

Golf

VICTORIA

  @golf_vic
 GolfVictoria

October/November 2017
Volume 58 - Number 5

PP 381 667 667 0038



GET ON COURSE!

**WILL'S WAY
INTO GOLF**

**JARROD LYLE'S AUSSIE
TOUR PREVIEW**

**GOLF AT
ART'S CORE**

Oates
cleans best!

Proudly sponsoring the



INDUSTRY LEADERS IN INNOVATION, ENGINEERING AND PRODUCT DESIGN

For over 85 years Oates® has been making great value cleaning products for the home and industry, designed to get the job done quickly and effectively.

From scourers to mops, brushes, brooms, buckets and sponges, Oates® cleans best.

**Whatever you clean,
Oates Cleans best!**







October/November 2017

Volume 58 - Number 5

Front cover: Shannon Maxwell has been bitten by the golf bug, thanks to the Get On Course program.

Photo: Paul Shire

contents

GOLF VICTORIA REPORTS

- 05 No Better Time To Get The Golf Bug
- 24 The Growing Concern With Poa

TOURNAMENTS

- 22 Boys And Girls Come Out To Play
- 30 The Spirit of the Sand Greens
- 36 Seniors Take It To The Wire
- 38 Casey and Jess Familiar Foes
- 44 Jason's Dream Revived For Europe



FEATURES

- 06 Where There's a Will, There's a Way
- 14 Sandie's Art Cuts to Golf's Core
- 18 72 Holes on the Longest Day
- 26 Game for Life - Back In The Game
- 33 Cheers! To the Social Swingers
- 40 Get On Course, Ladies!



DEPARTMENTS

- 08 Clayton Tees Off
- 10 Lyle Chips In
- 29 Clubhouse
- 46 Fairway/Star on the Rise
- 49 Gallery



Golf Victoria

BOARD MEMBERS

- Stephen Spargo AM (President)
- Ross Anderson
- Luci Bryce
- Mark Dunstan
- Dorothy Hisgrove
- Alison McCaig
- Lucinda (Cindy) McLeish
- Peter Nash (Finance Director)
- David Shilbury

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Simon Brookhouse

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

David Greenhill

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS MANAGER

Fiona Telford

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Greg Oakford



is published by Golf Victoria

MANAGING EDITORS

Mark Harding

Mob: 04 17 105 659

Email: mark@hardingmedia.com.au

Karen Harding

Mob: 04 21 040 580

Email: karen@hardingmedia.com.au

ADVERTISING:

Ray Kelsall

Mob: 04 08 196 729

Email: rgkelsall@bigpond.com.au

SUBSCRIPTIONS

All enquiries to Anne Maddock

Tel: (03) 8545 6200

Email: anne.maddock@golfvic.org.au

GOLF VICTORIA

Level 1, 47A Wangara Road,

Cheltenham VIC 3192

PO Box 2168 Hampton East VIC 3188

Tel: (03) 8545 6200

Fax: (03) 9543 9307

Email: info@golfvic.org.au

No part of this issue may be reproduced, transmitted or otherwise copied without written permission from Golf Victoria.

Production: **Mustard Creative Media**

Tel: (03) 8459 5500

Printed by **Printgraphics**

Tel: (03) 9562 9600



No Better Time To Get The Golf Bug

October brought daylight savings, warmer weather, a pause in the weekend sport schedule and a desire by all to get outside and be active as we waved goodbye to another frosty Melbourne winter.

There was no better or more important time to introduce someone new to golf, or help a friend, colleague or relative rekindle their love for our great game.

October was Golf Month and, for the third straight year, the game's governing bodies across the country joined forces to get a golf club in the hands of as many Australians as possible.

Clubs were encouraged to think outside the box and the ideas adopted were proof that golf is the game for all.

Over 100 clubs and facilities in Victoria alone participated in the month-long celebration of our great sport with more than 260 Victorian activities uploaded to the Golf Month website.

Sandhurst Golf Club kick-started proceedings with a BYO 'Party Golf' day on the first of the month, consisting of a trip around the par-3 short course with the option to play in a competition or socially.

The longer days saw Cerberus Golf Club and Mount Beauty Golf Club open the doors to new players with free Twilight Golf.

Pakenham Golf Club went one step further and while you didn't need clubs or any experience, you did need a torch!

A round of 'Night Golf' – complete with glow in the dark balls, music, dinner and more – was the perfect way to cater for those short on time during the day or anyone looking for something a little out of the ordinary.

Melbourne's Albert Park Golf Club and Eagle Ridge Golf Club on the Mornington Peninsula tried to help unearth the next Marc Leishman or Su Oh by inviting kids to play for free.

And for the adults, Gardiners Run rounded out Golf Month with a 'Tips and Sips' day for ladies, including a clinic with a PGA pro and drinks afterwards. Just to name a few.

However, the game wasn't set to be the only winner out of Golf Month, with golfers around the country afforded the chance to win one of four ultimate golf bug adventures to Barnbougle, Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes.

Airfares, accommodation, four rounds of golf and more – all on offer to anyone willing to tell us how they were going to share the golf bug during October.

If the activities on offer throughout the month weren't inspiring enough, the stories told by the hundreds of competition entrants certainly were.

Cobden teacher Daniel challenged all of the students at his school to pick up a club, while Greg was introduced to the game by his son so they could spend more time together. Nicki teamed up with her brother-in-law to introduce her sister to golf and Krishnan persuaded 20 colleagues to head out for a hit at Albert Park Driving Range.

Golf Month also received some sensational support from outside the industry, with a number of the country's top sports stars spreading the word about their love for their second sport.

Richmond premiership hero Jack Riewoldt joined AFL stars Tom Hawkins, Taylor Walker, Leigh Montagna, Sam Fisher and Nick Dal Santo in sharing the golf bug with their loved ones on the course and followers across social media.

Outside football, Lleyton Hewitt, Glenn Maxwell, Greg Blewett, Mitchell and Jess Johnson and countless others were also on board.

Golf Month launched in mid-September with a series of videos, images, artwork and other promotional material popping up online, on radio, in print publications and throughout clubhouses across the nation.

It's the responsibility of Golf Victoria, clubs and members to grow the game year-round – not just for four weeks of the year – but what better way to develop our sport than a dedicated month-long celebration.

THE MATESHIP OF GOLF

One of the great things about golf is playing with your mates. The mates you already had, and the mates you meet along the way. In this issue of the Golf Victoria magazine, we look at some of the many ways friendship is involved in our game.

From 18 friends at Team Yarra preparing for the philanthropic Longest Day Golf Challenge, to the TAC helping golfers with significant injury get back to playing with their buddies, to the camaraderie of the social golf clubs, to women beginners enjoying making new friends as they start out in the game, to the strong spirit of goodwill that is country golf, to the bond between mates that exists even at golf's highest competitive level. Mateship is the reason why golf is not only a *game for life*, but the game of life.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY

A serious back injury as a teenager ended Will Heffernan's promising tennis career before it had begun, but a switch to golf has given his dream of competing at the top level new life. GRAHAM ECCLES reports.

He was an Australian junior tennis champion at 15 with the potential to one day play the pro tour and maybe Davis Cup for his country. Today, he's 24 and it's not a tennis racket but golf clubs that do the talking.

For Royal Melbourne's Will Heffernan, this fascinating change of direction had nothing to do with switching sports just because he felt like it. In his case, there was really no alternative.

Unusual in one so young, Will was stricken with a serious back injury just as he looked destined for higher honours on the tennis court. Otherwise, he would still be pounding forehands and giving the likes of Nick Kyrgios, whom he beat comfortably twice in junior tournaments, a run for their money.

Now his goal is to turn professional as a golfer – an extraordinary transition in a short time for this talented athlete, who reluctantly took up the game just six years ago at the urging of his father Anthony. Since then, Will's handicap has plummeted from his 'debut' on nine to plus-four.

The oldest member of the Victorian state team, Will has never been beaten in two appearances at the Interstate Series and has twice played in the prestigious British Amateur, where he qualified for the matchplay rounds last year.

He added to these achievements by winning Royal Melbourne's club championship earlier this year as well as taking out the Portsea Amateur in July.

Remarkably, his back has remained pain-free despite the demands that the golf swing places on the spine. Said Will: "When I started taking golf seriously, I worried that it might come back but I did Pilates for a few years and have had no worries at all."

Although his grandfather occasionally took him to the Little Chippers at Sorrento Golf Club when he was a youngster, he admits golf held little interest for him.

"I got seriously into tennis from a young age and was doing pretty well, playing in various Victorian representative teams and for Australia against China and New Zealand," he recalled.

"Then, when I was 15, my back started to play up and Dad reckoned I wasn't doing my rehab properly. But when I reached the final at the national championships, I was in such excruciating pain that I couldn't serve and lost 6-0, 6-0.

"A specialist, who said the injury could have left me crippled, found I had two stress fractures either side of L5, the same injury Dad suffered as a fast bowler, so it was obviously a genetic condition.

"With tennis over, I took up swimming for a bit, put on a few kilos and then tried to get back into tennis but quickly decided it was too hard on my body. I focused on playing footy for Melbourne Grammar, which I really enjoyed. Then when I

finished school, Mum and Dad persuaded me to play a few holes with them on a Sunday at Royal Melbourne, where they are members.

"I have to admit I wasn't too keen but it was either that or stay at home and study for my university course."

A few lessons followed with professional Bruce Green, who told him if he got a handicap quick smart, he would be given a spot in Royal's Colts pennant side. Starting off nine, Will was playing off scratch within 18 months.

"I loved the Colts but I have never been so nervous as I was in those first few matches playing guys off plus-one and scratch, but I soon figured I could compete with them in matchplay. If I had a really bad hole, I would count it as a bogey and move on, which didn't amuse Dad.

"Last year I went over to England hoping to qualify for the British Amateur but as I had only received a world ranking earlier in the year, I wasn't too confident. I ended up first reserve and actually got to play.

"Dad said to use the opportunity as good experience, but you can only dream and I played really well and



Will Heffernan ... a late starter catching up on lost time.

made the matchplay rounds. I lost in the second round to the Scot, Robert MacIntyre, who was runner-up.

"It was great competing at that level because you realise you're not as far off as you might think. You go over there and figure these guys are just incredible players. Well, they are, but golf is a game of such small margins that one lucky break or one good shot as opposed to one bad shot can mean so much in the end.

"Playing in the British Amateur really has given me the confidence to have a crack at a pro career. If it doesn't work out, I have my degree in Property from Melbourne University to fall back on."

One of Will's strongest supporters is Golf Victoria's High Performance manager Ashley Marshall, who is impressed by the young man's athleticism and will to win. "He is turning into a very good player at the elite level of the game," Marshall said.

"That he is unbeaten at state level is a terrific record because it's where so many great golfers compete. The way he's tracking and the consistency of his scores certainly will stand him in good stead if he wants to turn pro."

Marshall pointed out that Will's scoring average in four-round tournaments this year is 71.63, which underlines that consistency. "Over the last two years he's been able to take his form from club level into the tournament arena, all the while displaying an incredible will to win.

"He's a good athlete, too. His old injury is a worry because bad backs are commonplace in golf but so far he's not had a problem."

Fingers crossed he may never succumb to such debilitating pain again. His father plays off 10 and also has been free of back pain as a result of his golf. "Dad's only problem is his swing – it's one of the worst swings imaginable but he gets around somehow," Will said, laughing. "He can't understand that I criticise it."

Golf is very much the sport of choice for the entire Heffernan family these days. Will's mum, Louise, is also a member at RM and "a handy golfer who loves nothing better than going down to the range on her own five times a week".

His older sisters, Sam and Mia, live in an apartment across from Albert Park, where they play when the chance permits. "Like Mum, Sam loves going to the range by herself and reckons her swing is just perfect."

Good luck, Will, when the family gets around to reading your comments about them!





'THE MOST UNDERRATED PLAYER IN THE GAME'



*Life in perspective ...
Marc Leishman, wife
Audrey and children
Harvey, Ollie and Eva.*

Marc Leishman's win in the BMW Championship in September shot him into the top 20 in world golf rankings and MIKE CLAYTON says the biggest prizes are clearly within reach.

Maybe a handful of the footballers who played in this year's Grand Final could walk the streets with some measure of anonymity but not the big stars, the ones amongst the top 20 players in a sport played in a handful of cities in a small country at the bottom of the world.

Marc Leishman and Jonathan Brown are no doubt the most recognisable men in Warrnambool and neither could walk the main street without someone wanting an autograph but how many would pick Leishman out if he walked down Collins St or through the airport?

