seen how this scenario will be affected by renewals next year. Watch this socially distanced space. **END**



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com



FEATURING

SUMMER 2020



JAMES BURNS
MILLTOWN

"What we're learning from our American colleagues is that if we can provide a comfortable, clean, regularly sanitised, safe environment for members, actually members clubs are going to do quite well coming out of this."

18



DUNCAN WEIR
THE R&A

"What we will do – with or without an Open championship, and sadly this year it's going to be without – is all going to be aimed at ensuring golf is thriving in 50 years' time, and the coronavirus has not changed that ambition."

24



ROB MCGUIRK

PRINCE'S

"We had to furlough most of the management team apart from the course manager, which means we have been light on staff. Therefore, I have been out assisting cutting greens, which for me is a great change of scenery."

28



PAUL BURLEY

IMG GOLF

"In some countries, golf will bounce back quickly, and we are already starting to see some markets recover and open up again. Other markets will need time, and in particular clubs and resorts in high-end destinations."

32



SIMON WORDSWORTH

59CLUB

"The higher end private clubs will have a choice to go more private, and the middle ground will be really interesting in my view. Those higher end clubs have a great opportunity to create 'safe havens' where people feel comfortable."

36

"THE MORE YOU CAN COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR MEMBERS AND
GUESTS RIGHT NOW, THE BETTER"



COVER STORY

CLUBCAR.COM



As golf clubs begin to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and start the process of rebuilding their businesses, focus should be given to communication, transparency and building customer loyalty, according to Club Car president, Mark Wagner.

Speaking at an important golf industry conference in America last month, staged virtually due to social distancing and travel restrictions, Wagner commented: "The more you can communicate with your members and guests right now, the better.

"Clubs that are looking to adapt to what's going on with diversified services, will be those who succeed."

As a global leader in golf, consumer and utility vehicles and a brand of Ingersoll Rand, Wagner highlighted how Club Car's digital technologies are perfectly positioned to help golf venues that are preparing to re-open.

"I have no doubt Club Car's connected technology, Visage, for example, will be a major part of the solution to course re-openings, as the operational advantages are substantial," he said.

"The Visage system can help venues manage self-distancing protocols. It addresses a club's dilemma as to whether they should call on starters to manage tee-offs, and marshals to patrol the courses to ensure the pace of play.

"The technology allows venues to monitor and control these from the office or the pro shop, safeguarding employees," he added.

Visage's digital food and beverage ordering capabilities can help clubs generate additional revenue by enabling players to submit orders for safe pick-up after they have finished their rounds, or after nine holes, avoiding contact in the clubhouse.

Addressing how clubs should approach reopening with members and guests, Wagner concluded: "Be as open as possible and forthcoming with information – from roll-out plans to disclosure statements – it will go a long way to mitigate concerns and uneasiness.

"It is important, during such uncertain times, to make everyone aware of what the reopening and new playing conditions are, and what you have planned to get things back up and running."

Wagner's comments were echoed by Kevin Hart, sales director EMEA who added: "Our key objective is to focus on the people, and a vital element of how we get through this is communication with our customers.

"Just picking up the phone and not talking about business as we know many courses have been closed, but just asking them how they've been coping. Many golf courses have had to lay-off staff or put them on furlough, so again, it's just about being there to talk to our customers and offer advice.

"As golf clubs across Europe slowly begin to emerge from their respective lockdowns, the industry can be assured that Club Car will be with them every step of the way," said Hart. **END**

Perfect spread, every time.

WideSpin™ 1550 Broadcast Topdresser

Turfco redefines how maintenance equipment can save time while improving results. With edge-to-edge coverage, the WideSpin Topdresser could save up to 720 greens passes per year. Plus, the savable presets ensure your preferred application every time.



See the difference. Schedule your demo today at www.turfco.com or call 800.679.8201



ALL YOU NEED ALL YEAR ROUND



The ISEKI SF range of powerful 24-46hp diesel engine mowers with turbine driven chute direct from the deck to the large hopper upto 1300L, ensures no blockages even in the wettest conditions. Available with rotary or Muthing flail decks, the ISEKI SF450 really is the ultimate mowing machine. Allowing you to work without the weather restricting you.

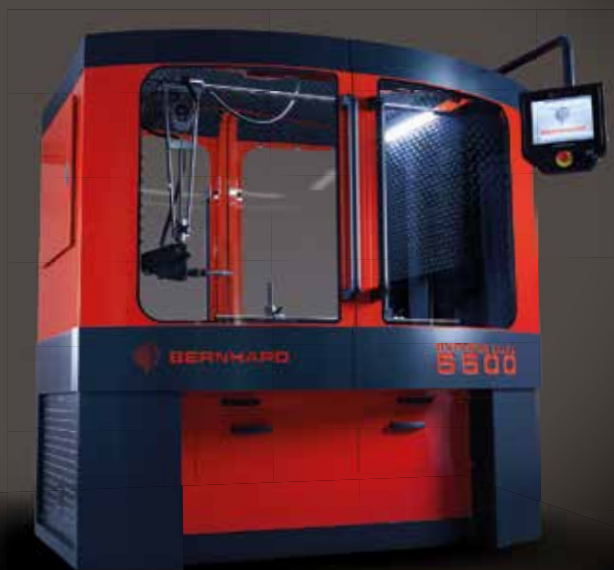
ISEKI UK & IRELAND
Tel 01473 599266
sales@iseki.co.uk www.iseki.co.uk



KNOW BERNHARD? THINK AGAIN. THE EXPRESS DUAL 5500.

The Express Dual 5500 is a truly connected reel sharpening system featuring our unique laser reel surveying system, 10.5" touch screen, contactless cards and direct reel drive.

Find out more at expressdual.com



BERNHARD
TURF HEALTH SOLUTIONS



NEW 10.5" touch-screen



NEW Laser technology



NEW RFID technology



NEW Direct reel drive

BUY BERNHARD. GET THE EDGE.

TECHNOLOGY

EXPERTISE

SUPPORT

"THESE LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE REALLY MADE ME REALISE THAT,
CONTRARY TO WHATEVER THE GREAT BILL SHANKLY MAY HAVE SAID,
NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN LIFE AND DEATH"



VISIT OUR PARTNERS ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com/partners



ON THE FRINGE

I want to be honest with you – I've been completely ambivalent about the return of professional sport. Not grass-roots sport, of course, as our industry needs to be up and running to sustain the livelihoods of many thousands of good, honest, hard-working individuals – many of whom have spent the last few months furloughed and genuinely concerned as to whether they'd still have a job at the tail end of the year. That's a priority.

But I've remained completely unmoved by the constant media speculation of when – or if – professional golf, football, tennis, motor racing, et al, can return. And it's not because I look at over-paid 'superstars' who could, quite feasibly, never have to work another day in their life – although that remains the case; no, my reason is much more prosaic: people are dying in their hundreds and thousands, particularly so in the UK, which, as I write, has one of the worst death rates per capita in the world.

I've been a sports addict all my life, 57 years of it – but these last few months have really made me realise that, contrary to whatever the great Bill Shankly may have said, nothing is more important than life and death. Millions of dollars have been spent worldwide by pressure groups galvanised by sports' governing bodies to put pressure on governments to allow their cash-cow enterprises to resume before they lose sponsors, official tyre partners and, maybe, that third home on the Côte d'Azur.

Just imagine how different it might have been for those thousands of mourning families if that money had been spent on front-line medical support and equipment instead of self-interest.

I understand that capitalism doesn't work like that; you can't just conjure up a way to switch money to one sector from a disparate commercial world. You're comparing apples and pears, I hear you say – and you'd be right. But, in my ideal world, I'd like to choose whether I have an apple or a pear.

When people I know are fighting for their lives in an intensive care unit, I still find it incongruous that I'm bombarded with reports of 'crisis' meetings at the Premier League and the PGA Tour. And, to my eternal shame, I still watch, listen and read. The big sports will survive – they always do. However great the storm, the leviathans of the sporting sea always find a port. All I fervently hope is that when we emerge from this we retain a sense of perspective – many of the people who have died during this pandemic would have been sports fans too.

Hopefully, professional sport may have an epiphany and realise it has a responsibility to give back. There have, indeed, been some heartwarming stories of individual sports stars going above and beyond to help their communities – maybe their commitment could be reflected by the power-brokers in their respective industries. **END**

NEWS IN BRIEF

GOLFMANAGEMENT.EU.COM/NEWS



QUINTA DO LAGO TAKES TUITION ONLINE WITH NEW GOLF ACADEMY

Improving your golf swing at Quinta do Lago has never been easier or more flexible after the Portuguese resort launched a new online coaching platform at its world-famous golf academy. Golfers of all ages and abilities can take advantage of tailored one-to-one tuition from the award-winning Algarve venue's team of top professional coaches, with an array of online sessions available to book.

