

BACKSPIN

Official E-Zine of Pitch and Putt Ireland
December, 2020



Issue Highlights:

- Review of the year
- Kieran Earls profile
- Martha O'Brien profile
- Plus More...

A Chara,

You are welcome to our second Backspin for 2020 where we look back on our curtailed season of 2020 along with what we hope will be a far more proactive 2021. Our President Mervyn Cooney gives up another update on the current state of play in his latest address to us.

John Manning profiles Kieran Earls and Martha O'Brien after their National Singles Matchplay in Larkspur Park back in September as he also looks at the rest of what took place in 2020. He also looks at what we hope will be some form of an International calendar in 2021 along with previous Irish successes in such events.

Ray Murphy is one such former winner of the Dutch Open and John profiles Ray in depth ahead of his nomination for a Cork Sports Star award in the ECHO newspaper in the coming weeks. We encourage our members to vote for Ray when the opportunity to do so comes around. *(Continued on the last page)*



Liam Leahy and Mervyn Cooney pictured with Jack Mullins, the winner of the Boys U16 Strokeplay Championships.

A message from President Mervyn Cooney

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas in some meaningful way given the constraints Covid-19 has imposed on us, I will try to reflect on what has been a very strange year for our sport our clubs and our families.

On leaving the Templemore Arms Hotel in late February after a well attended and reasonably successful Annual Convention few if any contemplated the events that were to follow a few weeks later. The decision to place the Country in lockdown had an immediate effect on the playing of Pitch and Putt, courses closed except for essential maintenance, no playing and therefore no competition. As the weeks of lockdown rolled on we waited patiently for the news that sport could officially reopen.

When that news came, I must say our sport and our clubs responded magnificently. We have seen many clubs enjoy significant increases in members for 2020, this was achieved in many instances by well thought out publicity campaigns on social media and elsewhere, I want to congratulate the club committees involved and thank them for their superb contribution to our sport. The end result of this saw increased income not only for their clubs but also for the County and Regional Boards where refunds of approximately €27,000 will have been returned to the Boards before year's end.

While on the issue of finance the NEC through negotiations with Sport Ireland secured €39,000 in grant aid for our sport, some clubs and Boards also received grants from their Local Sport Partnership's totaling €14,883, we are

hopeful of receiving some further grant aid in the days ahead. The Nett result is that as of the end 2020 over €80,000 will have made its way back to our Clubs and Boards which will be a significant help to them.

I want to clarify one thing in relation to grants if your Club or Board received an LSP grant Pitch & Putt Ireland will not be able to further grant aid, this is a written condition of our grant allocation.

As we approach 2021 it would appear that more restrictions will be imposed, it is our fervent wish that non-contact sports will not be included this time. The decision to close sports clubs from Oct 20th for six weeks took us all by surprise. The NEC made numerous submissions to Sport Ireland explaining how our sport could be played in a safe environment whilst following our strict protocols.

In the end a political decision was taken to close sports clubs. I know some people were very annoyed at this decision and took to social media to vent their frustration. I too felt it was a very unfair decision but it was totally outside the control of the NEC and your President. As we near the time for AGMs and Board Conventions I think we have to accept at this stage that the ban on indoor gatherings will continue for some time yet. The NEC will advise on this issue early next week.

The NEC have contacted all Boards asking them to consult with clubs regarding fixtures for 2021.

As soon as we have the details the NEC will allocate dates for open fixtures along the lines of what operated for 2020. This system appeared to work reasonably well and avoided clashes in local areas. I think it is worth trialing this for a full season and then review its impact.

It was of course a major disappointment not to be able to play our National Strokeplay in 2020 despite our best efforts. It was great that we got to play our Matchplay at Larkspur Park and indeed this was a great success and I want to thank everyone who contributed to the successful staging of the championship.

In hindsight we probably should have gone for back to back weekends for both events, but we were trying to allow time for clubs to stage their Scratch Cups. The NEC were hoping that we could stage both Strokeplays by the end of February 2021 and before the 2021 season gets under way on the 1st March. This may still be a possibility and we will keep everyone informed.