"Who's the big bloke with Jonathan Brown?" would be the most offered refrain.

Yet Leishman is now comfortably ensconced amongst the top 20 golfers in the world after a great season, one which prompted Jim McKay, Phil Mickelson's long-time caddie turned commentator, to describe him as "the most underrated player in the game."

Quiet, unassuming and a foreigner, it's hardly a surprise he slips past unnoticed by the average American fan but his play is making him harder to ignore.

In March, he poignantly won the first Arnold Palmer Invitational played after the death of the 1966 Australian Open champion and then, late in the season, he beat one of the best fields of the year in the BMW Championship at Conway Farms in Chicago.

Finally people noticed, which is somewhat extraordinary given he had lost a four-hole Open Championship playoff with Zac Johnson and Louis Oosthuizen at St Andrews only two

years ago, and had a real chance to win Adam Scott's Masters in 2013.

The fickle nature of deciding history over such a short run of holes worked against Leishman when his tee shot off the 73rd tee at St Andrews found a divot at the absolute worst time. No-one ever has fancied the pitch over the Swilken Burn out of a bad lie and he understandably went long and took three more from the back of the green. Johnson and Oosthuizen both made birdies and Leishman was pretty much out of it after one hole.

Three – for him – almost irrelevant holes later, he joined Kel Nagle, Jack Newton, Greg Norman (times four), Wayne Grady, Stuart Appleby and Steve Elkington as Australians denied major championships in playoffs. That Peter Thomson, David Graham, Adam Scott and Elkington have won in extra-holes (36 of them in Thomson's 1958 Open win) hardly redresses the painful balance tipped against Australians at the biggest moments.

Statistically, Leishman does the things you need to be a pretty efficient tour player. He's the 50th longest (298 yards) driver, 49 players hit more greens, and he's 37th in 'stroked-gained' putting – a statistic more relevant than the simple measure of number of putts you have in a round.

You could read his numbers as being sort-of-average at everything but being in the top 50 in all three of the critical categories adds up to a lot of money - over six million of our dollars this year.

Ironically, coming from Warrnambool, a course hardly known for wide fairways,

and polishing his early game on the sandbelt where so many holes are lined with unplayable lies, his driver isn't so straight. But accurate driving is neither a virtue nor a necessity in America.

Of the top-10 most accurate drivers, only three made the top 125 on the points list. Outside of the top-140 straightest drivers were many of the most successful players on the tour including Justin Thomas, Phil Mickelson, Rory McIlroy, Brooks Koepka, Adam Scott, Dustin Johnson, with Jason Day all the way back at 172nd. Leishman's 129th in 'fairways hit' doesn't look so bad after all.

Never before has the game been so much about 'how far' and, as crazy as it sounds, there is almost a direct correlation between how crooked you hit and how much money you make – just so long as you bomb it.

Geoff Ogilvy recently noted that the biggest change he has seen in his 17 seasons in America is the number players on the range ('all of them') obsessed with how far they hit it. With Trackman measuring every available number, it's created a generation who understand power is critical to their success and can go about maximising it with science and technology.

Either way, the Warrnambool man is long and straight enough to break the back of most courses on tour. Whilst crooked drives aren't exactly working at Warrnambool, fifth, second, 53rd and sixth in the last four Open Championships suggests he learned both early and well how to manage the wind and the weather. Probably it didn't hurt to have Port Fairy right down the road as well

because it's even more liable to offer up Open Championship conditions.

Cameron Percy, a contemporary from amateur days in Melbourne, remembers his youthful play where "Leish would always hit one a round off the map but he turned pro, played in Korea and developed one shot – a pure fade. And, he's had one coach and one caddy, so there is lots of consistency there."

Ogilvy echoed Percy's view of the value of a consistent approach. "He doesn't mess with his swing at all and seems from the outside to keep it very simple. That, and he is very long and putts well – two things that usually help good things happen."

Hardly surprisingly, Denis McDade, his Melbourne-based coach, understood how to guide the pupil. "His dad was a multi-club champion at Warrnambool and so his early instruction was very sound. He was a good athlete, I've always respected the way he learned to play and built my input around that.

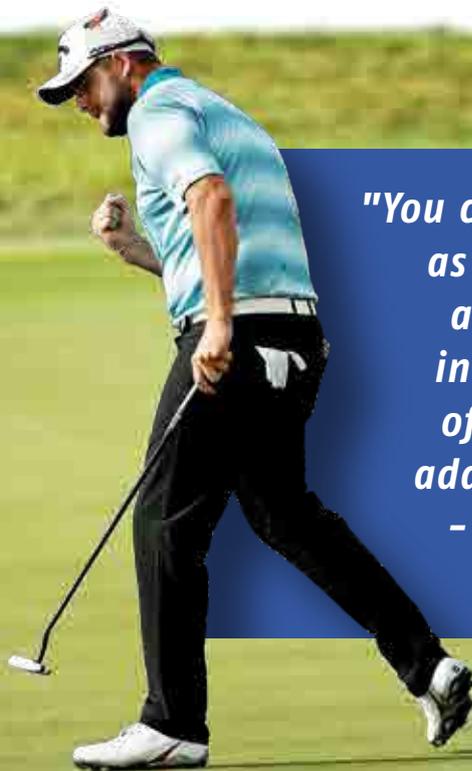
"More importantly", said McDade, "he's got golf in perspective – family and friends first, golf second, and he lives a simple, well-balanced life."

This year has been something of a breakthrough and it raises the expectations of his supporters because the biggest of prizes are clearly within reach. The majors are hard to win and they take not only good play but good fortune and after St Andrews, he is due just a little of it.

Maybe only then people begin to ask, "Who's that guy with Marc Leishman?"

Low-key maybe, but Marc Leishman is getting good at the fist-pump.

"You could read his numbers as being sort-of-average at everything but being in the top 50 in all three of the critical categories adds up to a lot of money - over six million of our dollars this year."





FOUR MAJOR WINNERS A COUP FOR AUSSIE TOUR

Popular Australian golfer JARROD LYLE's well-documented fight with leukemia might be keeping him off the course this season but who better to assess the prospects as the local tour prepares to welcome four of the biggest names in golf?

I'll miss it like hell, not being at The Australian in Sydney in late November and at Royal Pines a week later, because I'm tipping Australia's two biggest tournaments this year will be absolute blockbusters.

Illness seems likely to stop me from even going as a spectator. But, believe me, I'll be glued to the telly as four of the best players in the world, two of them Aussies, go up against some seriously talented locals, a mix of up-and-coming youngsters and wily old veterans in the Emirates Australian Open and the Australian PGA Championships.

The Open is blessed to have Jordan Spieth and Jason Day as its headliners and the PGA is just as fortunate to have Sergio Garcia and Adam Scott as the star attractions.

It's difficult for a lot of overseas players to come down to these tournaments because it is the end of a very long year and we don't have the potential to pay millions of dollars in appearance money. To have these four guys, all major winners, coming this year is a massive coup, a massive win for the Aussie tour. I reckon you can probably bank on one of those guys winning one of the tournaments, possibly even more.

Having Spieth come back to defend his Australian Open title is awesome, but to have him here just four months after his amazing win in the Open Championship at Birkdale is a dream.

He loves coming to Australia but I think he also understands golf the way Greg Norman did, playing around the world to support other tours – and, basically, the game. He knows what he has to do to give back to golf, signing autographs and just being a genuine guy. Believe me, there are too many egos out there that don't really give a stuff about anyone else.

The younger guys, like Spieth, know what it's like to have a top player sign an eight-year-old's hat and put a smile on that kid's face. They know they'll treasure it, look after it, that they'll put it up in their room and never wear it again.

Having Spieth back is great, but that's only half the Open story. For the first time in four years, Day will be back playing in front of his home crowd and with the very likely prospect of him going head-to-head with the guy he beat to win the US PGA Championship, it will be standing room only.

I'm really glad Jase has come home. I don't think the Aussie fans have been disappointed by his absence but I do think he owes them a little bit. With the Australian Masters gone, we've only got two big events left and to preserve them, we desperately need our top players to come and support them.

The majority do. Scotty has been amazing. He's been back to Australia every year since he won the US Masters and played just about every event he could. And what about US Open champion Geoff Ogilvy? He's only missed two Australian Opens since he turned pro.



(left) Jason Day is back in front of home fans for the first time in four years.

Jordan Spieth understands golf the way Greg Norman did.

I'm really glad Jase has come home. I don't think the Aussie fans have been disappointed by his absence but I do think he owes them a little bit.

For some years now we haven't seen Jason play in Australia very often, apart from World Cups and things like that. Even Greg Norman has stated he'd like to see Jase play here a little bit more.

You get him back here, playing alongside guys like Ogilvy, Marcus Fraser, Scotty Hend, guys who are at the top of their game on respected tours around the world, and the fans will come out to see them.

Getting Sergio to play in the PGA Championship is a huge coup. He is one of the ultimate competitors in world golf and I doubt there is anyone who wasn't happy to see him win the US Masters this year.

Now that he's shaken off the mantle of the best never to have won a major, he can get on with life and maybe win another one or two. He's certainly still got the game and the

ability to do it. He's a fiery character who gets out there and gives it everything he's got. Whether he's shooting four over or four under, it's a great thing to watch.

I know the Aussie fans are going to love seeing him out here again. And, let's face it, the PGA needed someone like him to come and boost the tournament up to the level that it should be.

After a visit to Royal Sydney last year, the Australian Open is back at The Australian and that alone says it's going to be a tough slog. It's a brutal golf course, a course where, if you can get on a roll, you can go pretty low. But if you're not quite on your game, you're battling the whole time.

I'll be watching for some of the young Aussies who are coming through, guys like Dimi Papadatos, who's won a couple of events this year, Todd Sinnott, who hits the ball a mile, and Jason Scrivener, who's had a decent year in Europe.

But I'll also be keeping an eye on our seasoned pros, players such as Greg Chalmers and Rod Pampling, who are real grinders and will grab any opportunity to get into contention. Don't forget, Pampling shot a 61 in the final round at The Australian in the 2015 Aussie Open and he held off the current US Open champion Brooks Koepka to win in Las Vegas late last year.

Those guys understand what it's like to play an Aussie Open. They know what it's like to play in big events and get themselves from A to B with a reasonable score.

Still, you can't overlook the fact that Spieth has played this course twice, for a win in 2014 and second in 2015. With that

OATES VIC OPEN — BIGGER & BETTER IN 2018

The Oates Vic Open, Australia's fastest growing golf tournament, will return to 13th Beach Golf Links for the sixth straight year, its unique format set to lure more of the world's top talent to the Bellarine Peninsula from February 1-4 this summer.

The \$1.3 million event – up \$300,000 on last year – is the only golf tournament of its kind around the world, with the men's and women's fields competing on the same courses, at the same time, for an equal share in the prize money. That means each of the men's and women's fields will battle it out in Barwon Heads for a share of \$650,000.

The tournament will again be spread across both the Beach and Creek courses for the first two rounds, before those that make the halfway cut tackle the Beach Course over the weekend.

The Ladies European Tour will again co-sanction the women's event alongside the Australian Ladies Professional Golf Tour, a move that helped lure some of Europe's biggest names in 2017.

A fortnight later the ISPS Handa Women's Australian Open gets underway in Adelaide, making the Oates Vic Open the perfect platform for the game's best female players to adapt to Australian conditions on another world class layout.

For the men, the Oates Vic Open will be one of the headline events in the early stages of the 2018 ISPS HANDA PGA Tour of Australasia calendar, with the tri-sanctioned ISPS HANDA World Super 6 Perth scheduled for the following week.

Additional support from the State Government has seen the tournament increase prizemoney by 30 per cent on 2017 and more than 300% over the last four years.

Victorian Minister for Sport John Eren said the 2018 event will yet again showcase the game's finest talent. "The Oates Vic Open is a key date on Victoria's great calendar of golf events," he said.

"It's a chance to see the biggest names in action and also a great opportunity for young players to get their big break."

City of Greater Geelong Administrator Peter Dorling said the Oates Vic Open had become a much-anticipated annual event in the Greater Geelong region. "It draws great crowds and allows us to show off the fine golfing terrain of 13th Beach Golf Links to the rest of the world."

Those unable to make the trip to Barwon Heads in February will still be able to watch the weekend's action with the return of the Oates Vic Open live stream.

Hosted on Facebook LIVE and YouTube, fans across Australia and around the world will be able to follow the final 36 holes of the tournament thanks to the Oates Vic Open's professional broadcast team.



kind of record, plus the fact he's the defending champion and in recent months has been in sensational form, you have to say he's the man to beat.

