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"GOLF IS OFTEN A TARGET FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS – AND RATHER UNFAIRLY IN MY VIEW"

FAIR COMMENT

Much was said at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, not so much was agreed. And while some progress was made in areas such as reducing the use of fossil fuels, tackling methane emissions, and protecting nature and biodiversity, it was made pretty clear that unless, as a planet, we stop procrastinating we'll be going to Hell in a handcart... and even Hell might be affected by climate change.

Golf is often a target for environmentalists – and rather unfairly in my view; surely there are more worthwhile industrial targets – but, as stated on the home page of the Sustainable Golf website: 'Among all sport and business, golf has a unique opportunity to make a powerful difference...'

Fitting then, that in this edition Howard Craft, the club manager at Berkhamsted Golf Club, and Oceantee, touch on the subject of sustainability. It's reassuring to know steps are being taken by stakeholders in our industry, but, surely, as an industry we can do more.

Wouldn't it be great if, instead of citing golf as a harbinger of environmental doom, campaigners held up the industry as an exemplar to others? My colleague, David Bowers, when he's feeling at his most pretentious, often quotes Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu and opines: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

However, on this occasion, he and Lao Tzu are right on the money. If we all make that first step, we're on the road to, if not redemption, at least a better place. **END**



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com

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publishing and communications

FEATURING

WINTER 2021



SONJA GSCHWENDTNER

ZALA SPRINGS

"I am not so good, but I enjoy golf. My biggest handicap is that I am working on a golf course so my time is very limited. Your hardest thing is when you can see the people coming in from the 18th."

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JACK LAWS

LES BORDES

"I was a historic underachiever. I was very, very capable, but I went to a school which was in Central London, which was awful, basically. I never really used to go. But luckily, I was always good at golf."

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AGUSTÍN GARCÍA PASCUAL

INFINITUM

"Although I had the option to return to The States and play soccer for one more year, I had to think about my future, which was in golf, and not football. So, I turned down the San Jose contract, and was offered two roles in golf."

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STEPHEN FOLLETT

LONDON GOLF CLUB

"We have always found it important to show our employees that we care about their development. At the start of the pandemic, we needed to show them that we also cared about their physical and mental well-being."

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HOWARD CRAFT

BERKHAMSTED

"It's about running an efficient business in a world of ever-decreasing resources. When I arrived I was determined to ensure that genuine, real-world sustainability was core to our long-term plan."

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"UTILISED BY MEMBERS AND VISITORS ALIKE, PRACTICE FACILITIES
SHOULD BE A HUB OF ACTIVITY"



COVER STORY

THEBUCKETPROS.COM

**THE
BUCKET
PROS**

Have you considered that a golfer's first contact with the sport is typically at a driving range? As such, the driving range becomes a primary location for anyone interacting with the it. Surprisingly however, the average range is severely underdeveloped and is far too often completely empty.

"Utilised by members and visitors alike, practice facilities should be a hub of activity for whether it is to hit a few balls before a round of golf, dedicated practice to try and improve their game or simply having fun with friends," said Calle Carlsson, European sales director of The Bucket Pros.

"Seemingly over the years facilities have fallen into disrepair resulting in them becoming a drain on resources and negatively impact businesses.

"The Bucket Pros provide a solution to this and we want to give golfers the ability to practice at the driving range no matter the day, time or weather," added Carlsson.

Through their dedicated consultancy program and ongoing innovation, they are able to supply the right equipment and support mentality, to create a driving range that is prepared to never be empty.

Since being founded by Andreaz Lindberg, the Scandinavian based enterprise has created a simple and effective strategy that can be adapted to suit each and every partner they work with.

As part of this process and strategy, The Bucket Pros have created a system called the 'Boost Method', which has been intro-

duced to the golf industry following a series of new partnerships announcements within Europe.

The 'Boost Method' has been developed through a unique set of ideas, concepts and strategies, and has proven that from enrolment it is guaranteed to double the revenue at a partner facility within 24 months. This process is undoubtedly effective and to date over 60 Scandinavian golf clubs and facilities have benefited since utilising the 'Boost Method'.

The Bucket Pros range management system, SEVE RMS, provides complete control and overview of the driving range. The advanced system has been created so that it can be quickly and easily installed, is fully secure through cloud security and provides managers with in-depth reporting and analysis, whilst also allowing the user to differentiate price any time, any where.

Pricing can be reflected by user habits and peak periods. It also provides the ability for payments to be taken via card or phone.

It is a pivotal time for golf as new concepts, technologies and practice emerge into the market. The Bucket Pros want to take full advantage of these opportunities and change the concept of the driving range among golfers.

The strong focus on new technology, digitalisation and modern design, will enable more and more driving range and practice facilities to benefit from The Bucket Pros one-stop-shop offering in Europe. **END**



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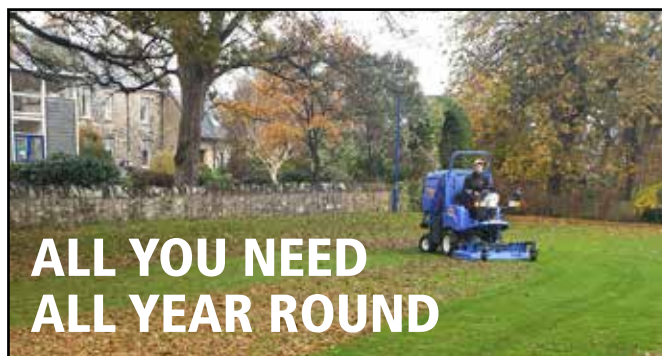
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How Many Strokes
Digital Conversion Table

ON THE FRINGE

Regular readers of this esteemed organ will know – if they read this page, that is – that penning a non-award-winning column for Golf Management is not my only job. No, like members of the UK parliament, I have a second job – and, occasionally, a third. Unlike them, however, I do not struggle to get by on a mere £82,000; indeed, I don't struggle to get by on an annual income much closer to the UK national average. Admittedly, I don't need to pay membership fees at the Garrick Club or fund annual cleaning of the moat or its duck house, but I do lead a somewhat extravagant lifestyle.

I enjoy annual membership of the village wine circle and the local bowls club, a subscription to a service that allows me online access to my favourite magazines and newspapers, and I play the occasional round of golf at any golf club that's still prepared to allow me across the threshold. And there aren't many left...

Other than that, I tend to insist on a minimum of one decent meal a day and allow myself a hot toddy in the evening should I be feeling under the weather. (I'm actually writing this while waiting for the results of a compulsory COVID test after my wife tested positive, so I could be hitting the Scotch tonight!)

'Where is he going with this?', I imagine you saying to yourselves. It's a fair question and one which I have just asked myself. What I was trying to do was paint a picture with words, a picture that showed me juggling several jobs, three kids, two cats and damaging addictions to Portsmouth Football Club, cider and curry. Which leads me on to the point I wanted to make about how wonderful the sport of golf can be for people's physical and psychological health.

In my other roles (see, that's where I was going!), I've worked with several people who have dedicated their time to harnessing golf for the benefit of others. People like Anthony Blackburn, who created Golf in Society, which delivers golf sessions for families living with dementia, Parkinson's disease and stroke and which has seen remarkable results.

People like the sports recovery team at the Armed Forces charity, Help for Heroes, who helped put Royal Artillery veteran Alan Izzard back on his feet through golf. And he recently won the national Battle Back Golf championship – another organisation that uses golf to positive effect in our society.