We were of course delighted to have staged the boys and girls Matchplay and Strokeplay this we saw as very important as it was such a difficult year for young people. I want to thank the Hillview and Athgarvan Clubs for being great hosts.

The NEC is now ready to include ladies in the new handicap system and this will take effect from March 1st 2021. I know some felt we were neglecting our lady members but this was totally untrue. The NEC contacted all clubs and asked them to review the handicap allocation of their

lady members this was very necessary as many ladies were playing off incorrect handicaps based on the scores returned.

To allow the system to work effectively it is important that the vast majority of players are playing off the correct handicap. I hope clubs have used this opportunity to stage an accurate review of handicaps, and I look forward to the inclusion of ladies scores into the system from next March.

In conclusion I want to wish all members and their families a happy and safe Christmas and hopefully we can look forward to a better 2021

Yours in sport,

Mervyn Cooney

Pitch & Putt Ireland President



Review of the year 2020

By John Manning

2020 was a truncated season but we can still reflect on some outstanding achievements. John Manning looks through what was played here.

Midway through 2020, the National Executive declared that, as so much time that has been lost due to the pandemic; they would not be running any provincial (all events), pairs (national) or team/inter-county (national) events for the rest of the year.

The NEC however did commit to running the following events in some form:

National Ladies and Gents Matchplay Championships, National Gents Strokeplay and National Ladies Strokeplay Championships and National U16 Matchplay and Strokeplay Championships.

Unfortunately, although qualifying rounds were held for the National Gents Strokeplay Championships and the draw was made for National Ladies

Strokeplay tests, the finals could not be held due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The National Ladies and Gents Matchplay Championships and National U16 Matchplay and Strokeplay championships were held as planned though and produced some top-class action.

Cork players recorded a notable double in the 2020 National Under-16 Matchplay Championships at Hillview.

Cork Strokeplay Champion Liam McGrath (Douglas) defeated Dylan Hudson (St. Patricks) 1up in a high-quality final to capture the Helen Persson Cup for the National Boys' U16 Matchplay Championship.

Reigning Champion Glenn Towler (St. Annes) was unlucky to be eliminated in the qualifying stages but bounced back to capture the National Boys' Under-16 Matchplay Plate. Glenn overcame



Eimear Ahearn from Lucan pictured on the left, winner of the National Girls U16 Strokeplay Championships. Liam Mc Grath from Douglas, winner of the National Boys U16 Matchplay Championships.



Sarah O'Neill from Collins Pitch and Putt won the 2020 Irish Open at Lough Owel.

Douglas member Sean O'Sullivan in an all-Cork final.

Eimear Ahern (Lucan) defeated Ella Moynihan by 3&2 in the All Ireland Girls' Matchplay decider at Hillview in the first leg of a notable double. Eimear is the first player in history to win the National Girls' Strokeplay and Matchplay championship titles in the same season.

Sarah O'Neill (Collins) won the 2020 Irish Ladies Open with a superb display at Lough Owel, Co. Westmeath, scoring a 36-hole aggregate of 110 for a two stroke winning margin over Liz Quinn (Collinstown). Reigning Cork Ladies Strokeplay champion Sarah McGrath (Fermoy) finished third on 119.

Pat Malone from the Custume club in Athlone won the VII Irish Open at Lough Owel. The Westmeath Inter-County star added a 48 in the final round to his brilliant 45 on Saturday to post a 36-hole aggregate of 15 under par 93. That saw him home by two strokes from a group of three

players on 95. Dean Grannell from the St. Patricks club in Enniscorthy took second on the back 18 tiebreaker with a brilliant closing round of 46.

Next was Westmeath Intermediate Strokeplay Champion from the host club Dean Dinnegan (47 and 48). 2013 World Strokeplay champion John Walsh scored 49 on Sunday for his 95. Eamon Gibney (Castletown), winner of the Irish Open six years ago, posted 48 on Sunday for a 97 tally to pip his young club-mate Evan Carry by a shot for fifth.