SEARCH 'QUINTA DO LAGO' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



JEFF ANGUIGE TAKES EARLY RETIREMENT FROM REESINK

Reesink Turfcare has announced the retirement of its national sales manager Jeff Anguige after 21 years working with the Toro UK distributor and its predecessor Lely UK, and a total of 46 years serving the turfcare industry. Anguige, 63, began working in the industry straight after leaving college, learning the business working at golf and grounds dealerships and turf machinery manufacturers such as Ransomes. In 1999 he joined the then Toro UK distributor Lely UK, with headquarters at St Neots, as national Toro sales manager, responsible for spearheading sales of its golf course and sports turf maintenance machinery.

SEARCH 'JEFF ANGUIGE' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

IMG is a global leader in the development, marketing and management of world class golf courses. Over the past 25 years we have assisted over 110 clubs worldwide with our industry leading golf consulting services and currently provide management and marketing services to over 20 award winning clubs & resorts.

The company also offers IMG Prestige, a global reciprocal network of over 200 golf courses located across 34 countries.

GLOBAL LEADER IN SPORTS, FASHION, AND MEDIA
WWW.IMGPRESTIGE.COM



Innovative Turf Care Machinery

That's Setting New Standards

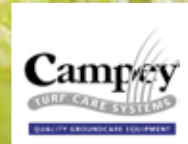
Campey Turf Care supply state of the art machinery that's regularly used on some of the worlds finest natural sports surfaces. Creating top quality healthy surfaces that are ready for play, talk to Campey today.

Innovative turf care machinery that's trusted by leading turf care professionals around the world.

Call +44 (0)1260 224568
email info@campeyturfcare.com
visit www.campeyturfcare.com

📱 CampeyTurfCare 📘 Campeys
📺 CampeyMachinery 📷 CampeyTurfCare

Perfecting Play™



ClearWater

Water Recycling Systems

A division of Acumen Waste Services

NEW! Credit Now Available

Making compliance that much easier

ClearWater ticks all the right boxes

- ✓ **A genuine biological water recycling system**
Not all washpad solutions recycle
- ✓ **Installed safely below ground**
Away from vandals and it looks good
- ✓ **Low operating temperature**
Well below 20°C and allays fears of Legionella developing
- ✓ **Large 5000 litre water capacity**
More than most offer and allows time for full treatment
- ✓ **Water Technology List Approved**
Means tax advantages under the ECA scheme
- ✓ **Only two moving parts**
Less to go wrong and minimal maintenance
- ✓ **Self-install option**
The only bio-system offering this; means huge savings!

Call now 01977 529580
clearwater@acumenwaste.co.uk





AL MOUJ GOLF EXPANDS ITS INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

Al Mouj Golf in Muscat, Oman has for the second time re-tained its designation as a "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary" through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Programme for Golf Courses, an Audubon International programme. Al Mouj Golf was first designated as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in 2014 becoming the first golf course in the Middle East and North African region to be certified.

SEARCH 'AL MOUJ' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



QUINTA DO LAGO UNVEILS NEW €7M GOLF INVESTMENT

Quinta do Lago's South Course is to be given a modern makeover as part of a new €7m golf course investment programme taking place at the luxury Portuguese resort this summer. The upgrade of the iconic layout, an eight-time host of the Portuguese Open, forms the centrepiece of a multi-million euro golf improvement plan announced by the top Algarve destination resort, with all the work due to be completed by September 1, 2020. As part of the South Course's major overhaul, all fairways, bunkers, tees and green surrounds will be revamped as well as subtle changes being made to a number of holes to enhance the playing experience.

SEARCH 'QUINTA DO LAGO' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



CRAIL APPOINTS DAVID SNODGRASS AS NEXT HEAD PROFESSIONAL

For only the second occasion in its 234-year history, Crail Golfing Society has appointed a new head professional, with David Snodgrass, the current assistant professional, taking over on January 4, 2021. Snodgrass has been assistant under current head professional, Graeme Lennie who is retiring after 34 years at the Scottish Club. Lennie, who was the very first professional appointed by the club, will leave Crail Golfing Society having helped establish the club now as one of Scotland's favourite golfing destinations.

SEARCH 'DAVID SNODGRASS' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

**RETURN TO OEM SPEC
OR TOUCH-UP,
THE CHOICE IS YOURS.**

ACCU-MASTER 653
FULLY ENCLOSED NOISE &
DUST REDUCTION GRINDER



NEW! REAR DOORS WITH MOUNTED TABLE LIFT*
*Optional Equipment



PRECISION AT PLAY | FOLEYCO.COM

FOLEY
COMPANY

Star Command 3180



**Only the Smithco Star Command Series
Has These Exclusive TeeJet Features**

- Control droplet size for greater efficacy, independent of rate, speed or height of cut, without worrying about drift.
- Spray from 2-10 mph – up to twice as fast as other sprayers.
 - Get precision guidance, auto-steering, application rate control, mapping, variable rate application, Automatic Boom Section Control and even optional wireless data transfer.

Smithco.com

Club Car Tempo™ Lithium



Club Car®

www.clubcar.com
info@clubcar.com

Official partner of



Tempo LITHIUM



MEMBERSHIP SURGES FOR NEW TYPE OF GOLF AT MANNINGS HEATH

There is a surge in golf membership sign-ups, with the new, younger players looking for shorter games than before the lockdown, says Barry Anderson, managing director of Mannings Heath Golf and Wine Estate. The club has reopened following the UK Prime Minister's statement on May 10, 2020 permitting golf and other outdoor sports to be resumed. Anderson says that members joining now are generally in the age range of 30 to 50 years old, whereas before the pandemic most club players were retired, and many in their 70s.

SEARCH 'BARRY ANDERSON' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



AIR2G2 PROVES TO BE A 'GAME CHANGER' AT LA GRANDE MARE

The Air2G2 GT Air Inject from Campey Turf Care Systems has played a significant role in transforming the greens at the La Grande Mare Golf Club in Guernsey. When he arrived at his new job two-years ago, course manager, Rick Hamilton, spoke to the members about their main concerns and the quality and playability of the greens was top of the list. Because the course is built on marshland, the soil is very silty heavy clay, making it a problematic soil profile to produce a healthy root zone.

SEARCH 'AIR2G2' ONLINE

[at golfmanagement.eu.com](http://golfmanagement.eu.com) for the full story



GOLF GENIUS SOFTWARE RECEIVES FIRST INSTITUTIONAL ROUND OF FINANCING

Golf Genius Software, a provider of cloud-based tournament management software to the golf industry, has announced the closing of its first institutional round of equity funding, led by four-time major champion and top-ranked golfer in the world, Rory McIlroy, and MVP Capital Partners. The company's flagship product, Golf Genius TMS, is one of the most widely used and fully featured golf tournament management systems available today, and the funding will allow the company to accelerate its product roadmap and expand its geographical reach.

SEARCH 'GOLF GENIUS' ONLINE

[at golfmanagement.eu.com](http://golfmanagement.eu.com) for the full story



A Revolution in Golf Bag Storage

The Carousel Golf Bag Storage System is easy to install, safe to use, and allows your club to increase, and often treble your golf bag storage capacity.

New for 2020... Electric Trolley Racking

Installations include...

- R&A St Andrews
- Penha Longa
- The K Club
- Portmarnock
- Aphrodite Hills
- The International
- Royal Óbidos



www.carouselgolfing.com

+44 (0)1242 702967
info@carouselgolfing.com

JOHN GREASLEY LTD

Specialists in Golf Course Construction

Green, Tee & Bunker Reconstruction
Drainage Schemes, Lakes & Reservoirs
Practice Facilities



HYLINE

HEAVY DUTY, TRIPLE LAYER GEOSYNTHETIC LINER

www.johngreasleyltd.co.uk
Tel: 0116 269 6766



Digital Scorecard.




We are making our Digital Scorecard App available to all clubs with NO SUBSCRIPTION FEES.

- FULL DIGITAL SCORECARD
- INCLUDES MARKER VERIFICATION
- PDF RECORDS OF ALL SCORES
- CSV & EXCEL OF ALL SCORES
- FULLY INTEGRATED TO HANDICAPMASTER
- SCORE FOR ALL PLAYERS IN GROUP
- UNLIMITED PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

The normal cost for the app with scoring and competition setup is £2,100. For the remainder of 2020, any club can have the app with the above features with no subscription costs, subject to a one-off setup fee of £350.