In recent years, much has been written by experts – and by charlatans like me – regarding the health benefits of golf, both physical and psychological, and it's starting to be taken seriously. But I'm sure golf could do more. Please, don't leave it all to charities; do something at your club. Be a leader for your region. There are so many people whose lives you could touch in the right way. It just needs you to take that first step. **END**

NEWS IN BRIEF

GOLFMANAGEMENT.EU.COM/NEWS



NEW OLAZABAL 36-HOLE PROJECT AT COSTA NAVARINO NEARS CONCLUSION

José María Olazábal headed to Costa Navarino to play Navarino Hills for the first time as his eagerly anticipated new 36-hole Navarino Hills development at the Mediterranean's prime sustainable destination approaches its completion. Olazábal flew to Greece to play his full part in the final preparations being made for the two 18-hole courses he has designed at Navarino Hills – the world's first International Olympic Academy Golf Course and the Hills Course.

SEARCH 'COSTA NAVARINO' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



INDIA'S KARNATAKA GOLF ASSOCIATION WELCOMES NEW SUPERINTENDENT

Karnataka Golf Association, one of the India's finest golf courses, is pleased to welcome Coman Mulry as the club's new golf course superintendent. In his new role, Mulry will manage and oversee the agronomic maintenance of the distinguished 18-hole course designed by Thomson and Wolveridge, located in Bangalore, India.

SEARCH 'COMAN MULRY' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

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SIR NICK FALDO SAYS 'BONJOUR' TO NEW PROJECT IN PARIS

Sir Nick Faldo has announced his latest golf course design project at Golf de Val-Grand, his first ever in France, with aspirations to create an exciting country club venue with a premium academy facility. Located just over 25km from the centre of Paris, the design is set to welcome the club's surrounding community to enjoy a strategic and inviting test that champions endless enjoyment for all golfing abilities.

SEARCH 'GOLF DE VAL-GRAND' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



FOXHILLS SCOOPS CONDÉ NAST JOHANSENS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Avid travellers looking for an escape to the Surrey countryside can now immerse themselves in an award-winning experience as Foxhills Club & Resort is recognised for its array of leisure pursuits by Condé Nast Johansens. Foxhills was named the Best Immersive Experience as part of the coveted awards, which celebrate outstanding hotels, spas and venues in the UK and Ireland and across the rest of the world.

SEARCH 'FOXHILLS' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



59CLUB ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH GOLF HR

59club UK has today announced a partnership with Golf HR, an employment law and HR specialist firm supporting golf clubs in the UK. Golf HR and its sister company Gap HR have been keeping organisations tribunal-free for 19 years, and now work with 129 private member clubs, and 62 private sector companies.

SEARCH '59CLUB' ONLINE

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RAIN BIRD LAUNCHES NEW GOLF SOLENOID VALVES

Golf courses in lightning-prone regions, those that use reclaimed water and those that need water pressure regulation, now have a new valve solution. Rain Bird Golf's new GSV Series plastic and brass valves include numerous advanced features designed to enhance durability even under the most challenging conditions.

SEARCH 'RAIN BIRD' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

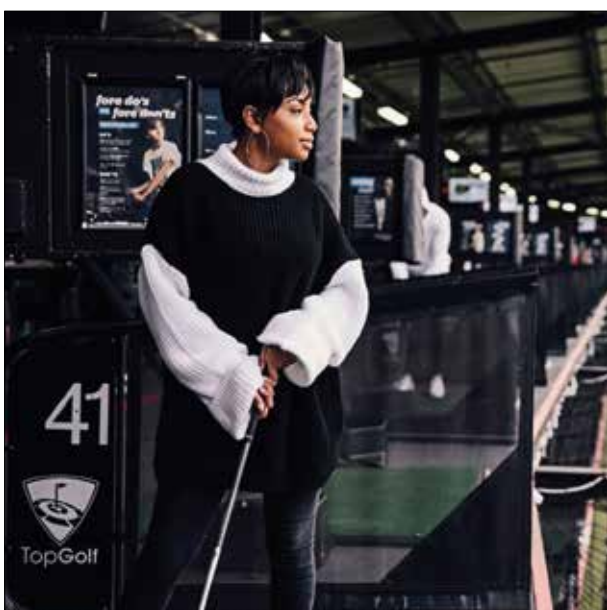


BOOST METHOD WORKSHOP REVELATION FOR SPANISH GOLF FACILITIES

Following the success of The Bucket Pros workshops and consultancy service in Scandinavia, the revolutionary methods of increasing driving range revenue have been delivered in Spain. The workshops, which have been created to support golf facilities in taking the first steps in reaching the full potential of their practice offering, are part of an ongoing development plan of bringing The Bucket Pros services to Europe.

SEARCH 'THE BUCKET PROS' ONLINE

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



TOPGOLF AND THE R&A JOIN FORCES TO PROMOTE WOMEN IN GOLF

Topgolf and The R&A are collaborating to offer several discounted women and girls coaching sessions from PGA professionals to support the governing body's #FOREeveryone campaign, as part of its wider Women in Golf Charter initiative. These fun social sessions aim to inspire and motivate women golfers, providing them with the practical skills they need to play the sport, while also showcasing it in a more positive and inclusive light.

SEARCH 'FOREEVERYONE' ONLINE

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



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GLENMUIR PROUD OF COLLECTION OF SUSTAINABLE GOLF PRODUCTS

Glenmuir, the Scottish golf clothing brand, has set out its commitment to the environment with sustainable and renewable methods of manufacturing and natural fibres at the heart of their #GlenmuirCare journey. This commitment can be seen throughout Glenmuir's supply chain from yarn and fabrics, to methods of manufacturing.

SEARCH 'GLENMUIR' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



GREENCLUB TO PUT PORTMARNOCK ON ROAD TO CARBON NEUTRALITY

Portmarnock Golf Club is taking the lead in the drive to improve sustainability at golf venues across Ireland after turning to environmental specialists GreenClub to help achieve its long-term goal of becoming carbon neutral. The prestigious Dublin venue, which was founded in 1894 and has hosted the Irish Open no fewer than 19 times, will work with the leading eco-consultancy company across all areas of its club business over the next three years to ensure a greener future – with the ultimate aim of becoming 'net zero'.

SEARCH 'GREENCLUB' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



EUROPEAN TOUR TO BECOME DP WORLD TOUR FROM 2022

The European Tour group and DP World has jointly announced a ground-breaking evolution to their long-term partnership, with DP World becoming the new title sponsor of the group's main tour from the start of the 2022 season. The agreement heralds a new era in the history of the European Tour group, which, along with DP World, will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2022, the first season of the newly named DP World Tour.