Day's form for much of this year has been ordinary, very ordinary by his standards, but going into the Fedex Cup he stepped back and decided to make some changes, not the least of them replacing his caddie, long-time mentor Colin Swatton. He got a new putter as well and he immediately started playing well again. He won't let the chance slip to take it right up to Spieth in front of his home crowd ... and they'll be cheering him on.

Don't get me wrong, though. We've definitely got the calibre of players to be competitive but I think a lot of the younger guys will see Spieth there, and Day, and they might get a little bit overawed, even intimidated, because they've never played in a tournament with those players.

I know how easy it is to fall into the trap of seeing the big-name players on the range next to you, on the practice green with you, and getting distracted. I mean, the only time you've seen these players is when you've been sitting up at four in the morning, watching them play the Masters.

We have players who can be right in the thick of it in both of these tournaments – Nathan Holman won the PGA a couple of years ago and Jason Norris won in Fiji a couple of months ago – but they need to play at their very best, while the likes of Jordan and Jase, and Sergio and Scotty, can probably get it done playing at 80%.

I shouldn't let the PGA go without mentioning Harold Varner III, the American who first came out here in 2015 and was beaten for the PGA in a play-off by Holman, then came back again last year and won it by two strokes. The course must really fit his eye because since Graham Marsh made changes to it, Royal Pines is playing a lot more difficult.

That said, Scotty rarely plays badly on his home turf and while it might be a tougher golf course, he has the length to overcome it. This time, the chance to go head-to-head with Sergio will be the incentive for him to really have a go.



NOV. 23-26
EMIRATES AUSTRALIAN OPEN
AUSTRALIAN GC, NSW
\$1,250,000

NOV. 30-DEC. 3
AUSTRALIAN PGA
RACV ROYAL PINES, QLD
\$1,500,000

*(left) Sergio Garcia, a fiery character who gives it everything he's got.
Photo: Courtesy Omega*

*Adam Scott has been back to Australia every year since he won the Masters.
Photo: Courtesy Golf Australia*

Flying is easier than ever



Another reason to opt for Avalon

Better fares, an uncomplicated drive, parking right out the front and everything you need right by the gate.

And now SkyBus Avalon City Express will bring you in comfort right to our front door. With free wifi while you travel, SkyBus' famous Free City Shuttle Service and fantastic family deals you can now enjoy even more simplicity.

 avalonairport.com.au



Avalon Airport
Flying made easy



Sandie's Art Cuts to Golf's Core

Metropolitan pennant player Sandie Wright has combined her two passions to become, literally, a golfing artist. MICHAEL HEDGE reports on her unique perspective which cuts to the core of the game.

In her quest to turn her art in a new direction, Sandie Wright decided a few years ago to take a hacksaw to her old golf balls – and realised almost immediately that she was onto something.

A couple of thousand balls later, and with a prodigious body of work to show for it, she is still cutting them up – and is still inspired by what she finds inside.

Whether her victim is a top-of-the-line Titleist, a humble Hot Dot, or a yellow range ball, Sandie's dissections have revealed a previously unimagined inner beauty.

A golfer of considerable ability and, as Ladies' Vice-Captain at Melbourne's Metropolitan Golf Club, a devoted administrator, Sandie's involvement in the game, and contribution to it, is vast and varied.

As is her art.

Sandie, who has also trained and worked as a physical education teacher, describes her work as "playful, humorous, and full of colour", and possibly subscribes to the theory that art imitates life.



But it was her curiosity and inventiveness that led her to slice into a golf ball.

"I've been playing golf for 22 years and about three years ago, I thought I'd like to make a sculpture involving golf balls," Sandie says.

As the ancients had done, Sandie decided she needed to know what was on the inside in order to properly understand the whole.

"I'd been looking at these balls and wondering how I could put them together. To do that, I decided I had to go and find out what's inside them," she says.

"So I got a hacksaw and I started cutting into these balls. I cut a couple in half and they were a kind of pale pink. I cut up the next one and it was bright purple, the next one was bright pink. I thought it was really interesting.

"I did 10, and I was really intrigued, so I did 20 and I thought 'this is great'.

"I decided I had to go to a bigger scale and I found a guy to cut them up with a machine. Over the years he's split around 2000 golf balls for me."

With their coloured inner cores exposed, Sandie began arranging the balls in patterns in much the same way as the ceramic mosaics she'd been creating for years.

As she created more and more pieces, Sandie noticed there was little or no regularity to the colour of the cores she was exposing, leading her to wonder what golf ball manufacturers were up to.

Balls from the same maker, branded the same and with the same specifications, were different on the inside from one box to another, making it difficult to know how to find a specific colour.

"I put the information onto a spreadsheet in my computer because I thought I'd be able to go to specific brands, and even numbers, and get the same colour. One time I needed orange, I bought what I thought would be orange and they were all pale pink," she says.

"It seemed to be completely random."

She even tried approaching the ball makers for information, only to be told their inner secrets were so commercially sensitive they couldn't be revealed.

"If you Google them now, they all show you everything that's inside their golf balls. But not back then," she says.

Sandie pressed on regardless and soon staged her first solo show, appropriately named "Inside Out".

“People look at them and say, ‘what’s that’. I don’t tell them at first and they’re surprised.”



So vividly stunning are some of the plastic compounds inside her golf balls that Sandie has trouble convincing people they are in their original state.

“People look at them and say, ‘what’s that’. I don’t tell them at first and they’re surprised,” she says.

But there is far more to it than sticking dissected golf balls onto a board.

Works like Sandie’s “States of Mind” series, inspired by the moods and emotions of golf and the psychology of colour, are directly related to the game.

“The pink, that’s the passion, a love of golf. Then there’s joy, in-the-zone, anguish and confusion – that’s the most popular, those days when I don’t know what club to use, the wind’s blowing a gale, you can’t hit it properly, that’s confusion, you just can’t make a decision,” says Sandie.

Other stunning works made largely of golf tees depict the bird life at her golf course. “Playing golf definitely affects what I do in the studio. Birds are part of that,” she says.

“My white cockatoo came directly from seeing the flocks of them that are all over the course. They’re just so loud and vivacious and squawking. I look at them and love them.”

Sandie’s artistic inclinations began as a child and then took a more formal shape much later: “I’ve always been a crafter. As a kid I always wanted to take things and make something.

“Then, when our kids grew up, I decided I needed to go and do a course that could help expand me while I was making all this stuff. So I went off and did a Diploma of Visual Arts and I just loved it.”

A Bachelor of Fine Arts at Monash University followed and, since 2008, Sandie has been a professional artist working mainly in ceramics and glass – and golf balls.

As for golf, Sandie maintains a four-generation family tradition at Metropolitan and last season was a member of the club’s victorious Division Two pennant team, as well as being in line to become Lady Captain next year.

“The golf has always been there. We’re a golfing family, from my Grandpa to my father, my mother, my sister, my aunt, me and my son, we’ve all been members at Metropolitan,” she says.

“I’ve been a member there for 34 years but I only started playing properly about 22 years ago. We got married at Metropolitan. It’s a part of my life.”

Being on the Metropolitan committee also gives Sandie the opportunity to take on another role about which she is passionate.

“One of the things I love is playing with new members,” she says.

“It’s a challenge for the new members sometimes because there is a big difference in ages and accessing information can be difficult for some of them. Time needs to be taken to listen and communicate.

“We have a great membership, they’re my family.”



GET ON COURSE



Hello Ladies

Do you want to learn to play golf on course?
No one to play with? Not sure where to start?

Get On Course is the ideal program for beginners or women returning to golf, designed to guide you from introductory golf lessons to playing on a golf course.

During each session a mentor will help you, and other like-minded women, develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to play on course. You'll also learn the basic rules and etiquette of golf along the way.

Group sessions run for two hours no matter how many holes we play. Once you've become a member, you can attend as many, or as few sessions as you'd like at various venues around Melbourne!



Learn more about **'Get on Course'** at

www.golfvic.org.au/get-on-course

Team Yarra Yarra gets into the spirit of The Longest Day.



72 HOLES ON THE LONGEST DAY

Friendship, the spirit of golf and some forward planning are the keys to getting through The Longest Day Golf Challenge – a marathon endurance test for golfers raising money for Cancer Council Victoria's fight against skin cancer. BRUCE MATTHEWS talks to Team Yarra Yarra about their quest and Golf Victoria Chief Operating Officer DAVID GREENHILL provides his tips for golfers up for the challenge of playing four rounds in one day.

It's realistic that Yarra Yarra pennant player Fiona Love would set a target to break 80 in four consecutive rounds of golf. After all, she's a former club champion off a single figure handicap as low as three, and the mother of two loves to challenge herself.

But this mission will require mental and physical stamina as much as shotmaking skill and consistency. She's playing the four rounds all in the one day.

Love is among a group of 18 Yarra Yarra golfers - 14 men and four women – preparing for the Longest Day Golf

Challenge over 72 holes to raise money for Cancer Council Victoria's fight against skin cancer.

Cancer Council Victoria needs \$200,000 to fund a vital research project at Monash University that is investigating immunotherapy for more effective skin cancer treatment. This project will explore whether a patient's immune response can be enhanced and therefore help stop malignant tumours growing and spreading throughout the body.

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world with over 750,000

cases treated every year. It's an initiative which is highly relevant to golfers.

Individuals and teams will set out at dawn around various Victorian golf courses in a marathon that is expected to take around 14 hours.

Whilst the Longest Day Challenge is officially December 18, participants can tee up a date in late December or even early January that best suits their home club or preferred course. The fundraising portal is open until January 31.

Among the prizes is the best aggregate stableford score and the top fundraising clubs in metropolitan and regional Victoria will receive a perpetual trophy and places in the 2018 Oates Vic Open Pro-Am at Thirteenth Beach in early February. Royal Melbourne and Flinders were the leading clubs last year as the event raised \$100,000.

Team Yarra Yarra includes general manager Peter Vlahandreas and club professional Andrew Bertram in a playing group that also has members of the men's, women's and colts pennant teams and a handful of intrepid seniors committed to the dawn-to-dusk exercise.

"The Longest Day is a fantastic initiative to raise awareness of this cause that is close to our hearts in golf clubs.

The enthusiasm by our Yarra Yarra participants is outstanding and demonstrates strong leadership to drive industry initiatives and grow the game in general," Vlahandreas said.

Yarra Yarra former pennant team member Karen Harding suggested the Longest Day Challenge to then Lady Captain Andree Leigh, current Lady Captain Anne Kaiser and Love after the four played an alternate-ball event together.

"We all agreed it sounded great. We locked December 20 in our diaries, not knowing what we were getting ourselves in for other than it being a game of golf. The next day Karen sent through the link and more details, and the texts started flying along the lines of 'oh, my goodness'," Love said.

"As a golfer, I'm excited by the challenge. I have said, and it's a statement I don't know whether I can live up to, I'd like to break 80 for every round.

"At the moment, I'm probably playing to between 82 and 87 a round. By December we will have been through club championships, so my game should be in reasonable condition.

"I'm committed to walking the whole way. I've already got a couple of

caddies lined up. One lady is slotted in for the first round and she said she was happy to help out again later in the day. I'm setting myself challenges in golf again and fitness is one I've been building on and I feel I'm fit enough to walk 72 holes. That will be a challenge in itself.

"I'm community minded and love charities, and this charity is relevant to golf."

Men's pennant team manager Rod Mackintosh said such a golf marathon that will demand teamwork is ideal to bring together the men's, women's and colts teams to foster the one-in-all-in club environment.

"I put the shout-out to the guys once I saw it was on. My father-in-law suffered from melanoma and died from cancer, so I understand the connection between doing research and raising funds," he said.

"I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE CLUB GETTING BEHIND US AND CREATING A REALLY GOOD VIBE AROUND THE PLACE AHEAD OF THE DAY. THAT WILL REALLY SPUR US ON."



Members of the Yarra Yarra men's pennant squad are using The Longest Day as a bonding exercise.

TIPS TO MAKE IT THROUGH 72 HOLES ON THE LONGEST DAY

By David Greenhill, Golf Victoria Chief Operation Officer

With the right physical preparation and mind set, anyone can complete The Longest Day Challenge – and please do. However, there's a few things to consider in the lead-up to the day and on the day itself to be fully prepared.