For further enquiries email
support@clubnetscoring.com



THE R&A LAUNCHES £7M FUNDING PACKAGE TO HELP GOLF INDUSTRY

The R&A has launched a £7 million funding package, The R&A COVID-19 Support Fund, to help golf deal with the impact of the pandemic. The fund will be largely aimed at national associations and other affiliated bodies in Great Britain and Ireland. With the global pandemic leading to widespread temporary course closures and drastic reductions in domestic and international travel, many golf clubs and facilities are facing serious financial difficulties.

SEARCH 'R&A' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



SYMBIO APPOINTS NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Jeremy Hughes has been appointed by Symbio as its new international business development manager. He has taken the reins from Martin Ward in providing advisory services, product support and training to the company's growing number of distributorships serving an expanding customer base in overseas markets. Hughes also provides direct support to a number of golf resorts and football clubs in Europe and the Nordics.

SEARCH 'JEREMY HUGHES' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



ENGLAND GOLF CEO JEREMY TOMLINSON WELCOMES GOLF'S RETURN

On the day that golf clubs across England re-opened for play, Jeremy Tomlinson, CEO of England Golf has written an open letter to the 1,900 golf club's, and the 630,000 men, women and children who participate in the sport. In the personally-worded letter, which was headed "And on the tee...", Tomlinson said: "Wasn't it fantastic to think about those words again today as golf courses all over England re-opened for play?"

SEARCH 'JEREMY TOMLINSON' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



swan^golfdesigns
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

GOLF COURSE DESIGN
AND
RENOVATION

www.swangolfdesigns.com
enquiries@swangolfdesigns.com



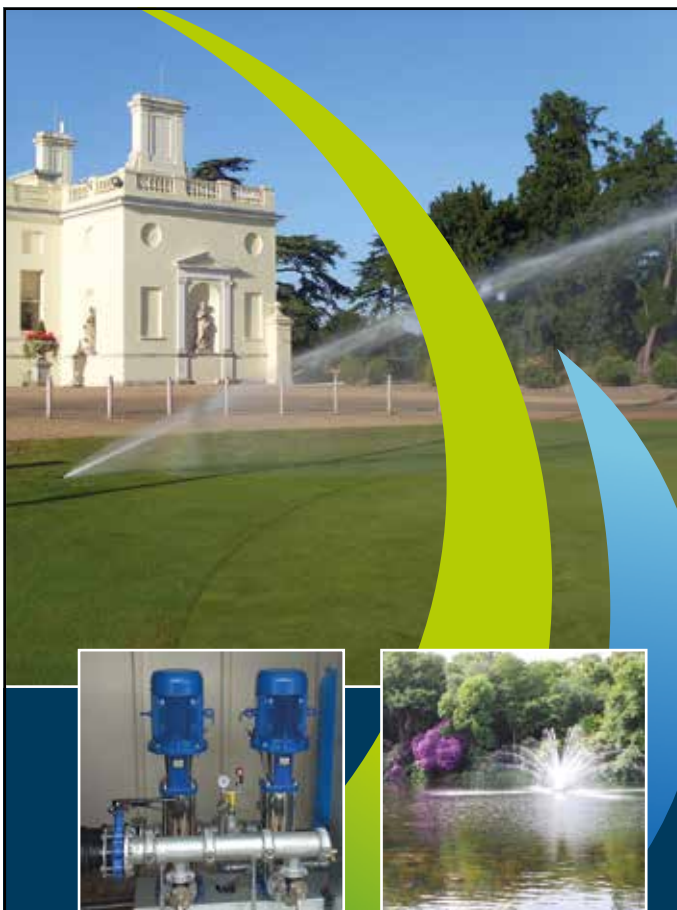
ROYAL BLEĐ, SLOVENIA

020 3985 0160
safety@e-arc.co.uk
e-arc.co.uk



**Helping the world's
golfers get back on course!**

**Social distancing signage and safety
material - tailored to your clubs
specific needs.**



 **Topturf**
IRRIGATION

Topturf Irrigation is a family run business
and one of the leading irrigation
companies in the UK.

Working to the highest industry
standards we design, build and install
irrigation systems, as well as offering full
servicing for all existing and new systems.

Call us on **01903 278240** or email
info@tirrigation.co.uk

www.tirrigation.co.uk



JAMES BURNS

GENERAL MANAGER, MILLTOWN



Founded in 1907, Milltown Golf Club south of Dublin is considered to have one of the finest club experiences in Ireland, and has invested heavily both on-and-off the course in recent years.

A major refurbishment of the clubhouse preceded the club's centenary celebrations, and more recently, McKenzie and Ebert were retained to oversee a major re-development of the course.

But it was in August 2006, when Milltown procured the services of James Burns as F&B manager, that the future of the Irish club – both pre and post COVID-19 – began to evolve. With a degree in hospitality management, and with a passion for golf, Burns arrived as a fresh-faced 28-year-old after a previous spell working for hotel chain Ramada.

"When I took the job at Milltown as food and beverage manager, it was the best decision I ever made – I could still be rattling around hotels," recalls Burns with a smile.

"Although I have a hospitality training background, I'm passionate about the service industry, and have been able to combine my passion for golf, and golf clubs. And with Milltown being one of the largest providers of a hospitality base in the club world here in Ireland, it was a great fit."

And that "great fit" led to Burns assuming the position of general manager four years later, after Milltown agreed to support and fund his career progression.

"I always wanted to be a GM of a club, so education-wise, I needed to develop," admits Burns. "When I was food and beverage manager, the club supported me through a

certificate in club management, which was run by the IGCMA, the Irish club region."

Still hungry for knowledge, in 2008 just after the financial crash, the board at Milltown agreed to finance an executive leadership programme at Cornell University in New York, at a time when other clubs were making staff redundant. "I was very fortunate," recalled Burns.

And that investment paid dividends the following year when Burns was offered the role of general manager. "I was offered the role in 2009 when my boss decided to retire before his time. I was 30 years old, and never thought I would be managing a club the size and stature of Milltown until my mid-to-late forties.

"The club were invested in my continuous [career] development, so when they came to me and said 'We would like you to take over; you've done all of this training and we think you're ready,' they immediately offered me the job. I didn't even have to interview for it."

Now aged 42, Burns took over as president of the Club Managers Association of Europe (CMAE) last year – and has been a Certified Club Manager since 2012 – but with COVID-19 uppermost in most general manager's thoughts at the moment, he has some useful insight to share on how the golf industry might look like when the 'new normal' starts to evolve, and in particular his specialist subject, F&B.

"For the foreseeable future, we are looking to our colleagues and friends in the US and in the Middle East where they are working on 30 per cent capacity, and staff wearing masks.



"WE FEEL – AND CERTAINLY I WOULD SHARE WHAT AMERICA IS SAYING – THAT THE CLUB CAN PROVIDE A BIT OF A SAFE HUB GOING FORWARD"

"We're also looking at other places that are ahead of us that offer busy food operations and expect to offer a lot more Alfresco or outdoor dining whilst observing social distancing.

"We will be offering a takeaway premium experience for members to come in and to be able to spend money, and there will be coffee shops and barbecues.

"We are mapping out our schedule and diary for the club, in preparation for when things return to a little bit of normality from the summer onwards, although very much on a restricted basis."

Burns plans to turn the club into a safe haven and is working closely with his social committee to protect the welfare of the membership. And due to the anticipated reduction in restaurant capacity, is looking at ways in which he can mitigate any financial loss.

"What we can do is look at running an event twice – we need to think separately now, and maybe drive in more lunch business, and more dinner business."

But with the average age of the membership at Milltown in the early 60s, will that present a problem convincing them that the club is safe to visit?

"We're not expecting people of that age category to be hugely active... why would they risk it? But I think certainly that what we're learning from our American colleagues is that if we can provide a comfortable, clean, regularly sanitised, safe environment for members, actually members clubs are going to do quite well coming out of this.

"I also believe that the randomness of going to your favourite restaurant is going to go," predicts Burns. "I'm three miles from Dublin city centre, so I'm competing with all the restaurants. And a mile from here are some of the top restaurants in the country.

"We feel – and certainly I would share what America is saying – that the club can provide a bit of a safe hub going forward. And we would see that as a potential area of growth for us, that members would come and use the club more often.

"I think that's what the US model is looking at. They are seeing more activity from

members and I think we'll see more of our members too."

As president of the CMAE, Burns had always intended to offer advice and guidance to his membership throughout his two-year tenure. Working with club managers from all sports, Burns shares a camaraderie with his fellow managers at golf clubs across Europe, many of whom are now facing an uncertain future as a result of COVID-19.

And with club managers needing to adapt at a pace unprecedented in the golf industry, he sympathises with their predicament.

"I know from a food and beverage background, that managers will need to be more creative in their offering, whilst obviously being safe. But trying to do what you did before isn't going to attract people in.