The evergreen Barry Morrissey (Bishopstown) posted 101 to capture the Irish Seniors (Over 55) Open by a single shot from European Seniors Strokeplay champion Anto Kavanagh (Bellewstown). Sean Minogue (Riverdale) and Brian O'Flynn (Ardnacrusha) were just another shot back.

In a relatively unproductive weekend for the Cork players at the National Matchplay Championships, six-time National Gents' Matchplay Cham-

pion Ray Murphy (St Annes) reached his 13th semi-final before bowing out to Ian Dillon (St Bridgets) – the ultimate beaten finalist. Kieran Earls (Parteen) was crowned the new champion. Earls recovered from a three-hole deficit after three holes in the final at Larkspur Park to defeat Ian Dillon by 7&6. Kieran had earlier eliminated Stephen O'Reilly by the same score in his semi-final.

Defending Ladies Champion Mary Murray (Rocklodge) was eliminated by Cork Strokeplay Champion Sarah McGrath (Fermoy), who later lost in the quarter-finals to Shula McCarthy (Hillview). Reigning National Strokeplay champion Martha O'Brien (Lakeside) added the National Matchplay crown with a 6&5 verdict in an all-Tipperary final against Breda White (Tipperary Hills) at Larkspur. Martha had overcome Shula McCarthy in the last four while Breda White beat Shandon's Marie O'Toole.

There was an absolute Premier County domination in the National Ladies Matchplay Nett Cup. Margaret Hennessy (Riverdale) took out former champion Elaine Quinn (Lakeside) in the semi-finals. Lorraine Creed survived an all-Hillview semi-final joust with Veronica Anglim. Margaret Hennessy prevailed by 8&7 in the decider.

Former two-time runner-up Eimear Ahern (Lucan) delivered an assured performance in Athgarvan that saw her crowned National Girls' Strokeplay champion for 2020.

Eimear, who was runner-up to Sophie Farnan (Skryne) at Fermoy in 2018 and lost a play-off to the Co. Meath player at Glenville last year signed for a two-round total of 129, which gave her a six-stroke cushion over Tralee's Ella Moynihan. Grace Reilly (Trim) improved thirteen strokes on her opening round to card a second eighteen of 65

and claim the bronze medal with a 36-hole aggregate of 143.

The 2020 Boys' Strokeplay championship was a triumph for Jack Mullins from the Kilbeggan club in Co. Westmeath, who was runner-up at Fermoy two years ago. One behind after his first round 53, Jack produced a fabulous 48 second eighteen (the low single round of the championship) to post a 101 total.

Semi-finalist in the National Matchplay championship at Hillview, Jack Mullins became the first Westmeath winner of the National Boys' Strokeplay Championship since Kevin Metcalfe (Rochfortbridge) triumphed at Waterford Crystal in 2001 when he overhauled clubhouse leader Fintan Martin (Deerpark). Fintan had led on 52 after the opening round.

National Boys' Matchplay runner-up Dylan Hudson (St. Parick's) closed with a second eighteen of 51 for 104 in Athgarvan to take the bronze medal. Two solid rounds of 55 and 53 for a level par tally of 108 claimed the Helen McMorrow Cup (Boys 10-13 category) for Oldcastle's Mark Cadden, who later in the year became a TV star on RTE's "After School Hub."



Liam Leahy and Mark Cadden.

Kieran Earls Profile

By John Manning

Kieran Earls 2020 National Matchplay Champion (By John Manning)

“After the one that slipped away from me in Cunnigar, I doubted myself slightly,” said Kieran Earls. That was the 2015 National Strokeplay championship at Cunnigar, which the 2020 Matchplay champion led into the final round on 10 under par (on a tough day, scoring wise) only to fall back into fourth place after a closing 53.

Kieran need doubt no more. “Hopefully this year can prove that I am good enough. Hopefully I can win many more.” That was the Parteen man’s reaction in the wake of his National Matchplay victory at Larkspur Park back In September.