The Lead-Up

1. Plan the Day – 72 holes in a day needs to be ideally done when the golf course is as quiet as possible. It takes time to play through groups. Commonwealth General Manager Peter Parks has been supportive in planning the Longest Day Challenge at my club and I'd encourage all participants to closely liaise with their Club Manager or Captain to plan the day as thoroughly as possible.
2. Play with a Purpose – I played stableford for each of the four rounds in 2016. While my mind naturally wandered over time, trying to score on each hole gave me focus.
3. Phone a friend – While the challenge can be done solo, it's more fun to do it with at least one other player. In 2016, I couldn't find another person who wanted to play all 72 holes, so four good friends and clubmates volunteered to play one round each with me.
4. Get Golf Fit – You don't need to be a great athlete to undertake 72 holes in a day. But whether you walk, have a caddie or take a cart, you will be making a lot of swings and bending down to tee up balls, remove loose impediments, mark balls on the greens, etc, along the way. In the months before, you need to be playing and/or practising regularly and doing some other regular exercise.
5. Have a Mental Strategy – There's never a guarantee that you'll play at your best, especially as fatigue sets in during the latter rounds. To cope, I made up my mind in the lead-up that no matter how I played and scored, I was going to enjoy the experience.

The Day Itself

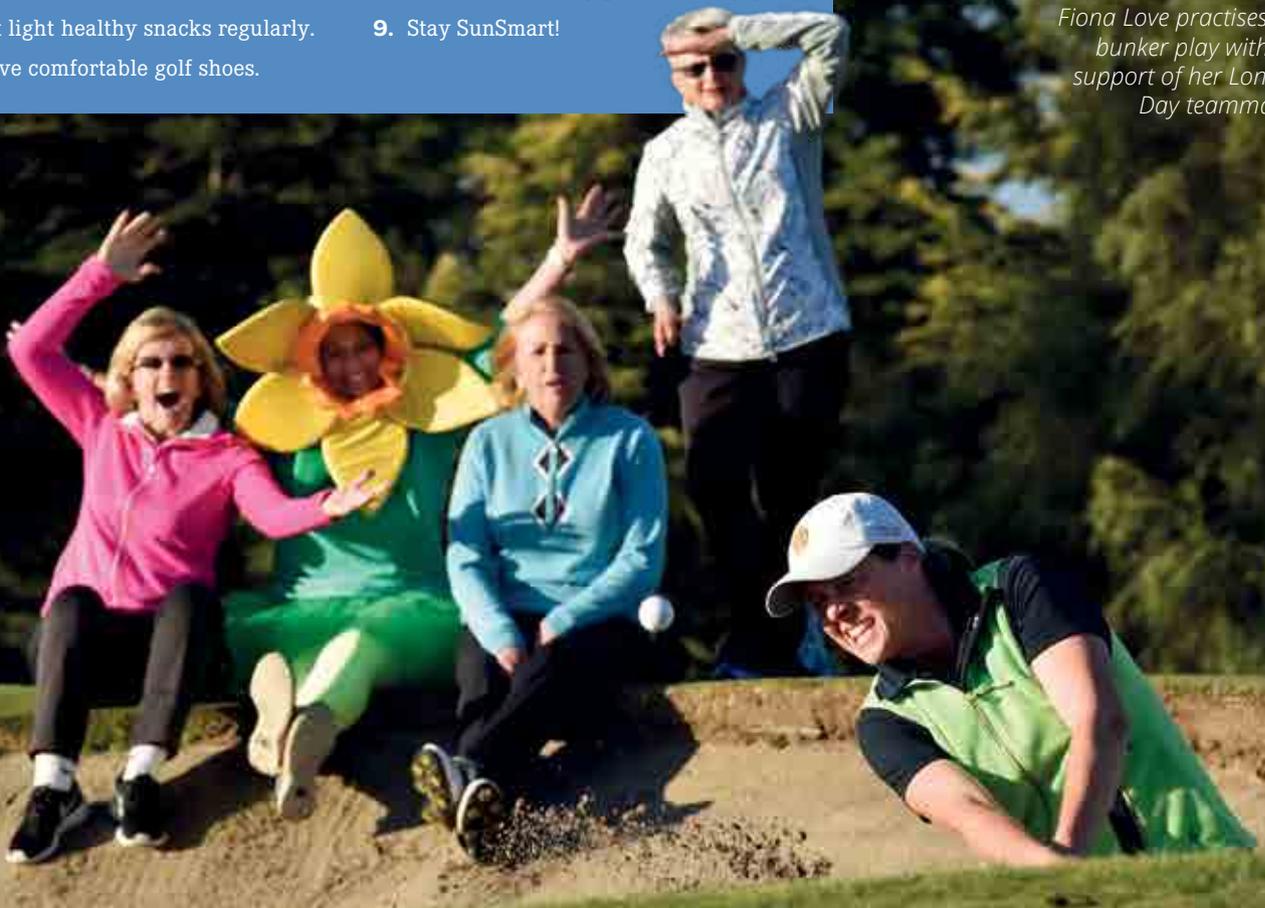
1. Get a good night's sleep.
2. Warm up before round one.
3. Drink lots of water.
4. Eat light healthy snacks regularly.
5. Have comfortable golf shoes.
6. Clean socks each round.
7. Pack a change of clothes.
8. Be committed, stay positive & enjoy.
9. Stay SunSmart!

"Everyone jumped on board, so there's nine of the pennant guys already, including myself, who are keen to do it. They're all young and fit and I think they see the challenge.

"The other thing about pennant golf is that it's one time when you come together and get to play as a team. You don't normally get to do that in golf and here's a great example over the course of 12 to 15 hours, you're really going to have to support one another. And that can pay a real benefit post-event too.

"I think we'll see relationships develop, we'll get to learn a bit more about each other, what we're made of. It might be the start of our (pennant) pre-season, starting on a really good note. The boys are in pretty good shape but four rounds in one day is really going to test us. I think we could get through 36 holes in a day pretty easily, we've all played

Fiona Love practises her bunker play with the support of her Longest Day teammates.



enough tournament golf with two rounds in a day. But this is going to be a new challenge.

"It's going to be a real challenge how we approach it, for example, whether it's a little light-hearted where we're out there to complete the four rounds rather than thinking about the score. As long as you approach it with the right attitude with the end goal in mind, raising important dollars and awareness about melanoma and you're doing it for the right reason, I think we should be fine.

"I'm really looking forward to the club getting behind us and creating a really good vibe around the place ahead of the day. That will really spur us on."

Melbourne property developer Andrew Buxton pioneered the early concept of playing multiple rounds of golf in the early 2000s as a challenge between mates to raise funds for charity just prior to Christmas.

He linked up with Cancer Council Victoria in 2013 to turn the idea into an official fundraising event.

Golf Victoria Chief Operating Office David Greenhill, who completed the Challenge in 2016 at his home club Commonwealth, said: "Golf Victoria is pleased to endorse this wonderful event. Undertaking the Longest Day Golf Challenge for Cancer Council Victoria was easily one of the best experiences I've had in golf.

"Not only was I raising money for a wonderful cause, I was also giving myself the personal challenge to see if I could physically and mentally cope with around 13-14 hours on the golf course. To emerge at the other end was immensely satisfying and I can't wait to do it again this year."



ARE YOU UP FOR THE LONGEST DAY?

Golfers can try The Longest Day Golf Challenge either as an individual or as part of a team. For further information, go to www.longestday.org.au or contact Claire Hunter, Cancer Council Victoria, at claire.hunter@cancervic.org.au or phone (03) 9514 6508.

All participants will be emailed a welcome kit with helpful information, as well as receiving ongoing fundraising support from the Cancer Council Victoria team.

The final cut-off date for donations to your fundraising page is Wednesday 31 January 2018. Prize winners will be notified on Thursday 1 February 2018.

Meteor Golf Buggy



Dismantles Easily Into Five Pieces For Transportation

FREE NO OBLIGATION DEMOS

FREEDOMMOBILITY SCOOTERS

2 / 15 Molan Street, Ringwood. Phone: 1300 951 799

Web: www.freedommobility.com.au

Stay & Play at Numurkah



Golf Package \$100pp

- Includes:
- Continental breakfast
 - Main meal at night
 - Golf unlimited
 - Accommodation
 - 10% discount on drinks

Book Now on **0429 623 445**

NUMURKAH GOLF & BOWLS CLUB

Turncock Road, Numurkah, Victoria
Website: www.ngbc.com.au

BOYS & GIRLS COME OUT TO PLAY



(left) Eyes on the prize ... Bella Kil rediscovered her focus on the back nine.

Chasing hard ... Kazuma Kobori gathered in his rivals with a brilliant final round.

Current professionals Su Oh and Marc Leishman are just two names on the Victorian Boys & Girls Championships Honour Roll. JUSTIN FALCONER was at Yarra Yarra Golf Club in September to see who would join them.

Amid-round fightback and a sensational final day charge saw Bella Kil and Kazuma Kobori claim the 2017 Victorian Boys & Girls Championships at Yarra Yarra Golf Club.

Castle Hill Country Club's Kil entered the final round with a two-stroke advantage over the field, opening with six pars and an early birdie to stretch her advantage to six before disaster struck.

Kil surrendered eight shots in a nightmarish six-hole stretch, the 17-year-old Sydneysider admitting she thought her run at the title was over.

"I did know the score because I was counting myself," Kil said after collecting her silverware.

"I was thinking about the score too much. I should have just played my own game. At one point, around the 12th or 13th, I just gave up. I thought 'just play your game, one shot at a time'."

From that point Kil steadied, playing the final five holes in even-par to keep fellow New South Welshwoman June Song and West Australian rising star Kathryn Norris at arm's length.

Ultimately, Kil needed a 72nd hole par to claim victory, leaving herself a testing four-footer up the hill to finish at 14-over and avoid extra holes with Norris and Song.

"I didn't know I was ahead, I thought I was one shot back or tied so I was just trying my best on 18," said Kil.

"I actually thought I was missing that putt but it went in for me and that was pretty lucky."

Kil's closing 79 was her worst score of the week but was enough to finish on top, Song (75) and Norris (77) sharing second on the standings, one stroke clear of fourth-placed Queenslander Sarah Wilson (79).

"I was nervous but I wasn't as nervous as yesterday," said Kil.

"My shots were off. My putting was off. But I said to myself, just keep making pars, pars, pars and get my head back into the game."

Boys champion Kobori didn't have the advantage of a 54-hole lead, instead thundering home from a five-shot overnight deficit with a round of three-under 69 to win by one.

The 15-year-old New Zealander made the trip across the Tasman with form under his belt but little expectation, improving on his third round 79 by ten shots the following day to shoot one of only three sub-70 rounds for the week.

"I didn't really think I had a chance of winning, I was just trying to win the Under-16 division," Kobori said about his mindset at the start of play.

Bella and Kazuma with the spoils of victory.



"I had a chance to look on 15 and I decided not to. I think that was best for me," said Kobori.

"I wasn't thinking about the score at all, that probably helped quite a bit. I made sure that I didn't look at the leaderboard because I was just out there to have fun. To get the win is pretty big."

After nailing a four-metre birdie try at 14, Kobori stormed to the lead with his fourth birdie of the day at the par-five 16th. Suddenly, winning was on his mind.

"I started thinking about the score a little bit," laughed Kobori. "I know you shouldn't, but I did start thinking about it."

"When I finished, my host for the week told me I was leading by two. I couldn't believe it!"

Kobori was one of 16 players from overseas – with Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and New Zealand all represented at Yarra Yarra – while Kil was among the 47 interstate players to tee it up.

Proving the event's popularity, 50 players were balloted out of the tournament due to a record number of entries, while the traffic to Golf Victoria's live leaderboard was close to double that of last year.

Those unable to make it to Yarra Yarra for the event's closing stages were again able to watch all the action from home, with the hugely successful return of the live stream across Facebook LIVE and the Golf Victoria website.

A full replay of the final round can be found at golfvic.org.au/VicBoysAndGirls.

"I was five shots back, I was thinking 'go out, have fun and try and play my normal golf'.

"To go out there and shoot three-under and win the tournament is pretty big for me."

Kobori had to overcome 54-hole leader Jye Pickin and leapfrog five others ahead of him on the leaderboard over the last 18 holes.

He left it late, but his run began with back-to-back birdies on 9 and 10.

The young gun revealed he stuck to his pre-round plan and avoided looking at the leaderboard at all costs.



Winners are grinners ... Bella Kil and Kazuma Kobori with other trophy winners at the Victorian Boys & Girls Championships at Yarra Yarra.

The Growing Concern with Poa

Many golf courses are facing an increasing problem with grasses such as poa annua becoming more resistant to the herbicides used to control them. A special report by John Neylan (Turfgrass Consulting and Research) and Brett Robinson (Australian Golf Course Superintendents' Association).

Golf course superintendents wage battles on a daily basis, whether it's against the vagaries of Mother Nature, insect pests or disease. But ask any superintendent what causes them to lose most sleep at night and more than likely they'll respond with one word – 'Poa'.