"They probably need to be a bit more careful on trying to be all things to all members; all visitors; all guests. I think there will be a lot that needs to go into planning, and menus will also need to change.

"Managers will need to be more creative, and probably offer digital ordering via a smartphone app.

"I also anticipate that labour costs are going to be higher as well, because it's really going to be a table service. You won't be able to go to the bar to pay for your food or to casually walk out. We are going to be working in a more controlled environment. So, I think all clubs need to make sure that what they're offering isn't trying to stretch it out.

"It's going to be tough for those proprietary clubs that rely on visitor or walk-in income," admits Burns. "I think clubs need to think [towards] next year, and possibly recessionary times. Nobody has a crystal ball, but I think managers need to start building scenarios based on restricted numbers of food and beverage, and tailor their resources around that.

"I know people would like to probably go back to simple golf and a breakfast, and that's probably the easiest thing to deliver, but I'm not sure that will be sustainable.

"It may get us through the crisis, but you have to be able to come back from it as well." **END**

"THE BALL ACTUALLY ROLLS AWAY FROM THE HOLE WHEN EXTRACTED
WHICH ALSO LIMITS WEAR-AND-TEAR ON THE HOLE SURROUND"



IN ASSOCIATION WITH
bmsproducts.com



CONTACTLESS BALL EXTRACTOR

In any crisis, there are always winners and losers, with the key to success quickly identifying a product that everyone needs at a time when, let's be frank, money is at a premium. In the Great Depression of the 1930s, Richard Drew invented an adhesive tape to help cash-strapped folks patch-up clothing, and so Scotch Tape was born.

So, will COVID-19 present another eureka moment for a new invention? Following rule changes last year, it is now permissible to putt with the flagstick in the hole, with opinion divided as to what is better. However, since the re-introduction of golf post-lockdown, and the implementation of the new social distancing guidelines, the option to remove the flagstick – or even touch it – has been deemed illegal, at least for the foreseeable future.

So how do you then stop the ball from entering the hole, whilst at the same time removing all contact with the flagstick? With some clubs opting to turn cups upside down – and a few even inserting foam lagging to stop the ball from dropping – James Buckholt, managing director of BMS Products believes that he has invented a simple, professional and effective way of allowing the ball to still drop into the hole, without the need to bend down and retrieve it. Branded as the Contactless Ball Extractor (CBE) and developed by Buckholt and his team at his British-based manufacturing company, the device is simple to use and highly effective.

"It's a device for sliding over the top of the flagstick to allow the golf ball to be extracted out of the hole allowing the golfer to remove the ball from the hole without touching the flag or the surrounding area," commented Buckholt. "Golfers are able to lift the CBE up with their putter, which in-turn, allows the golf ball that sits on the bottom of the cup to be raised level with the putting surface, allowing golfers to simply retrieve the ball from the green without any contact with the flagstick whatsoever.

"As the bottom of the CBE is slightly bevelled, the ball actually rolls away from the hole when extracted which also limits wear-and-tear on the hole surround. In our engineering facility here, we mocked-up some prototypes and took them to Woburn Golf Club. We field-tested a couple of variations, and after a successful trial, we very quickly put these into production.

"We are very proud of the fact that we have in-house research and development as well as engineering at BMS, so taking an idea from a piece of paper through to the finished product is immensely satisfying," said Buckholt. And that satisfaction is being shared by club managers, greenkeepers and thousands of golfers across Europe, as the Contactless Ball Extractor becomes the latest must-have device on the golf course.

And don't be surprised if it becomes a permanent fixture once restrictions are lifted, whenever that time will be. **END**

DUNCAN WEIR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - GOLF DEVELOPMENT, THE R&A



Honours boards at golf clubs around the world, normally unconnected other than perhaps containing the occasional and co-incidental duplication of surnames, will all be bonded come the end of the year. Alongside some 2020 competitions will be an asterisk with an accompanying explanation that the events were not held because of COVID-19.

Even the greatest championship of them all, The Open, has succumbed to the effects of the pandemic with the R&A – who in tandem with the USGA govern the sport worldwide – postponing the 149th staging, at Royal St George's, in Kent, for 12 months.

Since it is the R&A's only revenue stream it is currently waiting for formal confirmation of the exact financial impact the decision will have as negotiations continue with its insurers.

However, Duncan Weir, the executive director of golf development and amateur championships for the R&A, insisted: "What we will do – with or without an Open championship, and sadly this year it's going to be without – is all going to be aimed at ensuring golf is thriving in 50 years' time, and the coronavirus has not changed that ambition.

"I've not been involved in the nitty gritty [with the insurers], but as you can imagine with cancelling any major event insurance terms play a major part of that, and The Open is no different. The point I would make is that The Open is the R&A's only source of income so not only are we dependent on it, but much of golf in GB&I is dependent on it.

"Golf beyond GB&I benefits from it, too, so The Open plays a very important part in not just entertaining people and finding

the Champion Golfer of the Year, but raising money which allows the R&A to fulfil what we consider to be our obligation."

Golf clubs are facing their own financial uncertainties due to social lockdowns around the globe, which have not only removed all income directly connected to the playing of the game, but also subsidiary revenue gained from staging events, for example, such as weddings, parties and business meetings.

Weir explained that the R&A, which already provides extensive and regular support, will examine ways of increasing its commitments because of the extraordinary circumstances in which the world finds itself, and will do so through its normal lines of communication, not directly with clubs.

"We already support golf very heavily here in GB&I," he said, "with the Golf Foundation, for example – who do a tremendous job bringing young men and women into golf, through the schools programme and the like – it is the beneficiary of the biggest single annual grant we make, that's £500,000 a year.

"There's the PGA at The Belfry, £200,000 a year; the European Tour £200,000 a year; the Challenge Tour £120,000; we are supporting the LPGA and the LET and the Access Series with a joint venture this year.

"That work will go on, even through this pandemic, and all these grants have been made for year 2020 so there is still a lot of good work going on, and will go on certainly in the second half of this year. Those grants will be paid, and many of them have already been paid.





"GOLF'S GOT A BIG PART TO PLAY IN SOCIETY'S RECOVERY, BECAUSE OF THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS THAT PLAYING GOLF CAN OFFER"

"Our structure is such that it is national bodies which are affiliated to us, so in [the case of the interviewer] it would be England Golf and then to England Golf it would be the Yorkshire Union of Golf Clubs and then affiliated to the union would be the golf clubs; Moortown, Alwoodley, Fulford or whoever it would be.

"We don't offer funding directly to golf clubs, but we do offer funding through the national bodies. So, we support England Golf very heavily every year, for instance. I think our support this year might be in the region of £170,000, and we support many countries around the world, and would regularly support around 100 countries financially annually, all of which would be affiliated to the R&A.

"Our structure is such that the main contact in the development side is mainly through the national organisations as opposed to through the regions, provinces or clubs all over the world."

With regard to offering supplementary assistance, he added: "We have been in dialogue with [England Golf] and with others, not just here in GB&I but elsewhere, and we are working at the moment on putting together some kind of a package which will allow us, hopefully, to support some of those associations once our own finances are clear.

"We're still working through the details of our insurance claim on the cancellation of The Open, but if they come out as we hope they will, we would expect to be in a position to say something about hopefully offering additional funding to golf, but it will channelled through our affiliates. We would never bypass England Golf, for example, to go and support an individual club, that's not our role."

Some disgruntlement has been aired through social media by a minority of members of private clubs who feel they are not getting value for money from their annual subscription because of enforced course closures, but Weir feels this "could be a Lord

Kitchener moment for golf. We should not be asking, 'what can my club do for me, but what can I do for my club?'"

"Being able to resume playing golf just when the weather's improving, when the courses which haven't seen any play in weeks, months, will be in great condition, there's every chance, in Britain and Ireland, that people will be able to have a reasonable chunk of the golf season out of whatever subscription they might have paid for this year. I would hope that people will stand by their golf club in difficult times."

Weir believes excellent course conditions is a huge positive players will have discovered when play resumed in mid-May. "Greenkeeping staff have not had play to contend with, they've had a very good spell of weather and they've had a chance to do things on the golf course that they might have had difficulty doing in a normal spring time," he said.

"From what I've heard and from speaking with Jim Croxton [CEO of BIGGA], and Steve Isaac [Director – Sustainability, The R&A], who works closely with Jim, most golf clubs have been able to give the golf course some attention even if it's only been one full-time greenkeeper, and so my overall impression is actually pretty positive, and I would include in that the public golf courses."