“(It’s) overwhelming to be honest. It’s something I’ve strived to win. It was always on mind,” Kieran observed just after he’d beaten Ian Dillon (St. Bridget’s) in a final, delayed by three months due to the pandemic.

After finishing second to runaway winner Stephen Shoer in the National Intermediate Stroke-

play championship at Tullamore, Kieran played on the Limerick team that won the 2008 Munster Inter-County Championship at Clare Road. 10 years later, he played a key role in the Treaty County’s provincial Inter-County success at Parteen. Earls and Tommy Hanley fired a phenomenal 36 in the scotch foursomes to give Limerick the ideal platform for their ultimate 20 stroke victory.

In between, there were four silver medals in the Munster Inter-County for Kieran as Cork dominated.

Earls carded 50, 46 and 46 for an eighth place finish in the National Strokeplay Championship at RGSC in 2012 – the first of a number of impressive performances in domestic Pitch and Putt’s ultimate Strokeplay test.

Kieran’s fourth place finish at Cunnigar (piped on the final 18 for runner-up and third) was actually his second consecutive top four placing. He posted 146 at Stackallen in 2014 to be fourth behind his exemplar Liam O'Donovan. “He’s won



Kieran Earls pictured with his Father Pat, won the Men's National Matchplay Championships in 2020.

everything,” said Kieran of the Bruff genius. “Liam O’Donovan is the best player I’ve seen in Limerick.”

Kieran Earls has also achieved royally in the international Pitch and Putt arena. After finishing fourth in the inaugural Galicia Open in 2012, he placed second in the successive Catalan Opens of 2014 and 2015. Kieran lost the 2014 play-off to Jordi Serra and was four strokes behind Liam O’Donovan at Lleida the following year.

Having first come together as playing partners earlier that year, Thomas Hanley and Kieran Earls won the 2016 Catalan International Pairs at Sant Cebria.

There were promising Matchplay signs for Kieran as far back as 2013. After beating 2011 National Strokeplay champion Anthony O’Loughlin (Claycastle) in the Munster Matchplay semi-finals on home turf, Kieran fell by 2&1 to Gary O’Sullivan (Claycastle) in the decider.

After reaching the 2016 Munster Matchplay semi-finals at Lakeside in 2016, Kieran returned to the Templemore venue two years later to post 142 for 54 holes to pip Damien Fleming (Deerpark) to the Munster Strokeplay title by a single stroke.

Fleming and Earls again tussled for the Munster Strokeplay at Listowel in 2019. This time Damien clinched the Cup on 135, with Kieran four back in third spot.

The 2020 National Matchplay format was slightly different. Kieran explained. “With 18 holes, you’ve no choice but to start well.” Conversely, Kieran fell behind in some of his early round matches but managed to dig out wins.

Foursomes partner Hanley was one his early round victims at Larkspur Park. “Unfortunately, we’re meeting each other in the qualifiers or in the finals. We can’t get away from each other!”

Kieran eliminated Hillview’s Stephen O’Reilly in the last four. “I know Stephen from playing a lot of Scratch Cups. It was close for a good while but he had one or two misses and I took my chance.”

Kieran evaluated the final. “I started very poorly against Ian, who is a gentleman. I got a good few in a row and Ian missed one or two putts. His putter went a bit cold.”

The 2020 National Matchplay champion paid tribute to Parteen and his dad Pat. “It’s great news for the club. We’ve taken on new members. Without my father I wouldn’t be a national champion. He’s a massive part of the game for me.”



Martha O'Brien Profile

By John Manning

"I love Matchplay," said Martha O'Brien. And why wouldn't she, after her 6&5 victory over Breda White in the 2020 National Matchplay final at Larkspur Park?

The seventh former National Girls Strokeplay Champion to go on to win the National Ladies Matchplay Championship, Martha was understandably elated. "This is my first time winning this. I'm absolutely delighted."

"Every match I played I was a challenge," reflected Martha of her successful campaign, which saw her defeat former finalist Ger Holland (RGSC), Irish Open runner-up Liz Quinn (Collinstown) and Tipperary colleague Shula McCarthy en route to the final.