'Annual wintergrass', 'Poa annua' or just plain 'Poa' is one of the most problematic weeds on golf courses. Controlling its presence is by no means a new challenge and superintendents who maintain bentgrass greens have spent countless time and resources attempting to keep their greens 'Poa-free'.

In recent times, however, this battle has spread further afield. Superintendents are now having to contend with the increasing difficulty of controlling Poa in their warm-season couchgrass fairways, tees and greens surrounds. Chemical control options that were once effective are now becoming less so, due to increasing herbicide resistance levels of this 'weed'.

In a 2016 survey undertaken by the Australian Golf Course Superintendents' Association (AGCSA), 83 per cent of superintendent respondents stated that Poa was an increasing problem on their golf course. Over 80 per cent of all respondents identified couch fairways as a key problem area for Poa control, with many indicating a differential response to herbicide applications.

In response to these concerns, a meeting was convened at Huntingdale Golf Club in the spring of 2016. Superintendents from Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia joined with representatives from the AGCSA, VGCSA and chemical companies. Also present at this meeting was renowned herbicide resistance expert Dr Peter Boutsalis from Adelaide. The meeting provided a forum to discuss the increasing challenges being faced and to ascertain the various control methods being used and their level of success or otherwise.

What was emphatically agreed by all parties was that the post-emergent herbicide control options were not delivering the required performance. In terms of an action plan, the first step was to determine whether there was a problem with herbicide resistance and to that end 32 Poa plant samples were collected from golf courses in Victoria, NSW and SA that had demonstrated herbicide tolerance.

These were sent for screening for herbicide tolerance/resistance by Dr Boutsalis at the University of Adelaide. The outcome was alarming. High levels of resistance to most post-emergent herbicides was confirmed, but what was even more concerning was that many plants demonstrated resistance to several different herbicide groups, even glyphosate (Roundup™)!

So why is Poa such a problem and why is so much time and resources dedicated to its control? Put simply, Poa is an unsown component of most sports turf areas in temperate climates, however it also occurs in environments ranging from the sub-Antarctic to the tropics. It is one of the five most widely distributed plants in the world, having developed effective survival strategies that allow it to persist under a range of soil, moisture and nutritional regimes. It can withstand close mowing and continues to produce seed even under very low cutting heights.



Chemical control options for Poa in couch are becoming increasingly less effective.

Poa is self-pollinating and therefore any herbicide-resistant plants will produce seed/plants that are identical to the parent plant and will have the same level of resistance. Due to its prolific seed production, any area infested with potentially uncontrollable plants will invariably increase.

The challenge for superintendents where there is resistance to multiple herbicide groups is that more intensive efforts will have to be employed to reduce the population of resistant plants. This will include spot spraying, hand-weeding and the use of non-selective herbicides. Where non-selective herbicides, such as glyphosate (Roundup™), are used and depending on the rate of application, they can have some short-term effect on the quality and presentation of the couchgrass.

Herbicide resistance is a very serious problem for the golf industry and unfortunately there is no 'silver bullet' solution either now or in the foreseeable future. In fact, herbicide resistance is not only a problem in turf but also an extremely serious world-wide problem in agricultural production.

So, are turf managers sitting on their hands and just letting it become a bigger problem? The short answer is no! Many superintendents are undertaking their own trials searching for a workable solution, with some research being funded by the VGCSA and the AGCSA.

Herbicide resistance is an industry problem and must be tackled in a systematic and whole-of-industry approach with the key priorities being:

- increasing awareness in the wider turf industry and, just as importantly, the golfing community,
- undertaking research programs to assess chemical efficacy, and
- that if a new herbicide becomes available, there is a whole-of-industry approach to 'protect' its use.

In the intervening period, player and club expectations may have to change in line with the superintendent's ability to control Poa as the chemical options become more limited.

John Neylan is the founder of AGCSATech, the technical services division of the AGCSA and a former AGCSA general manager. Brett Robinson is the editor of the AGCSA's Australian Turfgrass Management Journal.



Poa infestations are a common problem in couchgrass, particularly when the couch is dormant during the autumn and winter months. Poa is a very opportunistic species and will quickly infest a dormant couch surface, effectively disrupting its growth habit and causing reduced aesthetics and playability. If Poa is allowed to persist, it can damage the couchgrass underneath and retard its recovery in the spring. Poa is treated by most superintendents and golf clubs as a weed to be controlled, but in recent times most treatment methods have given variable results and repeated treatments are often necessary to prevent its spread.

The difficulty in achieving control comes back to nature itself. Poa produces a huge 'seed bank' which means its potential for year-round germination and rapid seedling growth is constant. In recent studies funded by the Victorian Golf Course Superintendents Association (VGCSA), it was demonstrated that in a couchgrass-dominant turf, where there was good control of Poa, the seed bank was more than 7000 seeds per square metre. In earlier studies undertaken in Victoria, it was demonstrated that turf dominated by Poa had more than 200,000 seeds per square metre. And this seed can remain viable for six years or longer!

Compounding this is the fact that Poa is a very diverse grass. There can be many different 'biotypes' in a given turf area, ranging from annual types to strongly perennial forms, and it's this diversity which ensures its strong survival capability. This diversity of biotypes also increases the likelihood that there will be herbicide-resistant individuals.

So what are the ramifications for the golf industry? If effective control of Poa cannot be achieved, couch areas will become progressively more contaminated, which will in turn impact on surface quality. In addition, it will become impossible to control it in bentgrass putting greens.

BACK IN THE GAME

The partnership between Golf Victoria and the TAC is helping people with injuries or disabilities to play the Game for Life. MARTIN BLAKE attended a TAC day hosted by The Metropolitan Golf Club and spoke to three inspirational people who have survived accidents and returned to the game.

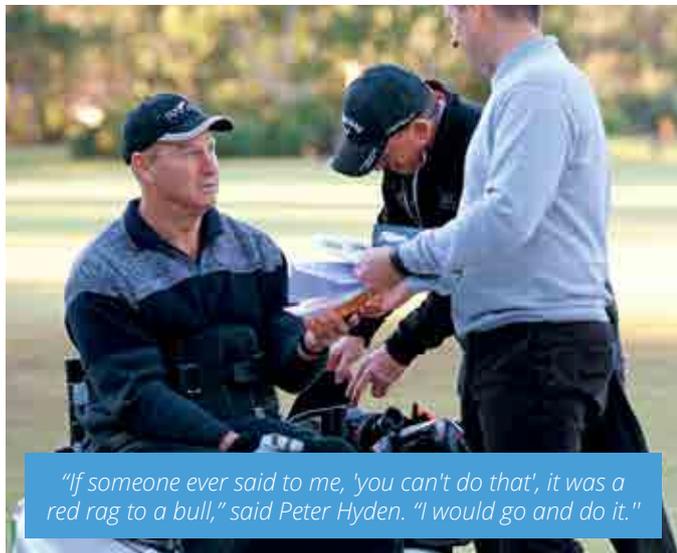
Golf is a game for life, the saying goes, and it's not just able-bodied players who live that adage to its maximum.

All around Australia, people who have been injured or live with physical and intellectual disabilities are finding their way to - or back to - the game.

The programs that make it happen are in their infancy. But they are happening, drawn together under the stewardship of Christian Hamilton, National Inclusion Manager for Golf Victoria and Golf Australia, and a man with a long interest and passion for the area.

Hamilton, who took up his position in 2016, had years of previous experience specifically with golf for amputees, but his role has broadened considerably.

His aim is full access for golfers with disability... everywhere. "At the end of the day, these people deserve the same opportunities as everyone else," Hamilton said. "That's the thing I'm really passionate about, trying to create those same opportunities."



"If someone ever said to me, 'you can't do that', it was a red rag to a bull," said Peter Hyden. "I would go and do it."

The Transport Accident Commission has played a big part, too, coming on board as a partner of Golf Victoria in the programs, helping to fund some of the equipment that is needed, such as Paragolfers, the \$35,000 all-terrain chairs that allow paraplegics to play golf.

The PGA of Australia, also keen to help, picked up the funding for inclusive coaching accreditation training of golf professionals around Australia.

From the TAC's point of view, anything that gets people with injuries or disabilities back outdoors and doing the things that they love can only be great.

"For our clients, getting back to work and participating in everyday life, roles and activities such as sport and recreation are crucial in them getting their lives back on track after an injury," said Liz Cairns, the TAC's Head of Independence.

"We have a particular focus on helping clients with disabilities to realise their full capacity. This includes supporting them to participate in their community and achieve their life goals. The Golf Victoria partnership enables the TAC to help these clients realise their important goal to get back to playing golf and getting their lives back on track after injury."

PETER HYDEN, 55, from Rochester in northern Victoria, was riding his favorite Ducati 1198 from his home to Melbourne to watch the Australian Grand Prix in 2011 when he came off the bike on a left-hand bend near Healesville and ploughed into an oncoming car.

He survived but had two punctured lungs, 22 broken ribs, and numerous spinal fractures that left him paraplegic.

Hyden is nothing if not determined. A truck driver who distributed fertiliser around farms in his local area, he initially sold his business but then turned up to work for the new owner. They had a truck converted with hand controls and a platform for him to enter and exit.

For exercise, Hyden began riding a bike with his wife Meren and they ultimately rode around Fiji, then around Thailand,

The Paragolfer seen in action at a TAC Day hosted by The Metropolitan Golf Club.



and from Alice Springs to Darwin. "That's my fitness," he said. "It gets me out of my wheelchair, it gets me out of my comfort zone."

Then golf came on to his radar. He had been an "everyday hack" before, playing socially, but then at a barbecue with a friend he had met during rehab one afternoon, the conversation turned to the Paragolfer chairs that are tailored for golfers with paraplegia.

"My friend had been down to see Christian," said Hyden. "And I thought, 'My wife used to play golf. It's something we can do together'. I go down to the club and there's the social aspect, and it's still competitive. I've still got that spark, I like to go and play something and try to be the best I can."

Hyden picked up one of the Paragolfer chairs with the help of the TAC and started playing with one hand – a challenge, to be sure. He is off a 36 handicap at Rochester Golf Club, having resumed the game in January this year, and his target is to break 100.

More to the point, it is about wellbeing. "Mentally and physically, you're healthy," he said. "I do some public speaking and a lot of people say to me, 'you look so well'. I think it's because I'm out doing things. If you're as fit and as healthy as you can be, it costs the TAC less money. I don't need hospital care, I don't need nursing at home, and in the scheme of things I'm fit and healthy because I'm active."

"It's also mental stimulation. The more active I can be, the more healthy I am both mentally and physically. You can sit here and go, 'it's too hard, poor me', but I've never woken up in the morning and thought, 'I don't want to be here'. I can't comprehend that. I mean, I still have pain. There are

days when I go back to bed because I'm tired and cranky, but I never had that attitude. If someone ever said to me, 'you can't do that', it was a red rag to a bull. I would go and do it."

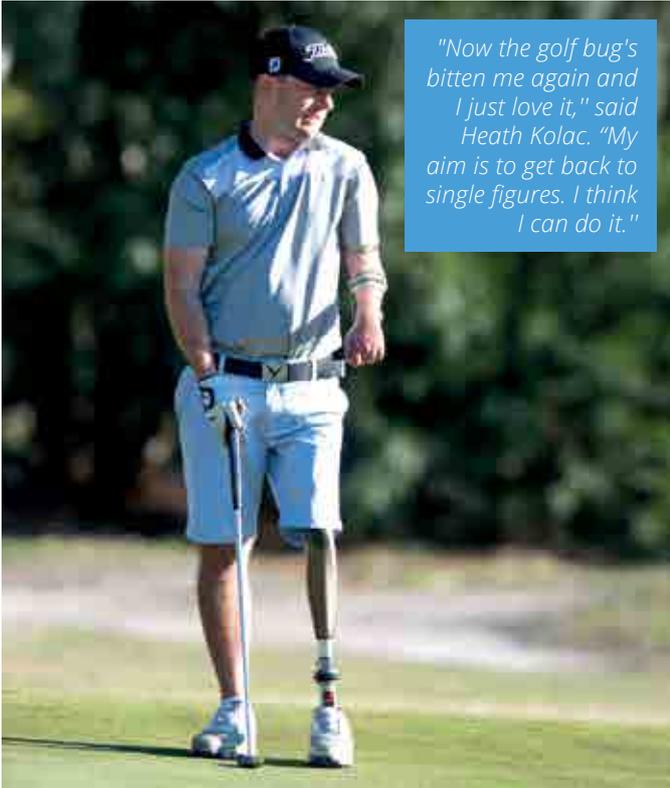
HEATH KOLAC was an accomplished junior at Phillip Island Golf Club from the age of 12 until he was involved in a motorcycle accident at 19, severing his left leg and losing almost all the use of his left arm.