SEARCH 'DP WORLD' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



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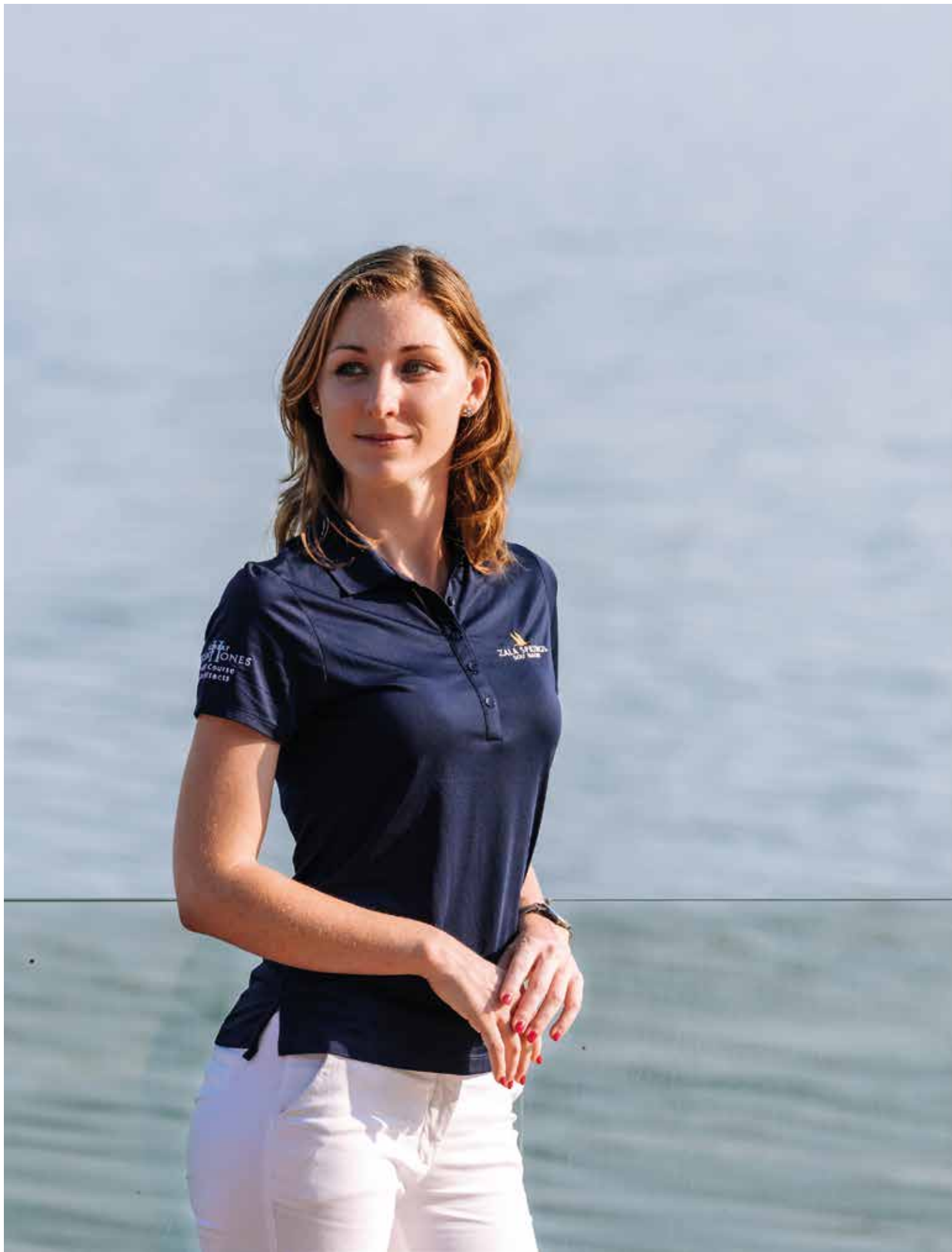
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Words Christopher Stratford

Photography Penzer Gyula, Szabo Aladar, Kálóczi Zoltán

SONJA GSCHWENDTNER

CLUB MANAGER, ZALA SPRINGS



Golf emerged from the shadow of Covid to be warmed both by a surge of interest in playing the game and a welcome increase in the number of people wanting to take up club membership.

They were timely boosts after a distinctly dark period for the world in general, but the Zala Springs Golf Resort in Zalacsány, Hungary had already gained an unexpected benefit from the stringent regulations imposed by the pandemic, says its club manager, Sonja Gschwendtner.

As in other countries, the Hungarian government offered financial support to businesses although Zala Springs did have to reduce its staff hours. However, the positive effects that ensued continue to be felt at a resort that is regarded by many as its country's premier golf venue.

"We had to make the contract from eight hours to four hours and then the government took over some of the expenses, but we kept all the staff and we tried to rotate them in the different positions," recalls Gschwendtner.

"So the receptionist may have helped with the cleaning or the food and beverage staff helped out on the course, and things like this. It was interesting because now the staff know a little bit more of each other's work, and it was quite interesting to see that they enjoyed jumping into other areas."

This enjoyment in an expanded view of the workings of Zala Springs led to it retaining all of its staff through a difficult period in which many golf clubs were hemorrhaging employees who left in pursuit of alternative careers.

The retention was much needed for the resort's reputation and standing within its client base meant its bookings for 2020 were all honoured albeit a year later.

"We do not have any restrictions anymore and we have had a very good season," says Gschwendtner. "We were lucky enough that all the groups from the foreign countries who booked their holidays to Zala, they were all really keen to come so they all postponed their travel and came this year."

Golfing visitors from outside Hungary's boundaries are Zala Springs' lifeblood since this is a country in which the sport was forbidden during Soviet rule and has only around 2,500 registered players, roughly equivalent to the membership of half a dozen popular UK clubs.

But they come in great numbers, particularly from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Sweden, attracted by a course designed by Robert Trent Jones II as well as luxurious facilities that have been much enhanced by this year's delayed opening of a Wellness Centre & Spa. It was finished last November, but could not be opened when lockdown restrictions were put back in place.

"It was really frustrating, but finally this March we could open it," smiles Gschwendtner. "It is doing well and more leisure guests are visiting the resort, which are not basically golfers."

"But it is also having a good effect on the golf because they are trying out the golf course and the golf lessons they take from our pros, so that is a positive that the people try out the sport because in Hungary we



"IN OCTOBER ONE OF OUR HUNGARIAN INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS, RICHARD GUZMICS, BOUGHT AN APARTMENT AT ZALA SPRINGS AND HE WANTS TO START PLAYING GOLF"

have just 2,500 golfers and it is always hard to push these numbers up."

Zala Springs is doing much to raise the interest in golf in a country in which football is the dominant sporting interest, including in July staging the Hungarian open championships – for elite, mid-amateur and junior players – as well as running the Zala Springs Junior Camp during the summer.

"We also have a programme where the Hungarian Golf Federation and Hungarian pros and also the Hungarian courses are working together to grow these numbers. People get a green card, which is like a licence to play all Hungarian courses. It's a 10-hour course and they have training and have a practical and a theory exam.

"It costs only €150 per person, which includes the balls, the clubs, the driving range fee and also green fees for using the course during the whole programme. They are also taught the etiquette, and also how to drive a buggy. After they do the green card, the course also gives one month of trial membership."

Gschwendtner also hopes two stars from the worlds of football and showbiz can assist in raising the profile of the game even higher and thus attract more participants.

"In October one of our Hungarian international football players, Richard Guzmics, bought an apartment at Zala Springs and he wants to start playing golf," she says. "I hope that it helps us a lot.

"We also have a member at the club who is a famous Hungarian actor, Kristof Nemeth, and we also make promotions with him. We have open house days that he attends when people are just coming because of him, but also to try out the golf, of course, and it is also a nice tool you can use."

Zala Springs is located two hours' drive from Budapest airport and a similar distance from Vienna, Zagreb and Ljubljana. While not a long journey, Gschwendtner believes the plans for Balaton airport to start running charter flights to and from the UK will help increase the number of visitors from these shores.

The resort was developed in 2016 – as a real estate development made up of studio

apartments and luxury villas and focused on golf – by engineering company magnate Gabor Szeles, who originally bought a small castle in the village that is now one of Zala Springs' hotels.

"The main reason for Zala's creation was to build an international community for golf, for players and for those who appreciate outstanding quality and high-quality and luxury, so we have luxury designed homes and the idea was to make Zala a golf village," says Gschwendtner.

Szeles's son-in-law Tomas is one of Zala Springs' 217 members, and plays every week.

Gschwendtner is also a keen golfer, who developed a love of the game in her previous job as club manager at Golfclub Imperial Balaton. "The president there helped me to get the basics and I fell in love quite easily with the game," she reveals.

"I am not so good, but I enjoy golf. My biggest handicap is that I am working on a golf course so my time is very limited. Your hardest thing is when you can see the people coming in from the 18th."

Prior to migrating to the golf industry she worked for an event management company in Budapest. "We did quite a few big conferences, prize-giving ceremonies, book introductions, things like that. It was very interesting.