While denial of a regular diet of golf during lockdown was aggravating to thousands, Weir concluded: "While we're frustrated, we've got to take half a step back here and just look at the wider world, in terms of what's happening, with people potentially losing their lives, losing their jobs. I think the whole thing places golf in some kind of a context.

"The world is just on pause and we're going to have to be patient. We'll reflect on this one day and maybe just appreciate it all the more. I'm sure we'll all play more, and hopefully play a bit better, and golf's got a big part to play in society's recovery, because of the mental and physical health benefits that playing golf can offer." **END**







Words Jake Wickham
Photography Prince's

ROB McGUIRK

GENERAL MANAGER, PRINCE'S



For golf clubs in Kent, 2020 should have been a bumper year. With the 149th Open Championship set to be staged at Royal St George's in Sandwich, local clubs were anticipating increased visitors and record revenues.

But following the announcement in April by The R&A that The Open Championship would be postponed until 2021, plans have needed to be put on hold for a year; bookings re-scheduled and contingency plans quickly put into action.

And with Prince's Golf Club occupying land adjacent to Royal St George's, general manager at Prince's, Rob McGuirk, has probably been one of the busiest GM's in the UK.

"The last few months with COVID-19 have been a tough period for everyone, and I doubt there was a club in the country fully prepared for the restrictions and lockdown," said McGuirk.

"With that said, we have done our best to remain optimistic and control what we can control, taking advice from the Government and following the regulations. All of our clients with bookings up until end of June were contacted and offered the opportunity to move later in the year or into 2021. This allowed us to maintain our bookings and keep those engagements going at Prince's without losing the revenue.

"We had to furlough most of the management team apart from the course manager, which means we have been light on staff. Therefore, I have been out assisting cutting greens, which for me is a great change of scenery, and helping the sales team with enquiries and newsletters.

"We may not fully understand the impact of COVID-19 until later in the year or even in a couple of years, however I'm confident that our members, guests and corporate clients will still value the proposition we can offer regardless of this tough time," added McGuirk confidently.

"During the last couple of months, we have kept our members and visitors engaged by maintaining regular communications throughout the imposed lockdown. This includes sending weekly updates with any new information or simply some messages of comfort and some light-hearted entertainment.

"Our media partner, GMS, have been great in guiding us and ensuring that we send the right message as these times are not about sales but about keeping in contact and sending positive messages.

"We have continued to frequently post on our social media channels with updates on how we are coping with government guidelines and updates on the changes to the course over the winter, as well as competitions with prizes to keep our followers engaged.

"One of the best received initiatives we had was to send The R&A Level 1 Rules Exam out to our members, offering prizes to the best scores. We had a really good number of responses and it's comforting to know that a fair proportion of the membership passed," smiled McGuirk.

"Rather surprisingly, we have had a significant increase in membership enquiries over the past few weeks. This is a really great sign for the future outlook once the impact



"RATHER SURPRISINGLY, WE HAVE HAD A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS"

of coronavirus has passed and we have responded to all of these prospective new members.

"It's been great to welcome our members back to play and enjoy the courses. Hopefully we will soon be able to do the same for visitor and guest golf when it is permissible.

"We do have a busy calendar of events booked in for the rest of the year, but it is difficult to say how long restricted golf will continue for and how this will affect the diary – certainly by the height of the summer into the autumn we would hope our open events and larger competitions can return.

"We have a very close relationship with Sandwich and the local area – it has always been important to us to retain this connection and serve the community with more than just our golf course.

"All our food that we serve in the Lodge is locally sourced and we have donated a lot of the produce to the local foodbanks in recent weeks. We are also standing behind Your Golf Travel's campaign to offer four-balls to frontline workers. It's our small way of showing appreciation for the work of key workers and the NHS, and we're pleased to be supporting it.

"Obviously, an Open year is a very big thing for the area and for Prince's in particular, however thankfully the impact won't be lost for us, just delayed until 2021. Almost all the bookings that we had in the diary for that week have moved to the corresponding week in July next year which is a relief.

"We do have an empty week to fill now but as sad as it is to have to cancel The Open Championship, the safety of everyone involved in putting on an event of that scale is more important.

"The week of The Open in 2021 will still be a busy one with most of our Lodge and golf bookings having simply moved to the same slot next year," explained McGuirk.

"A lot of the plans that we drew up for this year's event will be easy to switch to the following year and we will take stock of the situation and look if there is anything new or different we can do.

"We will also host the Final Qualifying Series at the end of June next year, which in

the past has always been a great couple of days and something to look forward to.

"It will very much depend on what the Government guidelines are when that week comes around, but we would like to do something in what would have been Open week. We will see what facilities we are able to operate, for example if the Lodge will be available to golfing guests.

"We have taken some tentative bookings for that week already and are looking at running an event with our neighbouring courses. This is a good idea in principle but at this stage we are not able to plan anything for definite. Once the lockdown exit strategy is more certain we will put a plan in place and potentially look to put together a special event."

The last couple of years have been a significant time in the history of the club. Working with Martin Ebert and GolfLink Evolve, all 27 holes have been improved alongside the addition of two new signature sea-facing par 3s.

The works to the Dunes and Himalayas are now complete with the Shore almost finished. The remaining work is to tidy up around the par 3 that will no longer be in play, and to extend the dune that was constructed over the winter which will run alongside the 7th hole on the Shore Course.

"During this process it has been very important for us to embrace our environmental responsibilities," added McGuirk, "which is why we have just recently retained our GEO Certified status for our continued sustainable focus during our period of works to the course.

"In the last few years we have increased our focus on sustainability, and this has led to taking on a few new initiatives as we look to factor the environmental impact into every decision we make.

"We have signed up for Ocean Tee and are proud to be partnering their movement to reduce the amount of plastic waste in golf. In addition to that, we are now exclusively using Frugal Cups as our paper coffee cups which are made from 96 per cent recycled paperboard and are genuinely recyclable." **END**

PAUL BURLEY

SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT, IMG GOLF



As a former director of golf at Turnberry, and with 12 years experience working for IMG Golf Course Services, Paul Burley is well qualified to pass judgement on how the golf industry can adapt to the new world post COVID-19.

In an exclusive interview, Burley – who is also a PGA Master Professional – shares his thoughts and opinions in order to help golf clubs all over the world emerge stronger from the pandemic.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all in the golf industry, and everyone, everywhere will feel the effect,” he states. “It will not be business as normal when the situation eases, and there will be a new normal we will all need to adjust to.

“In some countries, golf will bounce back quickly, and we are already starting to see some markets recover and open up again. Other markets will need time, and in particular clubs and resorts in high-end destinations that rely on international tourist golfers for their revenues will have significant challenges to deal with in 2020 and beyond.

“We started to see the impact in January, initially at our clubs in China, and then throughout the region and across Europe as the weeks went on,” recalls Burley.

“We have stayed close to our owners and management teams at each club, making sure they had all the support needed to either keep the club operating with safety protocols, or make the decision to temporarily close, following government guidelines.

“We developed an extensive IMG COVID-19 Best Practices guide which covered all aspects of club management; operations,

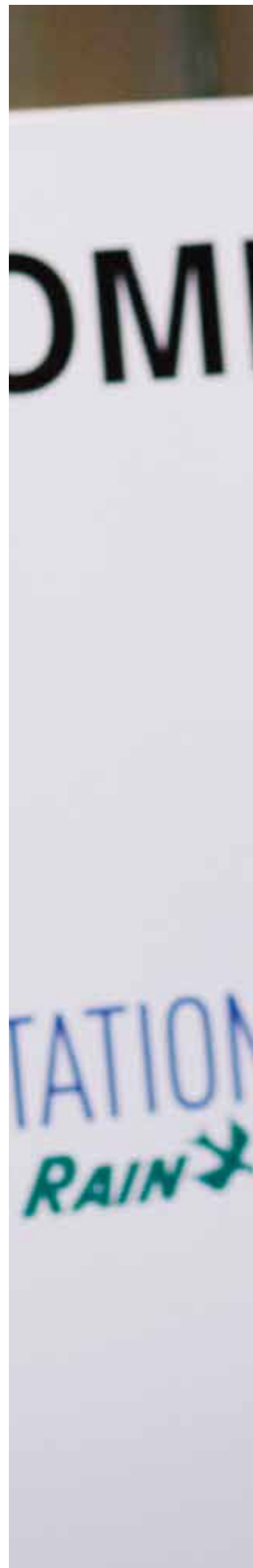
greenkeeping, sales & marketing, PR and human resources, as a way to support owners and the teams at our clubs throughout the pandemic,” he added.

“Keeping in regular contact with owners, employees, industry partners, suppliers and members as much as possible has been important throughout this process, and it will continue to be the case. We have tried to use this downtime productively, and have been working on updating databases, websites, templates, SOP’s etc.