It was Christmas Day 2004, around 11 am, when he was heading to his family home for a celebratory lunch. On a straight stretch of road near the family home, an elderly woman approaching from the opposite direction turned hard right in front of Kolac's bike, causing an immediate collision.

"It was out of the blue, no indication or anything like that," he recalled. "I went over the handlebars, my left leg dropped in through the windscreen and it was cut off by the roof line of the car pretty much straight away. I kept flying through the air and my left arm caught a speed sign as I was landing, and that did some damage to that arm."

The injury to his leg – known as a traumatic amputation – and the resultant blood loss could easily have killed Kolac but he had the good fortune that a helpful medico was riding his bicycle nearby at the time. The good samaritan literally plugged the femoral artery with a finger and saved his life but, even then, three times on the ambulance trip to Royal Melbourne Hospital he was clinically dead, needing to be revived.

After copious surgeries and years of rehabilitation, Kolac eventually came back to his beloved Phillip Island club, initially to watch his mates playing and to serve on the club's board. "The first few years I was finding my feet, trying to find the new normal. I went back to work, life was busy and a few



"Now the golf bug's bitten me again and I just love it," said Heath Kolac. "My aim is to get back to single figures. I think I can do it."

of my friends were having a hit. That spurred me on to think, 'Maybe I can still roll these guys'.

"That's two years ago now. I started playing back at Philip Island and, being on the board, it's been great being back in a golf environment. One of the biggest things, looking back for me, has been missing that competitive outlet, which I lost after the accident. Now the golf bug's bitten me again and I just love it."

Kolac swings the club with only his right arm and he has a bionic left leg which leaves him with limited flexibility. But when he resumed playing golf two years ago, he had a 31 handicap; it is at 16 now and creeping down. He can shift the ball up to 170 metres with his driver. "My aim is to get back to single figures," he said. "I think I can do it."

ROD PAYKEL, a 57-year-old financial planner from Chum Creek, near Healesville, ran off the road near Yea on his motorbike in August 2014, suffering a broken collarbone, fractured shoulder, and pulling nerves off his spine that controlled his right arm, as well as breaking 10 ribs, having punctured lungs, cracked vertebrae and a fractured skull. He lost most of the vision in his left eye and the use of his right arm.

Paykel was a golfer; he had spent 30 years as a member of Cranbourne Golf Club playing to a handicap of between 12 and 14. As his recovery continued after returning home at Christmas 2014, he sought out Christian Hamilton's details online and made the call.

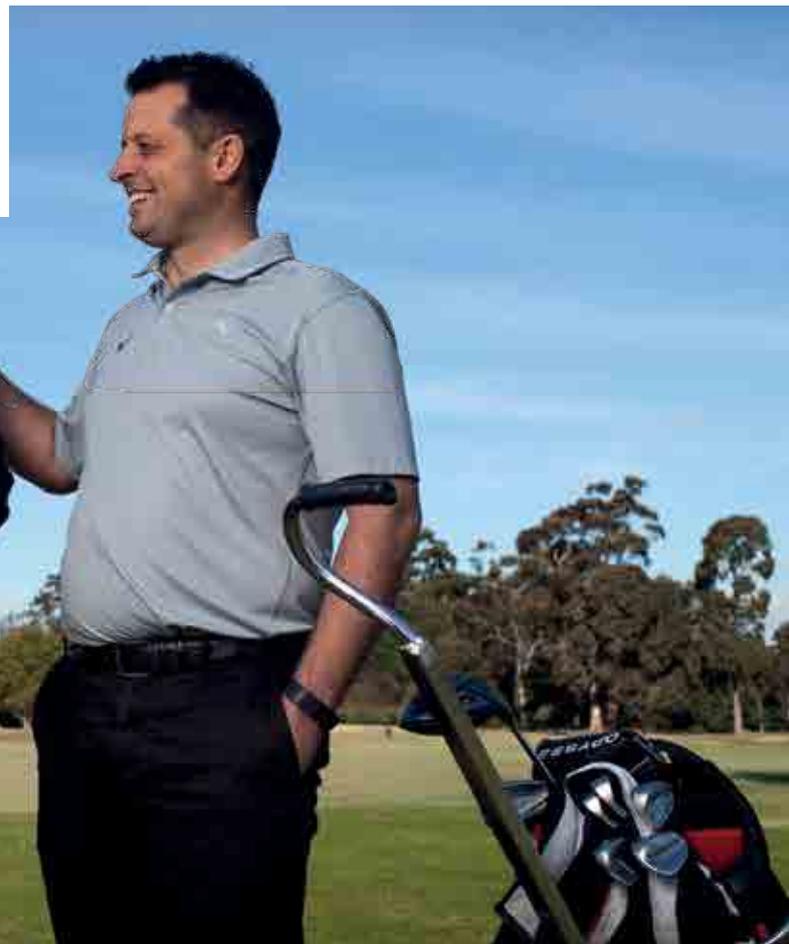
Two years on, he is playing regularly at RACV Healesville, near his home. "For a right-handed golfer, the left arm does a lot of the work and that's where I'm at," he said. "I'm loving it, the challenge of getting back to golf. It's exciting. I never thought, 'Damn, I'll never play golf again'. It was talking to people and seeing what people with disabilities were getting up to that I thought: 'Gee, I'll investigate golf!' I found Christian, had a chat with him, and the rest is history, as they say."

These are the uplifting human stories on which Christian Hamilton thrives. He has his teeth into something important, and he was rewarded by being named Victorian PGA Teaching Professional of the Year for 2016-17.

"We're focused on getting people back into mainstream sport," he said. "I think golf in its design actually allows that whereas some other sports don't provide that opportunity. We've seen statistics that show 80 percent of people want to participate in mainstream sports, so it's all about creating choice and giving people what they want to get back into the game."

For more information: <http://www.golfvic.org.au/inclusion>

- Page 46: Christian Hamilton named 2016-17 Victorian PGA Teaching Professional of the Year

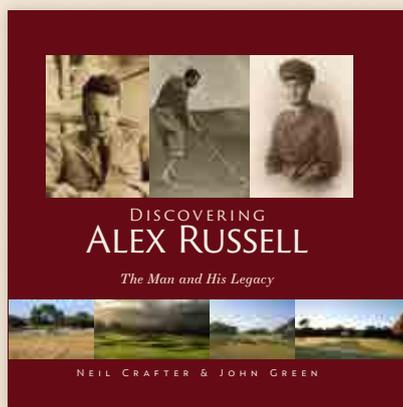


"I'm loving it, the challenge of getting back to golf," said Rod Paykel, pictured with Christian Hamilton. "It's exciting. I never thought, 'Damn, I'll never play golf again'."

GET IN EARLY FOR GREAT CHRISTMAS GOLF READING

An unsung hero of golf, an outstanding course architect, and a short history of the great game – there's something for everyone in three golf books recently released in Australia. And with Christmas fast approaching, here's the chance to lock away an early present for the golfer in your life.

DISCOVERING ALEX RUSSELL



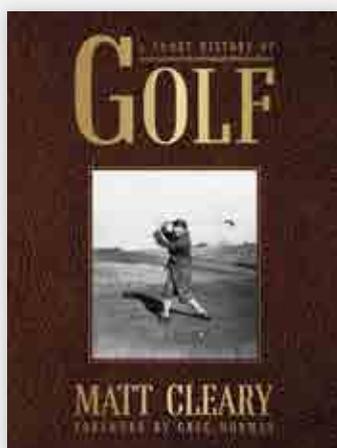
Regarded as perhaps Australia's finest home-grown golf course architect, Russell served as the Australian partner of famed Scottish architect Dr Alister MacKenzie in the design and construction of the West Course at Royal Melbourne Golf Club and was solely responsible for the design of Yarra Yarra and Royal Melbourne's East Course in Melbourne, Lake Karrinyup in Perth and Paraparamu Beach in New Zealand.

Russell was also a champion golfer, winning the 1924 Australian Open as an amateur among numerous other national and state titles.

This well-illustrated and detailed biography by Neil Crafter and John Green uses detailed text, period archival photographs, maps and plans to bring together the many threads of Russell's life, including his distinguished service as an artillery officer in the British Army during World War I, his political life and his grazing property 'Mawallok' in Victoria's Western District.

Available from Ryan Publishing at www.ryanpub.com for \$89.95 plus \$10 p&p for the first copy plus \$5 per additional copy.

A SHORT HISTORY OF GOLF



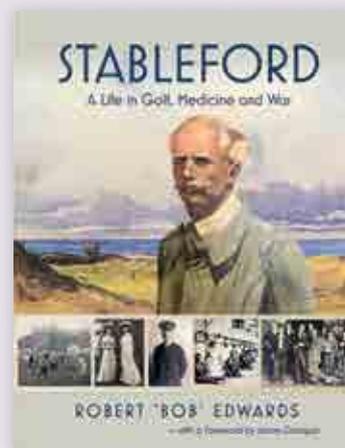
In this textured hardback and loosely chronological book, sportswriter Matt Cleary gives his take on the history of golf and the many iconic figures who have graced it, including Old Tom Morris, who won three of the first five Open Championships in the 1860s, Bobby Jones, who created the famous Augusta National course, and other stars like Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Seve Ballesteros, Greg Norman, and Tiger Woods.

The book also features some of golf's greatest women players, such as Karrie Webb, Jan Stephenson, Patty Berg, Annika Sorenstam and Mildred Ella (Babe) Didrikson Zaharias.

A Short History of Golf is an absorbing and sometimes amusing look at the seminal moments and characters of golf through its grand history. Greg Norman, who provided the foreword to the book, describes it as "bloody brilliant".

New Holland Publishers RRP \$29.99 available from all good bookstores or online at www.newhollandpublishers.com

STABLEFORD, A LIFE IN GOLF, MEDICINE AND WAR



Dr Frank Barney Gorton Stableford is responsible for the popular points scoring system used extensively in club golf competition. Stableford was an excellent golfer, off a plus-one handicap when he won the Royal Porthcawl club championship in 1907.

His unique scoring method was born out of frustration with the bogey system of scoring, where the player played against the bogey (or par) for the hole.

Said Henry Longhurst: "I doubt whether any single man did more to increase the pleasure of the humble club golfer."

This fascinating book written by Robert Edwards traces Stableford's family background from its industrial beginnings through the decades of tumultuous and peaceful times, including his service as a major during World War I, and contains many wonderful images from a world long ago.

Available from Ryan Publishing at www.ryanpub.com for \$79.95 hardback and \$59.95 softback, plus \$15 p&p for the first copy plus \$10 per additional copy.

THE Spirit OF THE

The time-honoured Trimax Victorian Sand Greens Championships are an excellent example of the spirit of golf in the country. **BRENDAN MOLONEY** reports on the 2017 men's and women's events and some of the hardy veterans for whom the companionship and traditions provide the drive to return year after year.

Carracher & Whelan BOTH SCRAPE IN AT WEDDERBURN

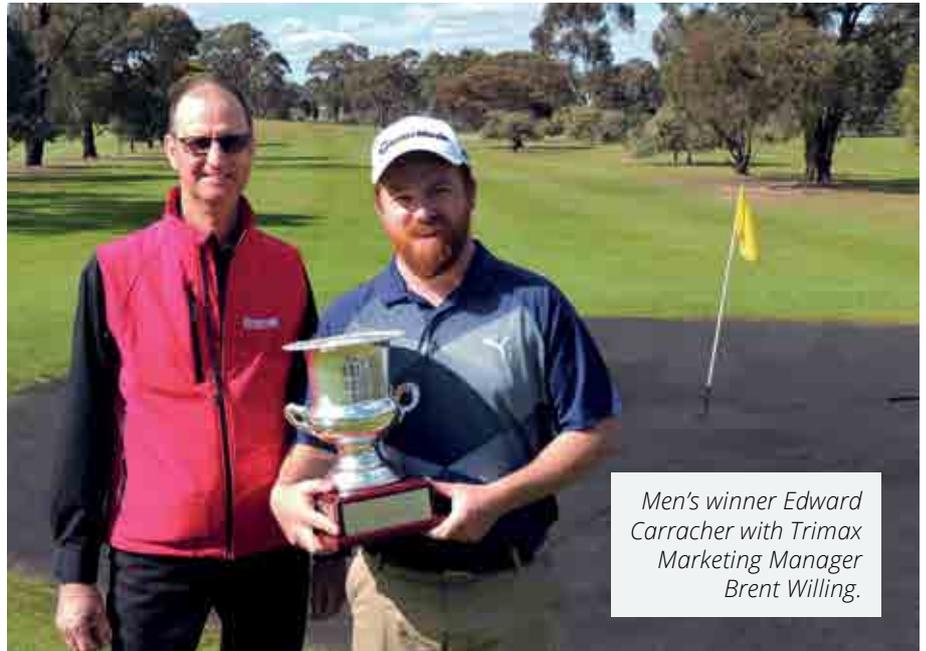
Defending champion Edward Carracher from Euroa posted four birdies on the back nine to take out the 2017 Trimax Victorian Men's Sand Greens Championship at Wedderburn in September.