"I learned a lot, with sponsorships and also about the whole industry and the marketing side and the events side, which is helpful now here in the resort because we have quite a few events outside the golf. We do a lot of conferences, team building events, things like this, and weddings as well."

Ultimately Zala Springs would like to stage a major European golfing competition, and she comments: "There are already some plans dealing with it, so hopefully we can announce soon a European event at Zala.

"We have some plans together with the Hungarian Federation, but we cannot say which golf tournament that will be or when, but maybe it can also be a young masters or something like this.

"We will try to get one, we would like to have one. We will see." **END**

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As Jim McKenzie MBE sits in the patio seating area of Merlins Bar in the Celtic Manor Resort, he is holding court with a group of youthful greenkeepers who have gathered to take part in a student greenkeeping awards event, sponsored by Toro which supplies McKenzie with the equipment used to maintain the Welsh club's famous fairways. For McKenzie, these meetings come all too rarely but they remain invaluable, even at the stage in his career where he has achieved everything a course manager could hope to – including hosting the Ryder Cup in 2010.

"This job is lonely enough and it is important to stimulate your mind as much as anything else," said McKenzie, 59. "The good thing about this industry is if you network properly, the solutions to all your problems are out there somewhere."

For more than 5,000 greenkeepers, groundsmen and turf professionals each year, the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition (BTME) provides the ultimate opportunity to put the tools down for a moment in favour of discussing problems, learning new skills and gaining the knowledge and equipment required to carry their golf course to the next level. When BTME returns to Harrogate between January 25–27, 2022, COVID measures will be in place to ensure the safety of all attendees during the show, while a revamped education system will provide hundreds of hours of learning opportunities, from machinery mechanics to improved management practices.

"I'm personally really looking forward to BTME next year," said McKenzie. "I'm desperate to see the guys, some of whom I haven't seen for nearly two years and I'm looking forward to catching up with old friends and networking within the industry."

It is difficult to say anyone has truly enjoyed the past couple of years, but golf clubs have fared better than most with the recorded surge in playing numbers. As the world returns to normal, the golf facilities that will retain the highest number of players are those who have invested in their premium product – the golf course itself – and the greenkeepers who are tasked with ensuring it is in the best playing condition possible given the available resources.

Club managers now face an important decision. They may choose to support their team by encouraging them to sign up for BTME and the incredible professional development opportunities available at the associated Continue to Learn education programme. They may also inspire their team by putting them forward for a BIGGA Award, which comes with some great prizes. Or, they may not.

The golfing industry stands at a crossroads. We can reinvest in our staff and our facilities and build upon the momentum we have gained through an incredible amount of hard work over the past couple of years to create a vibrant golf industry for generations to come, or we can let things slip back to the way we were. **END**



JACK LAWS

DIRECTOR OF GOLF, LES BORDES



It's fair to say that it has been an interesting few years for 31-year-old Jack Laws.

Settled in his role as professional assistant at Sunningdale – a position he held for just over four years – in August 2018 Laws was catapulted into the Loire Valley in France.

Assigned the role of head professional at Les Bordes, the exclusive private resort in Saint-Laurent-Nouan, Laws found himself in unfamiliar territory and unable to speak the language. He was very much an Englishman abroad, unable to converse in French nor relate to the culture.

But, like his previous role at Sunningdale when he took a fifty per cent pay cut to work with head professional Keith Maxwell, Laws knew that the move to Les Bordes would be beneficial to his long-term career objectives.

Sat in the grandeur of the clubhouse at Les Bordes – recently voted one of the best in world golf – Laws reflected on his earlier career: "My dad was a professional snooker player, and he didn't want me to play snooker. So, he used to just take me out to the countryside to play golf.

"He stopped playing when he was 22, but he beat Jimmy White, and his best mate was Steve Davis. So, he was properly good. And he still is quite good now. But back then it was like smoking, drugs, gambling, you can imagine, in the East End of London."

His father's insistence that young Laws pursue another sport proved merited, when he earned his place in the Kent County golf team. "I realised that I was actually quite good," recalls Laws. "I wasn't the best in the county, but I was in the same team with people that I thought were way better than me."

Like many of his peers, aged 18, Laws soon realised that he would struggle to make a career on tour, and opted to go back into education.

"I went to the PGA, and got my degree," he said. "And that's when I knew, I was going to stay in the industry as golf would be my livelihood now – I wasn't really good at anything else.

"I left school with one GCSE, and worked very, very hard to get two more GCSEs, which allowed me to go onto the PGA. I was a historic underachiever. I was very, very capable, but I went to a school which was in Central London, which was awful, basically. I never really used to go. But luckily, I was always good at golf."

And that grit and determination forged in the East End of London paid dividends when Laws had the tenacity to push for a job at Sunningdale.

After being made redundant from a central London Golf Centre, Laws landed a role coaching at Roehampton Golf Club, but after two years, was keen to progress. "A role at Sunningdale came up, and I was one of about a hundred applicants that went for the job. I went to the club, wrote letters and played golf with head professional Keith Maxwell as it was such a sought-after position."

Laws learnt the basics of his craft as a club professional such as retail, playing with members, coaching and golf operations. "Keith was a huge mentor to me," added Laws. "I left Roehampton, halved my income and doubled my work hours, but he was like a traditional old golf pro and I thought he





"IT WAS AN 11-MONTH BUILD, AND IT WAS A BIG, BIG PROJECT. HE LIVED WITH US FOR A LONG TIME, GIL"

was like the last Jedi," laughed Laws. "I learnt from him, and I wouldn't change any of that."

And Law's tenacity to land a job at Sunningdale – which he describes as "the best private members' club in the UK" – eventually led to him securing the role of director of golf at Les Bordes and working closely with one of the world's best golf course architects... Gil Hanse.

The golf course at Les Bordes was originally born out of an idea at a meeting of the industrialist Baron Marcel Bich (the "Bic" pen brand) and businessman Yoshiaki Sakurai. The two friends decided to create a golf course of high quality and international dimension for their pleasure and that of their friends.

Robert Von Haage, a Texan architect was contracted to give an 'American' touch to the project, and with no limits given to the investment and the size of the project, the Old Course at Les Bordes was opened in 1987.

By 2008, both Baron Bich and Sakurai had passed away, and new investors took control of the property with Von Haage returning to Les Bordes in 2013 to create a second course.

Five years later, in 2018, RoundShield Partners – a private equity firm – took control of the Les Bordes estate, and as part of that acquisition, formed Les Bordes Golf Club as a private club accessible exclusively for members and their guests.

"At the time, there were seven members here, three of which were Sunningdale members," said Laws, explaining the link between his current and former employer.

"One of the members contacted me in 2018, so I came over and took a look at the project. It was obviously amazing at that point; the golf course was great, and the ambition was there. I went back to London, met with the owner and our vision [for Les Bordes] aligned and I flew back two months later."

In the absence of a general manager or CEO to oversee the estate, Laws – who recently got married – was tasked with running the entire operation, and one of his primary goals was to setup the membership structure.

"Previously, Les Bordes was never a club – it was a venue," he explains.

"You had cottages, a clubhouse and a golf course but there wasn't a club in the true sense of the word."

The seven members from the previous regime all lost their playing rights after RoundShield purchased the estate, yet so enthusiastic were they to remain, all re-joined keen to buy-into the vision for the 'new' Les Bordes.

And that vision included the re-designed New Course, imagined by Gil Hanse. His first project in Europe, Hanse was selected to create a second contrasting championship course which opened in July 2021 spending much of his time on-site with Laws.

"It was an 11-month build, and it was a big, big project. He lived with us for a long time, Gil. He was literally on the dozer every day."