“The greenkeeping teams at our clubs have also been hard at work where it’s possible, doing renovation and upgrading projects, that are otherwise hard to do when the course is open and busy. Whenever possible, we have communicated greenkeeping projects to members and to our social media followers to keep them updated on the club’s activities and provide them with interesting, newsworthy content.

“We firmly believe that clubs that don’t communicate well during this period – internally and externally – will have significantly bigger challenges to deal with moving forward. We can all communicate better, and this period has highlighted to us some areas that we need to work on to improve our communication channels.

“Owners, members, partners and suppliers will value regular contact more than ever – not a call or email simply to talk about business, but also to know how they’re doing and to continue with building strong relationships. At IMG Golf Course Services we have regular management calls to go through all our different projects worldwide,





“REDUCING GREEN FEE PRICES NOW WILL PRESENT CHALLENGES IN THE MID-TO-LONG TERM WHEN THE MARKET RECOVERS, SO WE HAVE BEEN ADVISING CLUBS TO CREATE EXCITING PROMOTIONS”

and we find this a great way to stay connected and share best practises. We have the advantage of managing clubs in many different markets across the world, so can leverage this powerful information to benefit each of the clubs we manage.

“Social media is an important part of our marketing & communications strategy, and some clubs may have missed a massive opportunity to stay close to their members during the pandemic. We advise clubs not to self-promote and be sensitive at all times with their content.

“Humanizing posts has been a priority for us, and we took the opportunity to present team members, announce new appointments and do an IMG coaching series with videos from different IMG head professionals. These posts have the highest number of interactions and is something we aim to continue to do after the crisis.

“Perhaps some clubs will now understand the power of building and maintaining a strong database,” adds Burley. “Moving forward, digital marketing will play an even bigger role in the communication strategy for golf clubs, particularly as budgets will have to be re-organised. Clubs must take every opportunity they can to collect email addresses and constantly keep in touch with their members, guests and visitors.

“There will be a need to re-evaluate the membership products and associated benefits many clubs offer. Having the right membership product with built in flexibility, particularly with the challenges facing the golf industry in the future will be very important.

“Long gone is the time when golfers joined a club simply because of the golf element. Having the right portfolio of partnerships that can be used as a membership benefit, can play a significant role when deciding which club to join. Partnerships are something that take time and effort to build, but something that golf clubs must do more, otherwise we'll continue to lose business to other hospitality products.

“Membership benefits can go from arrangements with car dealerships, lifestyle companies, to reciprocal arrangements with other golf clubs; all of these partnerships will enhance the membership offering, and help retain existing members and make new memberships more appealing.

“When clubs can start to sell tee times again, it will be important to have an appropriate selection of promotions ready to go. Reducing green fee prices now will present challenges in the mid-to-long term when the market recovers, so we have been advising clubs to create exciting promotions, add value and aggressively target local markets.

“Local golfers will appreciate the offer, and you are also giving them an opportunity to experience your club. Make sure you collect their contact information and stay in touch – you might be talking to a future member or golf event organiser.

“It took a pandemic for some of us to focus more on our mental and physical wellness. During the lockdown we regularly shared a Wellness guide with the teams at each club, incentivising them to look after themselves by exercising, reading or taking new online courses.

“We believe the crisis should also change the mindset of clubs, by making them invest more in the staff wellbeing. Social distancing gave us no choice, but to invest some of our time and effort in this might well have a positive impact on the business.

“With many clubs across the world temporarily closed, budgets are going to be squeezed like never before. The importance of partnerships as we mentioned earlier also applies to golf club suppliers.

“We are all in the same boat and no golf business is not being impacted by the pandemic, so it's important that we all work together and show flexibility in our dealings and business relationships.

“It will take a lot of effort, but if we all work together as partners and not simply as buyers/customers, we will recover quicker and come out of it even stronger.” **END**





SIMON WORDSWORTH

CEO, 59club

59club

Most people have an interesting back-story to share about their life story, but for Simon Wordsworth, CEO of 59club, his tale is perhaps more pertinent now, more than ever.

Fresh out of school, Wordsworth was contemplating a career in either accountancy or estate management before he was asked to help at Hickleton Golf Club, where he was junior captain at the time.

The club had recently appointed Paul Shepherd as the club's new professional, and Shepherd who was in the process of relocating his young family to South Yorkshire from Lancashire, asked Wordsworth to help out in the pro shop over the summer.

"I was asked to help before I went to university, and there my story starts," recalls Wordsworth. "I chose selling Mars Bars and babysitting Paul's children over university, and much of what and who I am now came from Paul's help and support over those formative three years."

And in a twist to his tale, Paul's son David – who Wordsworth babysat for all those years ago – is now CEO of The Scandinavian in Denmark, and a 59club client to boot.

Wordsworth also spent time working with Mark Pearson at Bondhay Golf Club and as Wordsworth admits, both have helped shape his career. "Both were two very influential and creative people in my development, and one of the reasons why I have always tried to work closely with every golf professional who has worked for me.

"I've always tried to match the support that both Paul and Mark gave to that 'gob-bly little Yorkshire boy,'" laughs Wordsworth.

In April 1992, Wordsworth joined The Belfry and there followed a 14-year career which was cut horribly short on July 4, 2005.

Life that day changed forever, both in a personal and professional capacity as Wordsworth explained: "Everyone comes across one, or several crossroads in their life, well I didn't come across mine, it hit me head on.

"Aged 36 years old I had a fit," said Wordsworth. "Over a 24-hour period something which started as a little bit of a cold, progressed to being 'away with the fairies' and ended up with me throwing myself off the settee and having a full blown fit in front of my wife and kids.

"Flashing lights, paramedics, intensive care and a five-and-a-half-day induced coma followed, [all] of which made me totally reassess my life and priorities.

"I simply lay in intensive care, watched what was going on around me and vowed that if I made it through, I would get out of the corporate world and take control.

"My 14 years at The Belfry were wonderful, but very simply the never-ending chasing of higher share returns and ever more increase in budgets took its toll on me. I did not have enough sense to see what it was doing to me, and just ploughed on regardless, a decision which nearly cost me my life."

Thankfully, Wordsworth made a full recovery, and is today, fit-and-well. But the terrible ordeal that he and his family had to endure 15 years ago, does have a silver lining.

The first stage of reforming Wordsworth's life was the formation of The Aspiration Group, which in-turn, led to the creation in



"I DO THINK THAT THERE IS A SERIOUS OPPORTUNITY, HOWEVER I ALSO THOUGHT WE HAD A HUGE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE"

2008 of 59club, a specialist golf and leisure benchmarking business currently working in EMEA, Asia and the United States.

Working closely with golf club managers, 59club provides customer satisfaction surveys, mystery shopper audits and industry insight to clubs irrespective of size or stature, and since COVID-19, has accelerated the range of online surveys and metric tools that clubs are able to access.

"We stopped sending our mystery testers into clubs very quickly in the real early stages in March, after which you would think we would have little to do, [but] that has not been the case," explained Wordsworth.

"We decided to take the position of supporting our clients through this by working with them and allowing access to as many of our services as possible for free. It seemed like a choice we made, but honestly, I am not sure we had a choice.

"Our business is all about supporting managers and owners and it felt right to continue with that journey. Hopefully, their loyalty will be our greatest reward and may also lead to them referring us to others.

"It will be difficult for many people over the next 12 months, [and] golf has a wonderful opportunity but... the club atmosphere and 'feel' may have to change and the management of that will not be easy. Managers with their finger on the pulse will handle this better. Embrace feedback, listen, and adapt.

"We have just released two products that have been in development for almost two years," he adds. "The first is 'my59 metrics' which adds financial benchmarking to our portfolio along with the 'emotional and operational' benchmarking that we have done for 12 years.

"The second is a training platform called 'my59 mentor' where we have hosted all 12 years of learning to enable managers to train, upskill and even induct staff throughout the operation. These new offerings added to what we already do – one dashboard will arm every one of our managers with the tools to improve their customer journeys.

"We know that many operations are run very tightly, and we feel that business metrics will arm the club with solid financial

data to enable decisions based on fact, rather than gut feel. Good management is minimising the risk or at the very least totally understanding the cost versus [the] benefit of your actions."

Most commentators suggest that the golf industry – like many other sectors – will face tough times in the months and years ahead. When asked last year how many clubs could close across the UK and Europe, Wordsworth suggested that as many as one in four could shut. However, he now holds a different view.

"My gut feeling now is that in the short-term [that number will be] much less, but unless golf takes advantage now, by the time the recession is at its deepest we will come back to that number.

"I do think that there is a serious opportunity, however I also thought we had a huge opportunity before, and golf wasn't taking it then.