He wrapped up his third title since 2013 by chipping in at the last hole to beat playing partner Nathan Schneider, of Beechworth, by a shot after Schneider lipped out for birdie.

Followers of the sandscape game were not surprised by the spectacular finish after seeing Carracher win last year at Bannockburn, where he took a penalty drop on the last hole and then left his full six-iron approach shot sitting on the lip. In 2013, at Beechworth, he got his nose in front by hitting a similar shot into the hole on the 16th for eagle.

Schneider, also looking for his third title, started well with an opening round of 68 on the par 69, 5521-metre layout to finish the first day a shot clear of Stephen Valentine of Kew and Craig Boucher from Midlands.

Carracher's defence began poorly with two double bogeys in a round of 72 which left him four shots from the lead. Schneider did not do much wrong but his second round 70 to the winner's 65 tells the story.



Men's winner Edward Carracher with Trimax Marketing Manager Brent Willing.

Third place went to Boucher (69, 72) while fourth was shared by another two-time winner, Andrew Kane from Boort (71, 71) and Ringwood's Chris Jones (72, 70). Kane understood the disappointment felt by Schneider because he was also trying to win for the third time. His first victory was at Mortlake 30 years ago and then three years later at Ouyen in 1990 when he beat a field that included Robert Allenby.

"It would have been nice to win on the 30th anniversary but Edward played too well," he said. "Nathan was doing pretty well, too, until he got hit in the leg on the 10th by a ball from a player from his own club. That wouldn't have helped him."

An interested onlooker was Lance Carracher, winner of the title in 1988, a year before his son was born. He finished a creditable 15th after rounds of 75 and 76.

For the second successive year, the women's title was contested earlier in the week on the same course as the men and Martina Whelan from the Grampians Golf Club won at her eighth attempt.

The Irishwoman from Kildare, who did not take up golf until she came to Australia 12 years ago, had rounds of 75 and 78 against par of 72 to beat Helen Pascoe of Buninyong (77, 77) by a shot.

"I got a bit tight on the home stretch but managed to hang on," said Whelan, an eight-handicapper who played the first round on her birthday. "I have to say the course was magnificent. They are by far the best sand greens I have played on. They were brilliant. The club is completely run by volunteers who put in a huge amount of effort to make the place pristine."

It was a successful week for the 14-strong team from the club at Dunkeld in the Grampians, 280 km west of Melbourne, with Sue Morse winning B-Grade and Whelan, Morse and Marcia Macgugan combining to take out the Thursday teams event.

The club expects to have a strong presence again next year when the championship will be played at Rutherglen. "We all try to get away each year," said Whelan. "I've played in eight of the last 10 and am really looking forward to defending the title."

SAND GREENS

TOURNAMENT WITH A Magical Lure

Country people love their golf. They love to play it with their mates. And they love their golf clubs, too, which form an important part of their community. So they willingly support each other's events and championships with passion – and a commitment to drive long distances to do so.

The time-honoured Victorian Sand Greens Championships are an excellent example of the spirit of golf in the country.

First played for men at Yea in 1972 and for women in 1975 at Avenel, the event – which now has the men's and women's events run concurrently at the same venue - has achieved something of a cult status. Players from far and wide come to play – and meet up with friends made through the years, as well as making new ones.

This year's running was at Wedderburn, situated in the Kara Kara District Golf Association that stretches from Korong Vale in the south to Sea Lake in the north and encompasses both the Mallee and the Wimmera. In this vast area, all courses are sandscrapes and players who want a game on grass greens can face a return trip of up to 200 kilometres.

This seems a fair hike but it faded into insignificance when the team from Blackhall in Queensland arrived to play in the four-ball event on the eve of the 2017 Trimax Men's Sand Greens Championships. Les Williams, president of the sandscrape club, his son Aaron and member Shane Robinson drove 1000 kilometres from their home north-west of Brisbane.

"The decision to play was made in the bar," said Williams snr. "We then looked at the map. It was only 1700 kilometres and we said, 'we can do this'. We left on Thursday morning at 7.30am and got here on Friday in time

to play in the four-ball and get an idea of the lie of the land. We enjoy having a hit, meeting new people and playing different courses."

Robinson, with rounds of 87 and 88, was the best of the trio in a share of 65th place but for their epic journey, they were aptly awarded the longest drive.

The oldest player in the men's field was Tim Quinlan, 81, from Rochester who played in the inaugural event at Yea in 1972 and has missed only a dozen titles since. He was joined in the field by his brother Laurie and grandson David.

"I went back to Yea in 1972 because it was my home town," he recalled.

"I was one of six boys and two girls. My grandfather selected the land in 1895 and my father was also born there. That first title was a great event and was won by a fellow called Clark from Bendigo.

"In 1972, I had a very ordinary 45 in the morning round but started the afternoon round birdie-eagle-birdie and finished with 31 off the beater. I still have the trophy for that."

Quinlan may not have taken up golf if he had not been injured at Assumption College in Kilmore, which is famous for producing top footballers. He was given some clubs to keep him active by

schoolmate John Smith, son of Martin, the pro who was runner-up with Norman von Nida to Jim Ferrier in the 1939 Australian Open.

The man who has won the Rochester club championship three times still plays twice a week on a battery-powered scooter his daughter gave him for his 80th birthday.

Iris Dark, 77, from the Grampians Golf Club and winner in 1990 when it was held at her home club, has been to almost every running of the sand greens championships. Like so many country kids, she grew up playing golf.

"I used to hit up and down the cow paddock with my dad. He was a good golfer and he used to yell out instructions from the other end of the paddock. Mind you, I was supposed to be inside helping mum with the dishes but my dad would say, 'she'll be back in a minute and she'll do them then' but of course we'd play out there till it was dark", she recalled.

In the early days of attending the championships, as part of being club champion (some 30 times), Dark would struggle to get anyone to go with her. But as the popularity of the event has soared, "now I can't chase them off with a stick, they all want to go!"



Women's winner Martina Whelan won at her eighth attempt.

Millie Cumming is another who has played the sand greens more times than she can remember. 'It would be 20-odd or even more', she said.

Cumming grew up playing sandscrapes before moving to Mansfield GC 30 years ago. Playing three times per week on average, one of those games each week is a tournament or bowl at other clubs within the district, just because she likes to support them.

Cumming turns 79 the day after the Victorian Women's Spring Tournament at her home club Mansfield, another important country event.

Golf Victoria runs two women's tournaments each year across regional Victoria in autumn and spring. Players at both tournaments compete to win the Ruby McKenzie Trophy, named in the honour of one of Victoria's greatest country golfers. The Best 36 Hole Nett trophy is named after Vi Teesdale, a former Ladies Captain and Ladies President of Huntingdale Golf Club, whose contribution to golf administration in the state led her to be inducted recently into the Victorian Golf Hall of Fame.

Cumming played at Wedderburn while coming down with shingles but in true

country spirit played through it, even taking off one of the nearest-the-pin prizes on day one.

Yet another frequent competitor is Shirley Postle, multiple club champion at Wedderburn. Some say she has won the championship there anything up to 40 times but Postle herself thinks it's more like 20-odd but can't be sure. Imagine winning so many times you lose count! Still playing twice per week at 82 years of age – and off a very creditable handicap – Postle noted how much the event has grown over the years and took pride in Wedderburn being in immaculate condition through the week.

It's not just the golden-eldens who shine at this event though. The honour roll for both men and women is impressive, including the names of some of the best golfers from the country and in the state. Players such as Mike Clayton, Steve Allan, Marcus Both and Ben Ferguson have gone on to professional careers, as did Sandra McCaw before later regaining her amateur status, while legends of women's country golf such as Sara Love and Ann Johnston – who won it five times – adorn the boards.

Golf Events Manager Michelle Hui said of the 2017 Trimax Victorian Sand Greens Championships: "There is a real family vibe at this event. A lot of players use it as a yearly reunion to catch up with friends they have met along the way. This year was fantastic. In the speeches, there was overwhelming praise for the preparation and hospitality provided by Wedderburn Golf Club and the tremendous support from naming rights sponsor Trimax and a raft of other local sponsors."

Trimax Mowing Systems has been on board over the last two years, in 2017 as the principal sponsor. Brent Willing, Marketing Manager of Trimax, echoed the thoughts of all when he said, "being involved with country golf at this level is a real pleasure and a privilege."

Perhaps the final word on the spirit of the sand greens championship comes from Cumming: "It's a wonderful event. There's no other tournament like it. There's a lot of players who are younger than me, of course, but we have a lovely time and they're progressing with their golf, getting their handicaps lower, and it's so lovely for me to see that. It's magical, really."

Scenes from the Scrapes



(clockwise from top) Millie Cumming, sandgreen specialist Tim Quinlan, Father and son Lance and Edward Carracher, Putting is the key to good score, The boys from Blackhall won the longest drive.



Members of the Single Malt GC toast another birdie ... (from left) Archie Arabatzis, Paul Galileos and Nick Starrenburg.

Whether it's hookers and slicers, Greek gentlemen, chemists, sikhs or bushrangers, there's a social golf club out there for everyone. As BRIAN MELDRUM reports, the thing they all have in common is a love of golf and a few laughs.

A birdie is always a welcome addition to a player's score during a round of golf – but for the members of the Single Malt Golf Club, it's cause for a celebration.

Courtesy of today's whiz-bang technology, in this case a mobile phone app, whenever a Single Malter has a birdie, it's immediately relayed to all the members around the course and tradition decrees that everyone must down clubs and knock back a wee dram of Scotland's finest.

The course, of course, could be anywhere. That's the beauty of belonging to a club such as the Single Malt, one of dozens of social golf clubs scattered in and around Melbourne. As often as not they'll play on a different course every fortnight, month, or however often they play.

"It's one of the best things about it," says Single Malter Nick Starrenburg. "This year, among others, we've played at Southern, Eagle Ridge down on the Peninsula, and Growling Frog up in the north."

The fact of being able to play a variety of courses is just one of the attractions of social golf, which in recent times has become more formalised via the involvement of the Victorian Golf League.

More than 50 social golf clubs are registered with the VGL and according to board member and life member Peter Kingshott,

the opportunity is there for many of them to eventually become fully integrated member-clubs. "That is one of our aims," he said. "Several have already made that transition".

The move to bring social golf clubs 'in from the cold', so to speak, came with the formation of the Golf Access program, by the forerunner of Golf Victoria, the Victorian Golf Association.

"Doug Fox (former VGA Manager) introduced it," Kingshott said. "He saw it as a pathway into mainstream golf but it never really eventuated. It was wound down, but Golf Victoria didn't want to leave the social clubs out on a limb and approached us to take them under our umbrella."

Judging from the response, the social clubs have welcomed the involvement of the VGL for many reasons, not the least being it enables their members to retain official Golf Australia handicaps. It has also put the clubs in touch with other aspects of the game.

Kingshott conducts rules courses and says that on a couple of nights more than a third of the attendance has been from the social clubs. "We want them playing under the rules, rather than just going out for a hit," he said.

That the social clubs are responding to VGL initiatives gives Kingshott and his fellow board members a lot of satisfaction. "We are trying hard to include them, because it's what we see as our role - to bring more people into golf".

Golf remains one of the most popular sporting pastimes worldwide but for perhaps the majority of participants, it is but one element of their overall recreation. Quite often they do not have the time, perhaps the money, or even the desire, to be part of the traditional golf club structure.

For membership of an established golf club to be worthwhile, it requires, in most instances, a fairly big commitment but because of work and family involvements, for many this is not possible. And it's not just a modern day scenario either.

It was the reason why, way back in 1961, four mates from the eastern suburbs who loved golf but couldn't commit to joining a golf club, dubbed themselves the Ale and Flail GC and started playing once a month on public courses around Melbourne.

Friends and workmates became interested and eventually it was decided to formalise the club. "They drew up a constitution, wrote a schedule, things like that," Ale & Flail's Jason Jones explained. Mal Morrison, the only surviving founding member, retired from golf a year or so ago.