All of Martha's Matchplay nous was needed to progress. "Even in the match against Liz Quinn I was six down after 10," revealed Martha who

had previously triumphed in the Munster Matchplay at Larkspur Park. That was in 2019 when she overcame Shula's daughter, Gemma in the final. "Mentally you're trying to get back. You need that bit of luck in Matchplay." Martha managed to get back into her 2020 quarter-final match, to pip Liz Quinn on the home green.

Martha commends Liz Quinn, as she did all her opponents, for showing great sportsmanship.

By a quirk of the Covid-19-forced 2020 scheduling, the National Matchplay semi-finals were contested a year to the day since Tipperary famously won the 2019 National Ladies Inter-County championship at McDonagh. Martha, Shula and Breda were all integral players in that drama (just as they were six years previously when the blue and gold clad ladies also won at Hillview).



Martha O'Brien won the Ladies National Matchplay Championships in 2020.

Reminded of the coincidence by her “Facebook memories” before journeying to Cashel on September 6th, Martha took great encouragement from the twist of fate. “Shula, myself and Breda showed that the ladies in Tipperary are still quite strong, which is great.”

“Shula is very good around the greens. I knew I had to perform. I knew I had to pitch. She’s very good with the putter. She’s hard to get away from,” laughed Martha. Get away from Shula, Martha ultimately did, winning by 5&4.

“I was happy with the way I played. I definitely pitched better in the final than in the semi-final. I’ve played Breda a few times and I knew what I had to do. I was thankful that my game held up,” was Martha’s succinct summing-up of her victory in the first-ever all-Tipperary National Matchplay final.

The Premier County pair have certainly had their battles over the years. Martha’s first Munster Strokeplay success at Cill na Móna in 2012 saw Breda in second place. Breda exacted revenge in the 2015 provincial Strokeplay at Fermoy, having also defeated Martha in the 2013 Munster Matchplay decider at ESB. Martha beat Breda in a play-off for the 2019 Munster Strokeplay at Listowel.

Martha’s parents, Lily and Michael, have been constant supporters dating right back to her emotional four stroke victory at home in Lakeside in the 2008 National Girls’ Strokeplay championship. “I’m overwhelmed by it all. I’m so delighted they got to see it,” said Martha of her landmark Larkspur Park success. “They deserve it. Only for them, I wouldn’t be playing.”

Although it’s not that long ago (“this is my 11th year out of juvenile,” smiled Martha), there was no National Girls’ Matchplay championship during Martha’s time in the Under-16 ranks. However, she did capture the 2008 Munster Girls’ Matchplay Championship, beating Hillview’s Sinead Kenrick in the final at Hillview.

Twice capped internationally for Ireland, against the Catalans (at Lloret in 2014 and at Seapoint two years ago), Martha was crowned 2019 National Ladies Strokeplay champion (won at St Bridgets in a sudden death play-off with Chrissie Byrne). “Even with the Strokeplay I always kept saying to myself – make the final eighteen. If something happens great, if not you made the final eighteen.”

Martha became National Ladies Matchplay champion for the first time after her maiden win in the National Ladies Strokeplay Championship last year. The first player to win her first two National Ladies Championships by that route was a certain Miss Clare Foley.

That’s not bad company to be keeping in the record books!



2021 International Calendar

By John Manning

Covid-19 restrictions permitting, 2021 looks set fair to be a busy year on the international Pitch and Putt front. John Manning looks at some of the fixtures here.

The 2021 Catalan Open is scheduled for Lloret de Mar from April 9th-11th. The Lloret course has twice hosted the European Pitch team championship (Ireland won there in 2001 while the Catalans were victorious nine years later). Lloret was also the venue for the 2012 Catalan Open, when Catalan Marçal Moré was the winner. Irish players normally travel in force to the Catalan Open, which boasts three different past Irish winners. William Buckley Junior claimed inaugural Catalan Open at Teia in 2004. Liam O'Donovan (2013 and 2015) is a two-time Catalan Open champion while Tommy Hanley triumphed at Vallromanes two years ago.