And in terms of the design, Laws added: "Some of the corridors are [original], because we couldn't do anything about that, but I would say 10–15 per cent has been used of the old course. Away from that, it's all fresh. It's all new architecture."

And it would appear as if the changes have been well received by the membership, which now totals over a hundred, but with capacity for more.

"80 per cent of our membership is international," explains Laws, "so it's a very broad mix. Legally we have to be under a thousand [members], and I think the balance will be 500–700. We'll see, because at the end of the day, we haven't got an unlimited amount of accommodation on the estate."

"We are building a second hotel, which will be 88 rooms, but we'll have to see the ebb and flow. I mean, there's no rush."

And it's the ebb and flow of French life at Les Bordes, which seems to suit Law's character. And although his personal life has recently changed, he sees no change on the horizon professionally.

"I could be here for 25 years," he smiles. "Yeah, I'd be stupid to say otherwise because there's so much going on. There are so many moving parts, and the people that are behind the project are very personally invested with friends, family, etc."

"So, there's a trajectory to the club, which is happening. But where else would I want to go? I mean, this is a once in a lifetime situation and I appreciate that every day." **END**





AGUSTÍN GARCÍA PASCUAL

CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER, INFINITUM



INFINITUM

Golf industry leaders come in many guises. Some come from the world of commerce; some from the greenkeeping shed, and many from the practice range.

A few aspiring professional golfers have moved from the course to the office after realising that life on tour is tougher than it looks, yet rarely has anymore in world golf progressed from the world of professional football, to become the chief business officer of one of Spain's foremost golf and beach communities.

A former professional footballer with Racing Santander in Spain, Agustín García Pascual has a remarkable story to tell. Born in 1970, Pascual was raised in a world of professional sport as he explains: "I was born in a family where all my mother's side family were all golfing Spanish amateur champions. My dad played for Santander as well, football wise.

"I didn't know what [sport] to choose, so I chose both," he recalls fondly.

"I grew up at a golf course, Real Golf de Pedreña back home in Santander. We're known because of Seve Ballesteros. Seve was born there, grew up there, died unfortunately there as well.

"I grew up playing golf. I loved it. I loved golf much more than football, but I was better at football. I had to do both to keep my dad and my mum both happy."

After playing for Real Madrid at under 19 level, Pascual moved to Racing Santander aged 21, and realised his dream of playing for his hometown club. After a brief period in the second team, Pascual established himself as a first team regular, helping them

win promotion to La Liga that season and the chance to play against the Galácticos of Spanish football, Barcelona and Real Madrid.

But then a cruel twist of fate, quite literally shattered Pascual's dreams of playing at the pinnacle of Spanish football after breaking his foot during a match against local rivals.

After undergoing seven surgeries to try and save his career, aged 25 Pascual was forced to hang-up his professional boots, and moved to San Diego in the US to study golf management at the San Diego Golf Academy.

Pascual spent three years in San Diego studying golf complex operations and general management, and whilst in the US, was spotted playing football with friends at a local park one day. One thing led to another, and before he knew it, Pascual was playing for the San Diego Sockers.

"I ended up playing one year for San Diego, and then one year for Washington DC, having surgeries after every season. Back then, if you came from Europe you were good enough to play for them," he laughed.

After two seasons playing in the US, and finishing his golf degree, Pascual had an offer to play for the San Jose Clash in the MLS, and even signed a pre-contract, before returning to Spain for yet another operation on his foot.

"I always had surgeries in Barcelona with the same doctor," recalls Pascual, "and I already had a plane ticket to return to Orlando, to Disney World, for the pre-season with the San Jose Clash."



"WE NEED TO HAVE THE BEST GOLF COURSES; THE BEST BEACH CLUB; THE BEST RESTAURANTS AND THE BEST SERVICE"

But whilst back in Barcelona, Pascual learnt of a new golf project close by that was still in development and was asked to assist with the opening.

"Although I had the option to return to The States and play soccer for one more year, I had to think about my future, which was in golf, and not football. So, I turned down the San Jose contract, and was offered two roles in golf – one in Madrid, and the other in Barcelona.

"I still remember I was offered double the salary in Madrid compared to Barcelona, but don't ask me why, but I said [to myself] 'I have to be in this project.' So, in 1998 I started running PGA Golf Catalunya, a year before it opened, which was in the middle of nowhere, with no grass on the course. There was just nothing there, but I decided I have to be with these people."

Pascual spent 11 years as managing director of PGA Golf Catalunya, before returning 'home' to Real Golf de Pedreña and looks back fondly on his time in Catalunya.

"I was too young," he admits, "and I had no experience. It was owned then by the Royal Automotive Club of Catalunya, the RACC, and they were such nice people that I wanted to work with them rather than with the other project [in Madrid].

"And where I am today, I have to admit that it's been exactly the same thing. The project is absolutely unbelievable."

And that project is Infinitum – the re-branded name of Lumine Golf and Beach Community. Located on the Costa Daurada, Infinitum promises to fulfil its long-awaited realisation of becoming the leading golf destination in the area, with a mix of golf, gastronomy, a contemporary beach club and now, real estate.

But Pascual's start to life at Infinitum didn't quite go according to plan, as his first day in his new role was March 13, 2020, the day that Spain initiated a national lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

But unlike some destinations across Europe who chose to withdraw offers of employment, the owners at Infinitum stuck by their new man, testament to Pascual's faith in the project.

"When I got interviewed by the people that own this project, my decision to come here was because of the people rather than for the project," he stated. "But now, I realise that I'm very fortunate as the owners have not only honoured my job, but the long-term vision of the project, regardless of covid."

When questioned about the change of name, Pascual stated: "Infinitum means a bit of everything, Family; Sports; Ocean plus we are selling a way of living." And he's clear on the direction the rebranded destination needs to take.

"I think what we want to achieve here is something quite similar to what they are achieving now at Catalunya. And this is probably now in the phase that I was in at Catalunya in 1998, [although] I'd say this is probably farther developed."

Originally opened in 2008, and featuring 45-holes of golf, the destination has long-held aspirations of building real estate at the resort. And with Pascual's experience at PGA Catalunya, he is the ideal person to help Infinitum finally realise that potential.

"We are all very excited now that the real estate [has] come on board," he said. "We are all looking forward for the real estate to really do well. And at the end of the day, we all do whatever we do for the real estate to do even better.

"But I think that in order to do that, we need to have the best golf courses; the best beach club; the best restaurants and the best service. I think that's going to help the rest of the resort. Because at the end of the day, the resident is going to demand a full experience."

Pascual admits that he is "working" on improving the golf offering, with discussions taking place about design changes to the two 18-hole courses, the Hills and Lakes. But he is also clear in his mind, that he has an opportunity to mould Infinitum into something quite unique.

"What we have here is something quite special," reiterates Pascual. "We want to be Infinitum, and the potential is absolutely huge. What is quite clear is that this resort is going to be in the high-end market, that's for sure." **END**

STEPHEN FOLLETT

CEO, LONDON GOLF CLUB



Ask Stephen Follett to name the most important innovations introduced in his first five years as chief executive officer at the London Golf Club and it will need some time to narrow down the list.

It starts with growing the game of golf by encouraging and investing in the London Golf Club Academy, Junior Programme – The London Cubs – and goes on to include adding in aspects of golf fitness and mental fitness with the MindsetCaddy.

Transforming the venue to being a forward-thinking modern golfing facility, which is communicative and transparent with its membership, and carves a path within the industry comes next to be followed with driving the business to be more eco-friendly and 'green' with innovative plans for the future of the venue.

Like many golf clubs COVID hasn't been the only challenge faced by the club in the last five years. As a semi-private club and therefore open to both members and visiting golfers, the growth in membership and general interest in the sport has caused them to review the way the business is run.