"There will be short term wins where membership holes are filled because we have been denied golf, but there is a significant recession around the corner and managers have a short window to get golf back to being a necessary spend and not a luxury one. Health, family and community are its key opportunities.

"I think that the higher end private clubs will have a choice to go more private, and the middle ground will be really interesting in my view. Those higher end clubs have a great opportunity to create 'safe havens' where people feel comfortable and secure.

"There will be short term wins as venues open at varying speeds and there will be a chunk of nomadic golfers who I feel will temporarily return to the member fold for one, maybe two years before the 'value' questions rears its ugly head again.

"In summary in the long-term I think golf will continue to polarize with each area having its few ultra-private clubs, a number of very family friendly clubs, a few pay and play clubs and anyone who is not in those areas will struggle. You can't be everything to everybody – it's the club identity that the manager should deliver. If you try, you will fail in the long run." **END**

VERDURA RESORT, SICILY

ROCCOFORTEHOTELS.COM

Words Aidan Patrick
Photography Verdura Resort

Hailed by previous visitors including 2018 European Ryder Cup-winning captain Thomas Bjorn as one of the world's most beautiful golf settings, Sicily's Verdura Resort is, quite simply, a golfing paradise.

Home of the European Tour's Rocco Forte Sicilian Open and set next to the sparkling azure waters of the Mediterranean, the exclusive luxury lifestyle destination has quickly established itself over the last decade as a firm favourite with golfers eager to combine outstanding golf with the finer things in life.

Verdura nestles in 230 hectares of stunning landscape overlooking the Mediterranean with 1.8km of private coastline, and offers golfing guests and families an unparalleled modern five-star experience on the largest island in the Mediterranean.

Players from across the globe have travelled in their thousands to enjoy its facilities since the resort was first unveiled to an expectant world in 2009, and it's easy to see why.

Located on the southern coast of Sicily between Agrigento and the fishing city of Sciacca, and an 80-minute drive from Trapani and Palermo airports, the resort – part of Rocco Forte hotels – features 203 rooms and suites, all with a sea view, including six villas, each with its own private swimming pool.

At the heart of the resort are its outstanding golf courses – an 18-hole links-style championship layout and a nine-hole par-

three executive course – which were both created by world-acclaimed designer Kyle Phillips.

Providing challenges and an incredible backdrop, with the Mediterranean visible from almost every hole, the layouts are built to the highest specifications and offer something for every golfer, whatever your age or ability.

Take my word for it, there are few places more spectacular in the world to spend an afternoon on the fairways honing your swing, and the exciting news is that Verdura is set to get even better next year with the eagerly-anticipated reopening of its second 18-hole championship course.

When a freak flood caused damage to a number of holes along the coastline and close to a river levee in the winter of 2018, Phillips – famed for layouts such as Kingsbarns Golf Links in Scotland – took the opportunity to return to Sicily and use his much-renowned design skills to craft a new, improved layout.

With all the major earth removal and construction work having been completed over the autumn and winter, reseeded of the fairways, greens, tees and rough began this spring. Verdura will allow the course plenty of time to grow in over the coming months but, if everything goes according to plan, the aim is to reopen the new-look layout in 2021.

"It was hard to believe to the extent that which the course was damaged, particularly







"PLAYERS RETURNING TO VERDURA WILL BE MOST LIKELY TO NOTICE THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED ALONG THE COASTLINE"

the 14 holes nearest the river levee," Phillips explained: "The coastline was dramatically changed, with long veins of land pushed out and lost to sea.

"In early 2019, plans were assembled to conform the new landscape and shoreline configuration. Once the contractor was selected, reconstruction began last fall with a large-scale clean-up of the site. Then the focus turned to earthworks and restoration work, and then to reseeded the first areas in the spring.

"The intertwined nature of the layout of the 36 holes required that the layout of the course remained intact, but there were significant adjustments the specific design of each hole. The most pronounced areas being the adjustments made along the sea. These were made to utilise and blend sympathetically to the new landforms along the coastline.

"Players returning to Verdura will be most likely to notice the changes that have occurred along the coastline and how we have incorporated the new coastline. All of which will add to the drama, and pleasure, of the course. They will also appreciate playing what is, effectively, a new course, with new surfaces on the greens, freshened bunkers and new turfgrass in the fairways and roughs."

Exciting stuff, and a fitting upgrade for a resort that has been named as a recipient of one of Golf Digest magazine's coveted 'Editors' Choice Awards for the Best Resorts in Continental Europe' for the last five years in a row.

As you would expect from a venue of such high standing, the quality of Verdura's golf courses is matched by its excellent practice facilities including a double-ended driving range and a first-class academy ideal for pro-led tuition groups – and Italy's only European Tour-approved Performance Institute.

Only the third venue in the world to open such a facility, players of all abilities have the unique opportunity to practice, learn and improve under Sicilian skies using tools and techniques developed by the European Tour's medical and performance specialists.

Whether as an aspiring amateur or seasoned professional organising a clinic,

guests and members can take advantage of cutting-edge technology at the resort usually only on offer to Tour players, with Trackman, 4D Motion and SAM PuttLab all available.

Verdura's team of professional coaches are all expertly trained to use this technology and will guide each individual through a series of detailed screenings and analyses to precisely pinpoint areas that require improvement.

Together with players, they will then craft bespoke solutions ranging from shoe-fitting advice to fitness and physiotherapy sessions and technique adjustment to ensure short and long-term improvement.

Sometimes, though, it's good to take a break from the fairways, to put the clubs to one side and experience some of the other pleasures that life has to offer, and Verdura has an abundance of activities suited to doing just that if you're looking for a place to relax in five-star comfort later this year.

Other sports facilities available include six tennis courts; a 60m two-tiered infinity pool; numerous watersports, one football pitch; a 170sqm fully-equipped gym and a collection of running trails through olive and lemon groves.

The resort's award-winning 4,000m² spa complex includes 11 treatment rooms, gym, yoga studio, a 25-metre indoor lap pool, four outdoor Thalassotherapy pools, a double-height steam room, male and female saunas and a spa bar for healthy alternatives.

Guests can sample an authentic taste of traditional Sicily with an array of dishes at one of the resort's four restaurants and five bars – with fresh, organic produce sourced straight from Verdura's own garden. In addition, visitors can enjoy an array of cultural and culinary experiences where they can discover the secrets of Sicilian cooking, with menus inspired by celebrity chef Fulvio Pierangelini, and taste the many famous wines of the region.

With such a vast and varied extent of experiences to enjoy, Verdura's second decade looks set to be just as successful as its first, and there will be a long line of golfers eager to sample its redesigned course when the new-look layout reopens in 2021. **END**

CLUBNET BY GOLFGRAFFIX

CREATES A DIGITAL SOLUTION TO COVID-19



Helping golf clubs remain in regular contact with their members throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been heralded as a crucial factor when it comes to membership retention.

Since playing restrictions were eased across the UK and Ireland – with golf permitted albeit only as two-balls at the time of writing – countless clubs have reported a spike in membership enquiries as pay-and-play golfers desperate for their regular fix of golf, return to the membership fold.

How long this return to traditional membership models will last is like trying to predict when the pandemic will end, but regardless of the outcome, one Irish company is determined to steadfastly stand by the industry, and help wherever possible.

Based in Co. Louth in Ireland, ClubNet is a trading-style of GolfGraffix, a digital services company that provides alternative services to golf clubs the world over.

And as CEO, John Aherne explains, he is hoping that his company's innovative technology will be able to keep golf clubs open for longer amid the fears of COVID-19.

"There's not an industry in Ireland or around the world that hasn't suffered from the fallout of COVID-19, but golf remains an activity that can promote social distancing and much-needed headspace at this time," he explained.

"And if ClubNet by GolfGraffix can play a small part in not only helping clubs retain membership, but perhaps more importantly survive the months ahead, then I and my team will work timelessly to do whatever we can to help."

Perhaps that explains why Aherne is offering all golf clubs across the UK and Ireland free access to the ClubNet App for the remainder of 2020 with no subscription fees, to help them fulfil club competitions at this normally bountiful time for golf.

"ClubNet's success is inextricably linked to the success of the golf industry and as such, we would like to help the industry as we all get to grips with the effects the Coronavirus is having on golf," added Aherne.

So what exactly is ClubNet, and how can it help GMs and CEOs at golf clubs?

"In a nutshell, ClubNet provides digital alternatives to traditional golf services," explains Aherne. "It's an all-in-one golf management system, and in my mind, is the future of golf club marketing and member management."

Bold claims indeed, but upon further investigation, perhaps they are warranted. The platform incorporates tools for every type of golf club, and include tee-sheet bookings; member management; marketing and live scoring which may well become a more permanent part of golf in the post-COVID 'new normal' world.