Andorra, Basque Country, Catalonia, France and Galicia will contest their Five Nations tournament from July 23rd-25th 2021 at a French course, to be announced in the New Year.

The Dutch Open will be played at Koekange (the first-ever Pitch and Putt course in the Netherlands, founded in 1998) from August 20th-23rd 2021. Winner of an invitational event at Koekange in 2001, Ray Murphy (St. Annes) is a past champion at the Dutch Open (in 2004, 2011 and 2013) as are John Walsh (Collins) and Ian Farrelly (Bellewstown).

The Slovenia Open 2021 is scheduled for Stanežiče course in the nation's capital, Ljubljana from September 3rd-5th. The 2019 staging attracted players from Slovenia, Chile, Catalonia, Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Ireland. Six-time international open winner Ian Farrelly scored 165 at Stanežiče two years ago to finish second to France's Yann Le Tallec.

The Andorra Open will be contested at the Xixerella course from September 17th-19th. John Walsh (Collins), Eamon Gibney (Castletown) and John Ross Crangle (Loughlinstown) formed the Ireland team that won the World Cup at Xixerella in 2016 when Mark Keohane (Rocklodge) and Michael Murphy (Royal Meath) were joint team managers.

The Catalan International Pairs is down for decision at Sant Cebrià from October 22nd-24th. This tournament has always been popular with Irish players. Tommy Hanley (Bruff) and reigning National Matchplay champion Kieran Earls (Parteen) won the International Pairs at Sant Cebrià in 2016, matching the feat of fellow Irish players Pacelli Darcy and Liam O'Donovan, who triumphed at Lloret two years previously. On both occasions, Irish pairs also filled the runners-up slots – Collins duo John Walsh and Chris Scannell in 2014 along with the Old County combination of Paul McGreal and Stephen Murray in 2016. Chris Scannell has also been a runner-up with Weeshie Murphy (Raffeen Creek) while John Walsh finished second alongside Collins club-mate Liam Scannell in 2013.

The Australian Open (in which Ian Farrelly was 2007 champion) is likely to be played in November. The World Cup, postponed from 2020 to November 2021, will only go ahead if all travel restrictions are lifted. Chile is the provisional host country.

The FIPPA Board is still accepting applications for international opens so the list of fixtures may grow.



Koekange P&P in the Netherlands.

Pitch and Putt Quiz

By John Manning

TEST YOUR PITCH AND PUTT KNOWLEDGE

Modelled on the famous “Diffney Quiz” in the “Cork Holly Bough”, here’s a Pitch and Putt puzzle with a difference. Try to work out what the letters stand for and try to get all 36 correct. Quiz calls for a general knowledge of Pitch and Putt and specifically of the playing season just gone by.

1. H N 1 A I I 3 2 M L
2. R M H W 10 N I T
3. 5 4 I L P F 1 8
4. A B I 1 O P
5. D I A N F A 2 I C
6. 19/02/01, E P P A F
7. 6 P O A I C T
8. T C I T 19 T H H
9. 10 6 I 2 U P F 3 6
10. M H D I 70 M
11. 1976, N L A G I C P T F T F T
12. 1994, T W 1st S
13. R M 7 T H H M 25 M
14. 1960, P P U I F
15. S P I S I 2 S
16. R F I 15 E
17. 50 E I A F
18. 1994, N G M A L M P T F T F T
19. 2 P F A P I S
20. 3 P O A W C T
21. 130 (F 54), R L W S I N G S
22. K E B I D B 7 A 6 I N M F
23. 134 (F 54), R L W S I N L S
24. M O ’ B B I B W B 6 A 6 I N M F
25. M H B L C B 8 A 7 I A I L M N C F
26. V A W A P A P I E N F 50 Y
27. A D I T 34th R O H O F A
28. E A W B 4 S I A
29. T A 6 A C I K
30. 2 S W J M W M A A
31. I H W 3 W C
32. T I 1 A C I N I
33. 28 I 1 O P F 9
34. I C I 907 M L
35. R A W T 1st L T S O T N E C
36. T E T C H B W 6 T B I

(Answers at the back)

Ray Murphy

By John Manning

The Echo Newspaper in Cork is running an online and in paper competition to find the best Cork sportsperson of the past 50 years.