In the first two years of Follett's tenure one of the main challenges was to fill the tee sheet with over 5,000 visitor rounds. The team responded admirably by beating this target hands down, then the goal moved on to how to maintain this level of activity.

"COVID saw this goal completely flip, with more members and more golfers wanting to visit and play," he said.

"The challenge has now become how to offer sufficient tee times to both members and visitors – something that has to be

managed on a daily basis and with no small degree of care."

Recent events have shown that plans can sometimes need to change with little or no notice, having a back-up plan and being adaptable has been the most important lesson learned by the team in the last 18 months.

As a business, the London Golf Club aims to be forward-thinking and 'the first' to do something, looking to lead rather than follow. The many restrictions, and guidelines faced over the last 18 months has required the entire business to constantly think and rethink every possible situation and outcome.

"Going forward it is important for us to come up with ideas and have a plan but most importantly to always remain on our toes and be ready for whatever may be thrown at us."

Staff shortages and supply chain issues creating a shortfall of products across all departments are some of the major challenges that have been the result of COVID.

"We have had to adapt areas of the business to deal with these issues, and we also found that being completely transparent with our members and visitors about that we are facing is hugely beneficial.

"It has also been helpful to make up for our setbacks by bringing about planned changes or reinvesting in other areas, such as introducing our new Powakaddy and Club Car buggy fleet in April 2021 and redecorating the Spike Bar at the beginning of the year."

Like all successful businesses the London Golf Club takes great care with its staff, their selection, training, and career planning,



"OUR GOAL IS TO DEVELOP THE STAFF IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY SEE THE CLUB AS A STEPPINGSTONE IN THEIR CAREER"

should they desire it. But COVID has meant whole new levels of involvement and with no rule book to follow it has been vital to communicate effectively and often, especially throughout furlough.

"We have always found it important to show our employees that we care about their development," Follett added. "At the start of the pandemic, we needed to show them that we also cared about their physical and mental well-being.

"Throughout the last 18 months we have kept everyone informed about what they can do to continue their training and development throughout the furlough period, offering training courses and opportunities to grow whilst we were all made to stay at home.

"Now that we are back in the business, we have worked extremely hard to reassess job roles and descriptions and to listen to feedback from staff members – asking what their goals are and how we can help them in their journey."

It is particularly important to the club to grow from within and encourage existing staff to explore other departments or to utilise training programmes in order to make the next step in their career.

"We have recently signed agreements with three staff to support them as they work towards the PGA Foundation Degree.

"We also have multiple green keeping staff in training to receive agronomy qualifications, and two of our managers have just completed the CMAE coursework. It is one of our top priorities as a business to keep our staff growing and moving forward in their career journey with us."

Keeping staff and working alongside them in their career has obvious benefits to the business and yet it isn't the end game.

"Our goal is to develop the staff in such a way that they see the club as a steppingstone in their career," admitted Follett.

"Having said that there are a number of staff that have been with the club for 15 or more years. We have recognised those employees' commitment to the club with Long Service Awards and additional employee benefits such as an extra holiday or a free table at one of our Sunday lunches."

The corporate side of the business has suffered terribly but given time corporate days and overseas visitor numbers are expected to return, reigniting an important side to the business and plans to spread golf events across multiple dates is already showing signs of success.

"If everything continues to improve, and there are no more shut-downs and no new COVID variations, travel restrictions will continue to ease, and things will get back to some semblance of 'normal', said Follett.

"Practically, and in the short term it is hard to tell exactly what to do to speed their return, we can only plan for a return to the way things used to be for larger groups.

"However, the pandemic has taught us to have a plan and to make it adaptable according to the situation we find ourselves in. To reflect this, we have a range of new ideas and package options that we feel confident will cater for the needs of these corporate groups.

"As long as we remain flexible, we can encourage our corporate clients to return with the knowledge and confidence that we will deliver our usual customer experience no matter what the circumstances."

Growing the tournament legacy of the club have been import milestones, which Follett is keen to continue. "The venue has such a rich tournament history of which we are immensely proud, and we hope to continue this into the future.

"In the next five years my hope is that the facility continues to expand and grow to be a more all-around five-star venue. We hope to expand the offering to our members and to continue moving forward with our development as a venue/club."

Looking further ahead the club recognises that it has a responsibility to carefully consider their environmental footprint, and there are serious plans to move towards carbon neutrality.

"I believe we all have to take this seriously, both at the London Golf Club and golf in general, he said. "As a business, it feels like we've done quite a lot with regards to sustainability but there must be more to it than planting trees and changing the types of light bulb we use. We have to do more." **END**





Words Andy Hiseman
Photography Andy Hiseman

HOWARD CRAFT

CLUB MANAGER, BERKHAMSTED GOLF CLUB



The golf industry offers many challenging management scenarios. Reputation-rescue jobs, re-starts backed by significant investment, and being the first manager of a completely new facility are a few of the most common.

But Howard Craft faced one of the industry's more subtle challenges when he joined Berkhamsted as club manager in early 2018.

Berkhamsted is a 131-year old private golf club set in Hertfordshire's largest expanse of natural heathland, with a highly loyal, stable membership, and it is partially defined as a playing test by being one of the only bunker-free clubs in England.

Its enviable trinity of course architects – Willie Park Jr, Harry Colt and James Braid – also add authenticity to its appeal. Plus, in The Berkhamsted Trophy, it also has one of the most prestigious elite amateur events on the annual calendar.

"I arrived at Berkhamsted with change and improvement in mind, but I was acutely aware that those changes would have to be introduced gradually, and managed sensitively," says Craft, 37. "Berkhamsted has a very distinctive special appeal, so anything we did needed both to retain the essence of the club and also to have the full support of the members."

Craft's to-do list included overseeing a large-scale irrigation upgrade project; securing approval to turn The Berkhamsted Trophy into English golf's first gender-neutral elite-level amateur tournament; and introducing major new course-conditioning processes to bring the club's playing surfaces up to national championship standards.

In his first two years Craft also led the adoption of the R&A's Women In Golf Charter, signed in autumn 2020, and also managed the delicate process of reversing the nines at the club – the first major change to the golf course since James Braid redesigned seven holes in 1926, and a decision that had been much-discussed over the decades, but never clearly proposed to the membership.

However, two of the things which Craft considers to be his major achievements at Berkhamsted, as he approaches his fourth year in charge, are less headline-grabbing but still no less substantial.

"I am a passionate Sustainability Champion" says Craft, "and as our club's motto is 'Golf As Nature Intended' I felt we had an opportunity to set a fantastic example to other golf clubs."

"I also felt that, with a strategic investment plan needing to be put in place, and agreed by all, we also had an opportunity to make significant improvements to the club's governance at the same time."

Craft entered the golf industry aged 21 as a greenkeeper, after completing a degree in Environmental Biology at Swansea University, but crossed over fairly quickly into general club management at BGL Golf – his employers immediately before Berkhamsted Golf Club.

Craft's passion for the environment has led to his becoming one of only three Sustainability Champions appointed by the GEO Foundation in England as he explained: "Sustainability is not simply about increasing biodiversity."



"THIS MEANS WE CAN DISCUSS THE IMPORTANT STRATEGIC MATTERS IN A BOARD MEETING – AND NOT HOW THE CARROTS ARE CHOPPED!"

"It's about running an efficient business in a world of ever-decreasing resources. When I arrived I was determined to ensure that genuine, real-world sustainability was core to our long-term plan."

With Craft acting as an inspirational driver of change, the Berkhamsted team are steadily introducing a wide range of sustainable initiatives at the golf club, such as changing the way in which the club bakes its bread and decreasing the carbon footprint of its 'food miles'. The club is also planning to start to compost its own food waste, providing a popular free compost pick-up service for its more green-fingered members.