With social distancing, the days of exchanging printed scorecards at the beginning an end of a round are sadly probably confined to the annals of history now.

"With members downloading the ClubNet app to their iPhone or android smartphone, the app will allow club managers to keep running competitions without their members having to use a scorecard, or competition committees having to handle them," explained Aherne.





"GOLF REMAINS AN ACTIVITY THAT CAN PROMOTE SOCIAL DISTANCING AND MUCH-NEEDED HEADSPACE AT THIS TIME"

"Given that the situation is changing on a daily basis, the push notifications will also allow you to send unlimited messages to your members and guests at no cost."

The app – which is fully compatible with HandicapMaster – includes backend reporting; a news section; unlimited push notifications as well as full member competitions.

"The tee time booking engine has full flexibility on tee time intervals on a daily basis and can be set up months in advance. A full month takes about ten minutes to set up, that's all," added Aherne.

"There is also a members purse which allows for contactless payment of competition fees and all pro shop items, which under social distancing guidelines, is yet another added element to the platform."

Furthermore, there is also a waiting list built into the app which allows for users to get onto the time sheet rather than turning up on a whim in the hope of getting a late cancellation.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic reached European shores, ClubNet has seen an incredible 400 per cent increase in usage with club managers communicating far more regularly with their membership than normal.

"Push notifications are free of charge and can be sent to members at any time and segmented out based on the users preference," added Aherne. "During the COVID-19 response information was changing on a daily basis – in some cases by the hour – and push notifications are immediately received."

Also, as most European countries begin to roll out their own versions of 'Track and Trace', Aherne is keen to stress that the ClubNet app can also assist Governments in this respect.

"The check-in option gives a full list of all members that have played along with their contact details. Should contact tracing be required the batch email can be used to send all players at risk an email."

Two other key aspects of ClubNet that Aherne is keen to promote are the live scoring and greenkeeping elements of the platform, the latter of which acts as a constant reference for staff and course managers with all course features fully loaded.

The live scoring element allows players or team managers to enter tournament scores directly from their mobile smartphone, allowing all competitors to keep fully up-to-date with club, and interclub competitions anywhere.

"ClubNet is committed to setting up all the club competitions, creating all member accounts to access the app and will also carry out a video training session for golf club staff," confirmed Aherne.

"Although there will be a small one-off set-up cost capped at £350, any club looking to keep the app into 2021 will have their set-up fee converted to credit against any new cost.

"Considering it takes us three hours to get each golf club up and running – and typically, the usual installation fee comes in at around €2100 – we believe this is a great opportunity for golf clubs to avail themselves of superb technology that we hope will keep the fairways open in this time of need."

ClubNet currently serves around 120 golf clubs in Ireland and its platform caters for 57,000 members which is about a quarter of the golfing population in the country.

The app has long been established at clubs like County Louth, Portmarnock Links and Ballyliffin. It's easy to use and above all else at this time, it promotes social distancing and presents golf clubs with an effective marketing tool.

And with the clubhouse experience set to be redefined, ClubNet is looking at incorporating an F&B element in future releases.

"For clubs on our EPOS system we will be introducing food ordering from the app, which can be paid directly from the members purse account. It can also trigger a geo push notification; for example, the hole before the halfway house or the 18th green.

"We're aware that COVID-19 extends far beyond the golf course and the virus has really put things like the importance of sport into perspective in recent months.

"But we're also cognisant of the need to look out for one another in whatever way possible over the coming months, and if golf can play some small part in that, then we're all for it." **END**

THE SPRINKLERS **WORLD-CLASS COURSES RELY ON.**



Toro® Irrigation Systems

The greenkeepers of the greatest golf courses on this planet trust in the skills of legendary toolmakers at Toro®. The INFINITY® and FLEX Sprinkler Series are the masters of efficiency and reliability.



Join the conversation
 **@ToroGolf**

Discover more at: www.toro.com



NEW DESTINATION

WORLDCLASS.GOLF



Zala Spring Golf Resort in Zalacsány, Hungary, has become the latest destination to join worldclass.golf, a portfolio of the world's premier golf courses, destinations and resorts.

Featuring a Robert Trent Jones II golf course and distinctive modern clubhouse, Zala Springs enjoys an enviable location, lying within a two hour drive of three iconic European cities – Budapest, Vienna and Zagreb – and within 20 minutes of Lake Balaton, Central Europe's largest lake.

Accommodation is provided in the form of 32 luxurious apartments and penthouse suites and an extensive wellness centre opening soon. Designed to capture the cultural and natural heritage of the surrounding area, Robert Trent Jones II has crafted a course that fits beautifully between the picturesque Zala Valley, and the surrounding

vineyards, all complemented by a luxurious yet comfortable clubhouse offering excellent food and wine, and a beautiful terrace overlooking an 18-hole practice green that is illuminated in the evenings.

"This very flexible facility situated on a spectacular area adjacent to the Zala River and near Lake Balaton is designed to become the new hotspot for golf enthusiasts around the world," said Trent Jones II.

The variety of styles and settings means Zala Springs meets both individual lifestyle and property requirements. The resort's stunning architectural developments are designed to create spaces that encourage wellness and outdoor activities. The real estate section is located in the heart of the resort and is an excellent investment for anyone who wishes to take advantage of the property active lifestyle. **END**



#worldclassgolf

A portfolio of 25 of the world's premier golf courses, destinations & resorts, worldclass.golf is a unique and exclusive network of golf destinations offering a truly world-class visitor experience.

For entry criteria, and learn how membership can benefit your destination, visit worldclass.golf or email experience@worldclass.golf



A portfolio of the world's premier golf courses, destinations & resorts

"I HAVE DEFINITELY EXERCISED A LOT MORE OVER THE PAST
TWO MONTHS – THANKS TO ZWIFT"



Words

Christopher May
Chief Executive
Dubai Golf

GUEST BOOK

CHRISTOPHER MAY



The beginning of 2020 seems such a long time ago, and so much has changed in all our lives over the past few months. So many challenges have been faced by those on the front line of the fight against COVID-19, and many more will become apparent over the coming months as the global situation evolves.

We are so fortunate in golf to be at the forefront of sports to return to action with the natural social distancing and the relative safety of large expanses of green and open land, and we all have an amazing opportunity to grow the game to a much wider audience.

It has also been a time to reflect on what is really important in our lives and look ahead to the future; health, family, education and travel have always been important to me. It has been evident that I have definitely exercised a lot more over the past two months – thanks to Zwift – whilst at the same time eating better and cooking and enjoying meals more as a family, which is a huge positive change for me.

Travel has always been important to me ever since my wife (girlfriend at the time) and I quit our jobs and went travelling round the world for ten months; still one of the best decisions we ever made! Looking ahead to future trips, whether it is Antarctica (my eldest daughters choice), New Zealand, Iceland or the UK... one thing this pandemic has made us realise, is that it is so important to make these things happen and turn opportunities into reality. **END**

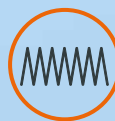
INTRODUCING *the* **ALL NEW AR530** **ROUGH MOWER**



MASTERS
SIDE SLOPES



IMPROVED
OPERATOR COMFORT



BEST TRUEDECK
QUALITY OF CUT

Built for your success



A GROUND-UP **REDESIGN**
of a **GREAT MACHINE** we've
just made **EVEN BETTER**

LEE FRIE, JACOBSEN PRODUCT MANAGER, AUGUSTA

JACOBSEN

→ **BOOK A TEST DRIVE NOW AT:**
jacobsenbuilt.com / +44 (0)1473 276287



TORO®

NEW

WHAT *The new Greensmaster® eTriFlex Series
flagship electric riding greensmowers.*

MATTERS *Unparalleled, outstanding cut quality,
quiet operation, and no onboard hydraulic fluids.*



Greensmaster eTriFlex
Engine/Generator



Greensmaster eTriFlex
Lithium-Ion

MOST *Routine compliments from members
and improvements to your bottom line!*



What Matters Most to You Matters Most to Us.

The all-new Greensmaster eTriFlex Series riding greensmowers provide all the innovative features of the original TriFlex and more. The eTriFlex lineup includes a Lithium-Ion powered and an Engine Generator model, with no onboard hydraulic fluid. The new Radius Dependent Speed (RDS™) System, in combination with the Lift-In-Turn cutting unit leveling feature virtually eliminates the effect known as "Triplex-Ring". This along with many new features provide added versatility, simplified service, and ultimately, more productivity.

©2020 The Toro Company. All rights reserved.

Join the conversation
 **@ToroGolf**

LEARN MORE AT [TORO.COM](https://www.toro.com)