Ray Murphy (Pitch & Putt) is one of eight personalities nominated. The others are Timmy McCarthy (Basketball), Alan Bennett (Soccer), Damien Delaney (Soccer) Linda Mellerick (Camogie) Mary O'Connor (Camogie and Ladies football), Sandy Fitzgibbon (Basketball and Camogie) and Clare Coughlan (Golf).

Here's the bio submitted on Ray Murphy by John Manning.

Ray Murphy is arguably the greatest Pitch & Putt player of all time.

Like the GOAT in another code, Ray wears red shirts on the final day of Championships and tournaments. He shared (with Tiger Woods) an uncanny ability to strike fear into the hearts of fellow competitors. His presence on a leaderboard could transform the focus of his fellow participants.

Before his initial Cork Strokeplay (Senior grade) championship success in 1998, Ray Murphy cap-

tured the 1985 Intermediate Championship, when playing out of Crosshaven.

Ray's first provincial or national major title arrived when he defeated John Looney (Collins) in the 1994 Munster Matchplay championship at Rocklodge. Oddly, that remains his sole victory in the provincial Matchplay tests.

Ray defeated Chris Scannell (Collins) at Glenville to win his first Irish Championship – the National Matchplay of 1998.

In the mid-noughties, Ray was practically untouchable in national individual championships. Having claimed the 2006 All Ireland Matchplay, Ray captured the next four national individual titles as well, racking-up an unprecedented “double-double” in 2006 and 2007. It's no surprise that Ray finished a season top of the National Pitch and Putt Rankings on eight occasions.

Having made his international bow against Australia at Fermoy in 1994, Ray captained Ireland



Ray Murphy receives his award for being the no.1 ranked player in 2013 from Eamon Birchall (RIP).

to European Team championship victory at Lloret de Mar, Catalonia in 2001. He is the highest points-getter in International Pitch & Putt history.

Cork has been the dominant team in the Inter-County championship over the past couple of decades and Ray has played an integral part in all of the Leaside successes.

Unflappable on the course, Ray's two individual overseas wins came at the 2004 and 2011 Dutch Opens and he was runner-up in the 2009 World Strokeplay Championship.

Ray won his first Cork Gents' Matchplay championship in 1987. Then playing out of Crosshaven, Murphy beat Jerry Crean (St. Annes) in the final at St. Annes. Murphy retained the title the following year and has since won the title on seven other occasions – in 1996, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2011. Ray's nine championships constitute the most wins by an individual since the event was first played under PPUI rules in 1961. Ray also holds the distinction of the longest gap (23 years) between first and most recent success.

This year, Ray contested his 13th National Matchplay semi-final, which is yet another record.

Murphy won his first Cork Senior Gents' Strokeplay championship in 1998. Then playing out of Templebreedy, Ray fired 86 at Collins to tie Pat Desmond (St. Stephens). Murphy prevailed in the play-off and has since won the title on four other occasions – in 2003, 2004, 2009 and 2016.

In addition to his phenomenal competitive successes, Ray nowadays spends endless hours preparing the St. Anne's course for competitions and for members' recreational play.

Achievements: 10 national Individual titles – six

Matchplay and four Strokeplay, 16 National Inter-County winners' medals with Cork.

Two World Cup wins and two European Team championship victories with Ireland.

Two Munster Strokeplay wins and one victory in the Munster Matchplay, 16 Munster Inter-County wins with Cork.

Five Cork County Strokeplay Championship wins and nine Cork County Matchplay championship successes.

15 Cork County League titles (eight with Templebreedy and seven with St. Annes).

Helped Templebreedy to wins at the 1994 National Mixed Team Event and at the 1997 National Club Tournament.