Other measures include a new polytunnel on-site where the club grows all of its own herbs and edible flowers for its restaurant. The club will also be adding new solar panels onto the roof of its clubhouse extension, subject to planning permission, and has a large-scale ongoing heathland restoration project ongoing, overseen by Natural England.

Another heathland-management initiative will involve the addition of cattle-grazing to some of the non-golfing land on the club's 560-acre estate.

Also key to Berkhamsted's sustainability drive was a major new irrigation system, completed in 2019. Craft explains: "Just under 600 new sprinklers went in, a seven-fold increase on our previous sprinkler system.

"This increased our water efficiency to a great degree. Previously, like many clubs with an inadequate sprinkler system, our water wastage was unacceptably high. Now, we feel that we set the standard for golf clubs in the area."

The drive towards ever-better practices continues, but the club's initial carbon footprint goals have already been met. "We have had our carbon sequestration calculated for the entire estate, and we are now a net sink of over 500 tons of carbon per annum. The Sustainability Scorecard which we received from the GEO Foundation is now a source of great pride at Berkhamsted."

Improving club governance may not be what you dream about at night when you're imagining future career glories as an ambi-

tious golf club manager, but a poor structure can thwart even the most well thought-out plans, and can in extreme cases create a toxic working environment.

Berkhamsted did not suffer from the latter, thankfully, but over the last three years Craft has overseen a remarkably thorough reorganisation at Berkhamsted Golf Club, and it is now a slicker, better-organised working environment for him and his management team to implement the necessary changes.

"You can have a first-class strategic investment plan, and communicate it brilliantly to your members, but ultimately the work needs to be done, day-by-day, by your staff, and I felt we needed to make some changes to give ourselves the best chance of actually implementing those plans.

"We also have become more disciplined with regards to our Board activities. A Board pack is now sent 72 hours before a meeting, keeping the agenda focused and clearly highlighting any decisions to be made. This means we can discuss the important strategic matters in a Board meeting – and not how the carrots are chopped!"

Craft's heads of department now also prepare reports in advance for sub-committee meetings, enabling faster resolutions to some of the stickier operational matters. There is also now a Nominations Committee to identify candidates for future Board or Captain positions.

Role profiles have been also created for chair, captain, vice-captain, president and director positions, and a skills matrix has been created to highlight any knowledge or expertise gaps in the Board to help more efficient recruitment of new Board members.

The chair and directors are now in-post at Berkhamsted for a minimum of three years – and can serve for six – so the club now enjoys greater continuity.

"Our reorganisation has enabled us to create a new vision, purpose and set of values, with a solid strategic investment plan. Our members now have much better clarity as to the club's future direction – which makes life much more enjoyable for everyone here.

"And after all, that's what this is all about," concluded Craft. **END**

ANTOGNOLLA, ITALY

ANTOGNOLLAGOLF.COM

Words Michael Lenihan
Photography Antognolla

Described as Italy's most exciting new luxury resort, Antognolla Golf in Umbria will soon have the credentials to warrant that bold statement.

The resort, which was established in 1997 and currently consists of an 18-hole Robert Trent Jones II designed golf course, sits in the shadow of Antognolla Castle which dates to the twelfth century.

Lying at the heart of the 500-hectare estate, the castle will soon form the centre-piece of an up-market golf resort, ideally located in Perugia, just a few hours from either Rome or Florence.

Described as the 'green heart' of Italy, Umbria is rich in culture, and set against a backdrop of olive groves, vineyards, and cypress-topped hills.

Six Senses, the upscale international hospitality brand, will soon transform the castle into a luxurious 71-bedroom hotel together with 79 branded residences.

Construction work is due for completion by 2023 just in time for Europe to (hopefully) regain the Ryder Cup at Marco Simone Golf and Country Club in Rome.

As part of the renovation of Antognolla Castle, Six Senses will also incorporate a





"OUR AIM IS TO CREATE ONE OF EUROPE'S TOP LUXURY RESORTS AND THE GOLF COURSE IS A KEY PART OF ANTIGNOLLA'S VISION"

wellness centre, equestrian centre, cookery school and organic farm ensuring that guests privileged enough to stay on-site will have plenty to occupy their time besides golf.

"We are thrilled to start bringing our collaborative plans with Six Senses to life," commented Victoria Sobolevskaya, head of hospitality asset management for VIY Management, the owners of Antognolla.

"Antognolla is a unique project in Italy in terms of its concept; combining a luxury hotel in a medieval castle, stylish serviced residential properties, an exceptional golf course and a luxurious spa complex – all of which will be operated by a world-renowned international hospitality brand.

"We are delighted that our vision of the project is in line with that of Six Senses, and we have a truly unique opportunity to carefully preserve and develop this area of historical and cultural significance."

Until that vision is realised however, golf, for the time-being at least, is the main attraction at Antognolla with the resort investing heavily in the condition of the course over the past couple of years.

"Our aim is to create one of Europe's top luxury resorts and the golf course is a key part of Antognolla's vision," added Sobolevskaya.

Featuring long, cliff-lined fairways, water hazards and large, undulating greens, every bunker has been upgraded; all tee boxes rebuilt; the drainage and irrigation improved, and a newly designed practice facility constructed.

Antognolla Golf is fast becoming a globally renowned course, providing one of the most spectacular rounds of golf in Europe. Rated among Italy's best golf courses, Antognolla was selected to host the 2019 PGA Italian Championship.

With sustainability and the environment being at the heart of the whole development, Antognolla Golf has adopted a proactive approach to implementing its sustainability initiatives, and the exquisite harmony of the landscape and natural environment offers a golf course with a truly spectacular backdrop, opinions shared by Gary Player who recently visited the resort.

"Although it's been a very short trip to Antognolla Golf, I can say without reservation that the greens are some of the finest you'll see here in Italy," he mused.

"The views from the course are simply spectacular and when the 12th century castle is restored as a hotel it will be one of the most beautiful places in Europe to stay."

As a destination, Umbria is one of Italy's best kept secrets, and the privacy and seclusion that the valley in which the Antognolla course sits, is part of its charm and appeal.

Nestled amongst forest covered hills, it feels like every hole is a 'signature hole' such is the beauty at Antognolla Golf.

The charm of Umbria's ancient towns and villages is complemented by its cuisine, which is renowned for superb ingredients and authentically rustic dishes.

The region is also well-known for the quality of its wine, truffles and olive oil, and a wine-tasting tour to Vineria del Carmine is a real must, where visitors will learn about the wine making process in the region, and how the seasons influence the wine.

The 90-minute tour culminates with a food and wine pairing hosted by a sommelier which includes locally sourced truffle paste and Umbrian cured meats and local cheeses.

Perhaps not quite as well-known as neighbouring Tuscany, Umbria still has plenty to offer including the historic city of Perugia, the capital of the region. Overlooking the Umbrian and Tiber Valleys, the city is probably best known for its medieval Etruscan walls which encapsulate the well-preserved city within.

In 1540, Pope Paul Farnese III destroyed much of Perugia, building a new fortress on top, leaving entire streets underneath intact, which can be accessed via an underground escalator system.

The city is also home to two of Italy's most popular celebrations: the Umbria Jazz festival each July, and October's annual Euro-chocolate festival.

Umbria, and Antognolla Golf have plenty to offer, and despite the Six Senses hotel not opening until 2023, a visit to the destination is a must, especially for the golf purist. **END**

GOLF NEEDS TO EMBRACE THE THREE PILLARS OF SUSTAINABILITY



One of the major talking points for the golf industry in the last 12 months has been sustainability. Despite this there are still major misconceptions around the subject, particularly when it comes to cost, performance and impact.