Coaching & Development

By Shaun O'Donnell

We have had to unfortunately postpone both of the Introductory Coaching courses that were planned in October in Munster and in November in Leinster due to travel restrictions, we aim to run both of these courses again early in the new year depending on what guidelines are in place then. The previously registered members for both courses will be contacted when a new date is set. We will also look at the possibility of running a level 1 course later on in the year with the venue and date to be decided in the new year.

We also hope to run the schools u-16 competition in the new year again, hopefully restrictions will be eased around March/April time.

National Coach Steven Ennenguess will be

available for club coaching sessions if needed when restrictions are eased, this can be arranged by contacting myself or Steven directly. Sport Ireland have recently launched online coaching courses for beginner to experienced coaches, keep an eye out on our social media in the coming weeks for further information.

I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and hopefully we will have a more normal 2021.

Yours in Sport,

Shaun O'Donnell

Coaching & Development Manager

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ANSWERS

1. Hole No. 1 at Ierne is 32 metres long
2. Ray Murphy has won 10 National Individual Titles
3. 54 is Level Par for 18.
4. A Bogey is 1 Over Par
5. In Cork, Dyke is another name for a 2
6. 19/02/01, European Pitch and Putt Association founded
7. 6 Players on an Inter County Team
8. The Clubhouse is the 19th Hole
9. 106 is 2 under par for 36
10. Maximum hole distance is 70 metres
17. 50 Euro is Affiliation Fee
11. 1976, National Ladies Inter County and Gents Inter County played together for the first time.
12. 1994, Templebreedy won 1st Skoda
13. Royal Meath's 7th Hole measures 25 metres
14. 1960, Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland Founded
15. Standard Penalty in Strokeplay is 2 Strokes
16. Registration Fee is 15 Euro
17. 50 Euro is Affiliation Fee
18. 1994, National Gents Matchplay and Ladies Matchplay played together for the first time.
19. 2 Points for a par in Stableford
20. 3 Players on a World Cup Team
21. 130 (for 54), Record low winning score in National Gents Strokeplay
22. Kieran Earls beat Ian Dillon by 7 and 6 in National Matchplay final
23. 134 (for 54), Record low winning score in National Ladies Strokeplay
24. Martha O'Brien beat Breda White by 6 and 5 in National Matchplay final
25. Vincent Allen wrote about Pitch and Putt in 'Echo' Newspaper for 50 years
26. Margaret Hennessy beat Lorraine Creed by 8 and 7 in All Ireland Ladies MatchplayNett Cup final.
27. Andy Dempsey is the 34th recipient of the Hall of Fame Award.
28. Eimear Ahern won by 6 strokes in Athgarvan
29. There are 6 affiliated clubs in Kildare
30. 2 Strokes was Jack Mullins' winning margin at Athgarvan
31. Ireland has won 3 World Cups
32. There is 1 affiliated course in Northern Ireland
33. 28 is 1 over par for 9
34. Ierne course is 907 metres long
35. RoseAtkinson was the 1st lady to serve on the National Executive Council
36. The European Team Championship has been won 6 times by Ireland

BACKSPIN PRODUCTION TEAM

Jason O'Connor, John Manning and Shaun O'Donnell

After the success of our two night Virtual Quiz back in November where we raised over €1000 for The Irish Kidney Association, John has another quiz for everyone to pit their wits at. It's a slightly different one from what we are used to and requires a bit of Cork knowledge!

As disappointed as we all were not to have our usual season an increase in membership has been a great plus to our activities. It was great for this to be highlighted as it was in the feature we had in The Irish Examiner back in September for which I would like to thank Martin Claffey for taking an interest in our sport and profiling us like he did.

We hope you are all keeping well ahead of the festive season at what is a difficult and uncertain time for everybody. Hopefully we will be seeing a lot more of each other in person next year and we can undertake our activities without fear of

either lockdown or restrictions scuppering those plans.

Have a Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year's Celebrations whatever you decide to get up to.

Yours in Sport,

Jason O'Connor

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