"Sustainability actually has three pillars," explains Ed Sandison founder of sustainable golf brand OCEANTEE. "For a sustainable project or business to be successful it has to demonstrate economic, environmental and social impact.

"There are far too many companies dipping into sustainability for credibility's sake, which makes no commercial sense and has no genuine impact. There are incredible businesses, organisations and not-for profits out there who are pioneering new technology which is enabling us and companies like us to create high performance products with great margin that are also sustainable."

By taking this view, OCEANTEE has attracted the attention of organisations outside of golf and has been awarded for its efforts, most recently at The Global Good Awards.

As well as congratulating OCEANTEE for making a significant impact on an industry described as 'ripe for change', the judges compared the potential impact of the company's bamboo tee launch to the universal switch away from using plastic drinks straws.

As Best Start-Up Enterprise at the awards, OCEANTEE set new standards as the first sport brand to receive one of these prestigious awards.

Sustainability can be defined as providing for the present needs without compromising

the needs of the future generations, and this simple premise was the starting point for OCEANTEE. All the company needed to do was find businesses who were able to create products that would help the industry move away from its obsession with virgin plastic.

Sometimes the use of plastic is obvious, as with plastic tees, but mostly it is surreptitious. Polyester, nylon and elastane are all plastic. Just by looking in your wardrobe you'll see how easy it has been for us all to accept that these are the only fabrics that offer the performance and comfort characteristics that we need to enjoy our game.

By looking outside of the industry and working in conjunction with organisations like the Sustainable Angle, OCEANTEE has identified a raft of processes and fabrics that deliver the same if not better performance characteristics.

"The Sustainable Angle connect brands and designers with mills, suppliers and innovators in the fashion supply chain who produce sustainable fabrics and materials with a low environmental impact," explained Sandison.

"They were able to help us make informed, commercial, decisions regarding our material choices."

One business who has been instrumental in enabling OCEANTEE to deliver its ambitious clothing collection is UTENOS, a family owned manufacturing facility in Lithuania.

This company is the perfect example of how a business can transform its processes to make sustainable business practices commercially viable and socially responsible.





"GOLF CAN BE REALLY INTROSPECTIVE AND SOMEWHAT RISK AVERSE, WHICH IS WHY WE ARE HAPPY TO DO THE LEG WORK!"

One hundred per cent of its energy is green and comes from renewable sources, they only use natural fibres, they don't use toxic chemicals – and that is to protect their workforce as much as it is to protect the wearer. This unique combination of transparent, sustainable business practices alongside fair pay and conditions for its workforce makes it the only factory in Europe to be accredited by Greenpeace.

The significance of working with pioneering business is two-fold for Sandison and his team. As well as having access to incredible innovative process and market leading fabrics such as those created by LENZING – who produce the TENCEL branded Lyocell fibers with REFIBRA technology that won the Oceanic polo a series of awards – OCEANTEE is using its product range as a showcase for sustainability.

"Every product we make uses a brand new technology, unique to golf. The range has become our platform to show the industry what is achievable," explains Sandison.

"Golf can be really introspective and somewhat risk averse, which is why we are happy to do the leg work! We know incredible organisations and individuals who are constantly evolving and developing new processes and products that are cost-effective and environmentally sound. All we need to do to support that third pillar of social impact is to drive demand and alter consumer behaviour."

Another inspirational business that OCEANTEE is working with for a product launching in the New Year is Waste to Wear. Their mission is to relieve the planet of the plastic problem by innovating products made from recycled plastics, using traceable and transparent supply chains. They believe that 'waste' is only waste when we don't do anything with it.

We all know that tonnes of plastic waste are being thrown away daily. However, Waste to Wear have developed a process that means that this plastic can actually be viable, eco-friendly and sustainable.

They work with local communities around the world to collect plastic which is sent to a recycle plant to be cleaned, shredded, flaked and milled into usable pellets.

The pellets are melted and moulded before being extruded into yarn which is treated and becomes fabric.

Sometimes the work and process that goes into developing sustainable fabrics goes unnoticed, but Waste to Wear want consumers to understand where their product has come from. Each product made using their fabrics has a QR code which customers can scan to track exactly which ocean the plastics used to create the fabric have been collected from.

On top of this you can see each step of how and where the product has been made and understand the difference you are making to the world as a result.

The importance of traceability is something that will become increasingly significant as the sustainability market grows as Sandison explains: "The sad reality is that a lot of brands are making unsubstantiated claims to recycle ocean plastic."

"It really worries me that consumers are happy to accept something as fact, when there is no traceability. Working with Waste to Wear gives me and my customers a level of confidence that should come as standard."

As the original manufacturer of bamboo tees a lot of OCEANTEE's success to date has been dependent upon re-educating people. As Sandison explains, the pandemic made this much easier than it would have been otherwise as governing bodies and golfers had time on their hands.

"Timing for us has been everything. In 2020 we were able to open doors and start conversations with people who would otherwise have been travelling around the world, delivering events. We were also unwittingly answering questions that they were already starting to ask about measures that they could take to address their environmental impact."

To date, OCEANTEE bamboo tees have replaced less sustainable tees across the whole of the Ladies European Tour, at WPGA events, across the EuroPro Tour and at several European Tour events. Plans for 2022 will see this number increase and allow the team access to educate the next generation as they have done this year.

"Our proudest moment this year was finally delivering our first Sustainability Session at the Women's Scottish Open. We want to demonstrate that change is achievable and the best way to do that is to connect with the younger generation." **END**

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Formerly the home of the Domecq sherry family, The San Roque Club sits on an enviable backdrop surrounded by lush hills and historic cork oak woods. The centrepiece of the club is the magnificent Domecq mansion which oozes character.

The club is set within 340 acres of peaceful and natural Andalusia countryside where the ancient Cork Oaks dominate the landscape. San Roque first opened its doors in 1991 and quickly became the golf resort of choice in Sotogrande.

Featuring two courses – The Old, originally designed by Dave Thomas in 1990, and The New designed by Perry Dye in 2003 – San Roque along with Valderrama and Real Club de Sotogrande became known as the golden triangle of golf.

In 1997, during the Ryder Cup held in neighbouring Valderrama, the San Roque Club hosted both the European and American teams and their families and to this day the plaques with the players' names remain by the door to the suites they occupied.

After a period of major investment during 2020, the Old course was significantly upgraded and re-opened for play in June 2021. Also updated during this period were the clubhouse, driving range and academy, ensuring that the San Roque Club continues to keep its place as one of Europe's top courses. **END**

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"THERE CAN BE NO SIMPLER A MESSAGE THAN
BRILLIANT BASICS, MAGIC TOUCHES"



Words

Stuart Gillett
Founding Partner
Legacy Golf Advisors

GUEST BOOK

STUART GILLETT



Throughout one's career there are moments when you read, see or hear something that really resonates and makes a difference. One of those moments came at the GCMA National Conference in 2017 where the keynote speaker was Linda Moir.

Linda had been involved with both British Airways and Virgin Atlantic in their delivery of in-flight services, and was also one of the key individuals who shaped the way the Olympic 'Gamesmakers' delivered their memorable services at London 2012.

Linda's presentation was about customer service, and really simplified it with the message 'Brilliant Basics, Magic Touches'. I found these four words quite eye-opening and it reassured me that my philosophy about customer service was right, as in the world of golf management, customer service should be a focus for all.

Management and leadership teams need to inspire and motivate their teams with a clear direction and a simple message, and there can be no simpler or powerful a message than 'Brilliant Basics, Magic Touches.' It is clear to understand and most importantly doesn't cost a penny to deliver.

As managers, both experienced and aspiring, I recommend you take a second to think about how you and your teams approach customer service and use this simple message to help your teams deliver a higher level of service. **END**



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