The club plays 16 times a year and members must commit to playing a minimum of 10 games otherwise they cannot join. "For a long time the membership was capped at 32 but in the past 15 years that has been extended to 40," Jones said.

"We have a lot of people who want to play but it is hard to get big numbers onto courses on a Saturday morning. At the moment we've got three people on a waiting list." And, Jones added, they also have three female members, a rarity among social golf clubs.

Social clubs have all manner of beginnings. The Single Malt GC originated with a core group of a dozen or so mates who, once a year, would take a trip down to the famed Barnbough links in northern Tasmania.

"One of the rules was, you had to have a bottle of single malt in your bag during a round," Starrenburg said. "Its age didn't have to be able to drive, but it did have to go to High School."

"ONE OF THE RULES WAS, YOU HAD TO HAVE A BOTTLE OF SINGLE MALT IN YOUR BAG DURING A ROUND. ITS AGE DIDN'T HAVE TO BE ABLE TO DRIVE, BUT IT DID HAVE TO GO TO HIGH SCHOOL."

Keen to play more golf together back in Melbourne, the group decided to form a social club and quite obviously didn't have to look far for a name. Now the overall club membership is around 60, many of whom are also members of traditional clubs.

The Hookers & Slicers GC has its origins in the St Albans Sports Club, the western suburbs home of a variety of sporting activities. This year it celebrated its 25th anniversary, having been formed by a group of St Albans footballers in 1992.

Because it has a permanent home base, the only thing the Hookers & Slicers GC lacks is a golf course. "We have honour boards and all that sort of stuff, and we're well sponsored," secretary Michael McLaughlin said.

The club still has the football club as the basis for its membership but friends of players and ex-players are welcome to join if they pass the criteria. "They can play with us for a year and if we like them, they can join," McLaughlin said.

The club currently has about 30 members and plays once a month at courses in and around Melbourne. It has its own website and facebook page and the annual trip-away, a feature of most social clubs, is just as likely to be held on the Gold Coast as up on the Murray River.

The names of so many social golf clubs registered with the VGL make for some fascinating reading. You might wonder what was in store for you if you were invited to play with Bushranger Golf, and just what exactly is the membership of the Port Phillip Prison GC?

Ethnicity seems to be a popular starting point, as evidenced by the Italian Golf Association, the Victoria Sikh Association GC,

the Greek Gentlemen's Club, the Croation, the Cypriot, the Victorian Vietnamese Golf Association, and even the Kiwi GC.

The professions often stick together, hence the Victorian Chemists GC and the MFB Social GC, but, as often as not, you get a hotch-potch of catchy names like those mentioned earlier, plus the likes of the Hookers, Hackers & Hustlers, and the Tour Elephants.

The latter club, which had its origins at the Ivanhoe GC, was started back in the 1980s by South African Barry Kent and originally went by the name of the Pink Elephants, one assumes a reference to the aftermath of the golf day celebrations.

"We don't really know where the name came from," the club's secretary Steven Morrell said. "But, would you believe it, when we went to register it with the VGL, it was already taken. So, because we were playing a lot of different courses, we called ourselves the Tour Elephants."

The Elephants play fortnightly and can even boast to having an interstate member. "There's a guy named Louis who

comes down from Sydney to play once a month. I don't know how we picked him up, but he's a champion bloke."

In recent years the Elephants have established an annual competition against the Marysville GC which, along with the whole town, suffered massively during the Black Saturday fires in 2009. "They are rebuilding, so they contacted us a couple of years ago to see if we'd be interested in coming up. This will be our third year up there, and it's a great day."

Of course, all the social golf clubs have their traditions – the Single Malters is a good one – but one of the longest standing traditions, and perhaps the most extraordinary, belongs to the Ale & Flail boys.

At the end of each day, when the winner is announced, he or she must stand up, raise a glass, and call out, 'zasrano' – which is Polish for 'always in the sh**'.

Everyone else then stands and responds with the word, 'zawsze', which translates as, 'always'. Bizarre!



Balls fly everything when the hookers and slicers hit the course.

SENIORS

TAKE IT TO

THE WIRE

The Victorian Senior Amateur Championships went to East Gippsland in September, where both men's and women's finals were decided in dramatic fashion. CHARLES HAPPELL reports.

Metropolitan's Doug Francis produced a career recovery shot on the final hole of the Victorian Senior Amateur Championship at Bairnsdale to claim his maiden state amateur title by a single stroke.

Francis, 55, stood on the tee of Bairnsdale's 18th hole, a par five which doglegs to the left, tied at 10 over par with his friend John Kelly, also from Metropolitan, after 53 holes of tense strokeplay.

But pumped with adrenalin, he rocketed his drive through the dogleg and into

a tricky lie among the shrubbery. Kelly also found trouble off the tee, adding to the drama.

Despite having an impeded follow-through, Francis took a deep breath and lashed a hybrid club through the foliage. He couldn't get a clear view of the shot until he eventually saw the ball roll up through the apron and onto the green, 10 metres from the hole.

"I hit it absolutely perfectly and luckily for me it went straight and within birdie range," he said. "The only problem was that as we walked up the fairway, a huge cold front came through and we got hit by these squalls; it wasn't an easy two-putt at all."

From his lie, Kelly could only hit a mid-iron down the fairway and then pitch on to the green, about seven metres from the hole, from where he missed

his birdie putt. But he nevertheless finished alone in second place on 226, with former champion Gordon Claney (Kingston Heath) third on 228.

Francis, a plus-one marker, has an astonishing history of success at club championship level, having been the club champion at Metro seven times, Kew five times and Anglesea twice. A relative newcomer to the 'senior circuit', though, this was his first major amateur title.

"I've got the utmost respect for John and what he's been able to achieve in the game. And, as I said in my speech, I think we're the most prolific users of the practice fairway at Metro," Francis said.

Heading into the third and final round, Kelly was tied for the lead with Ian McCleary. When McCleary slipped back with an opening nine of 40, Francis seized the initiative by heading out in 36, to Kelly's 38, to take a one-shot lead into the back nine.

In the nett championship, The National's Guy Krall took top honours by two shots with a three-round nett total of 216 from a daily handicap of seven. McCleary finished runner-up with a nett total of 219 from a daily handicap of four.

Age category nett winners were: John Kelly (55-59); Guy Krall (60-64); Ignatius Duivenvoorden (65-69); and Wayne Aigner (70+). Age category gross winners were: Doug Francis (55-59); Gordon Claney (60-64); Russell Rogers (65-69); and Paul Welsford (70+).

The three days of competition – for both men and women – were shared between Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance Golf Clubs and the two courses won rave reviews for the way they were presented.

On the women's side, the championship was decided via two rounds of strokeplay with the leading four qualifiers heading into two matchplay semi-finals.

As with the men, the two finalists, Helen Pascoe and Jo Sellen, stood on the 18th tee at Lakes Entrance all square.

Their afternoon final was played in horribly difficult, squally conditions which occasionally produced bursts of hail. Pascoe said the three-or four-club wind wrought havoc with the players' judgment of distance and also their putting on fast greens.



From left, East Gippsland Mayor Joe Rettino with Victorian Men's Senior Amateur Champion Doug Francis and nett winner Guy Krall.

Having won the 17th with a par, Sellen had the honour down the last but she pushed her drive into the trees, an error compounded by the gale which took the ball into deeper trouble.

Pascoe, who plays off 1.5 at Southern, summoned a steely nerve, though, and hit her drive straight down the middle. Although the final hole is a modest 305-metre par four, Pascoe needed a full five-iron for her second shot of about 120 metres into the green. With one of her best shots of the afternoon, straight into the breeze, she found the green about six metres from the hole.

Sellen could only hit out sideways for her second and her third did not make the green. When Pascoe putted up to within gimme distance for her par, Sellen conceded the hole – and the championship.

Pascoe's victory was her second state amateur senior title, having won in 2014 at Curlewis. And it was especially sweet after having finished runner-up in several other events this year, including the Australian Senior Amateur Championship and Victorian Senior Sand Greens Championship.

"The conditions were just horrendous in the afternoon," she said. "All day I struggled with my distances. Downwind I'd take a couple of clubs less and come up short; into the wind, I'd fire over the back of the green. So that second shot into 18 was especially satisfying. We had a great



Victorian Women's Senior Amateur Champion Helen Pascoe is flanked by age category winners Glenys Ferguson (left) and Josie Ryan.

match all the same and Jo played very well and fought back hard after I'd got three-up early on."

Pascoe, the number one seed, counted herself lucky to get through her semi-final after being two down with two to go against Elizabeth Smyth. But she produced a par and birdie, then another par at the first playoff hole to win her way through. Sellen, the second seed, had a tough battle in her semi-final with Lyn Bennett before eventually prevailing 3&1.

Interstate visitor Glenys Ferguson, from Waneroo in Western Australia, took out the 55-64 year division for the second

year running, overcoming 2011 Victorian Women's Senior Amateur Champion, Heather Harley (Koorringal GC), 3&2 in the final. Josie Ryan from Headland GC (Qld) enjoyed a dramatic win in the 65+ flight, squeezing past June Tickell (Trafalgar GC) at the 19th hole in the final.

There were 118 entries on the men's side and 36 from the women. Michelle Hui, Golf Events Manager at Golf Victoria, said the decision to take the senior championship to provincial Victoria, where country courses could be showcased, was proving a success.

IRELAND

Come and share the golfing magic with

SWING Golf Tours & Promotion

TRADING AS
DQ International Travel Service Pty Ltd
Licence No. 30224

9th Floor, 500 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

Contact Damian L. Quirk
Tel: (03) 9614 4588
Fax: (03) 9614 1185

Email: travel@dqinternational.com.au

SPAIN

Experience a golfing holiday in Spain's Andalucia region. There are more golf courses in Andalucia than any other Spanish region, including the Continent's finest course, Valderrama and several others rated among the best in Europe.

SWING Golf Tours & Promotion

TRADING AS: DQ International Travel Service Pty Ltd
Licence No. 30224

9th Floor, 500 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

Contact Damian L. Quirk
Tel: (03) 9614 4588
Fax: (03) 9614 1185

Email: travel@dqinternational.com.au

SCOTLAND

The best of Scottish golfing with

Swing Golf Tours & Promotion

TRADING AS
DQ International Travel Service Pty Ltd
Licence No. 30224

9th Floor, 500 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

Contact Damian L. Quirk
Tel: (03) 9614 4588
Fax: (03) 9614 1185

Email: travel@dqinternational.com.au

CASEY AND JESS FAMILIAR FOES



Casey Wild (right) came out on top in the Victorian Country Women's Championship but Jess Pickwick gave her a run for her money.

The Victorian Country Women's Championship is one of the state's most prestigious events and was this year fought out by two young women looking to forge their lives in golf. STEVE PERKIN reports.

The Victorian Country Women's Championship has always attracted the state's finest country golfers but in recent years, two young players have left indelible marks on this historic event.

Kilmore's Jess Pickwick and Wodonga's Casey Wild have been at the pointy end of the championships regularly over the past few years, so it was little surprise to see them battle out the 2017 final.

This year, Casey overcame Jess 2&1 in the final, giving the 22-year-old back-to-back titles. Jess won in 2015.

Earlier in the week, Casey and her partner, Commonwealth and Port Fairy pennant player Jo Flaherty, tamed the Cobram Barooga golf course to win the Foursomes title by 12 shots.

For Casey and Jess, the successful week means they will both now come into serious contention for future Victorian teams. For Casey, she's hoping it may be a stepping stone towards realising her ambition of becoming a touring professional.

She took up the game at the age of eight because her father was working with juniors in Wodonga.

“I WAS HAPPY TO PLAY WELL ON THE FINAL FEW HOLES TO GET UP. WE’RE PRETTY GOOD FRIENDS, SO IT’S ALWAYS FUN TO PLAY AGAINST HER.”



In the foursomes, Casey Wild landed the double with the help of Jo Flaherty.

Based at Tarleton State University in Texas for the past three years, Casey has played successfully in its Division Two college team. Just getting accepted into the system was, she says, her greatest golfing achievement.

“That was my proudest moment. I’ve managed to have a few victories (in America) and that’s been nice, considering it’s so competitive.

“Back home, being able to go back-to-back in the Country Championships was also pretty special.”

When she finishes college next year, Casey plans to return to Australia to

play as much as she can. “I chose the college system because I wanted to get a degree while still being able to play competitive golf. I love the competitive nature of college golf. Everyone is out there to win and it has improved my game a lot.”

Coincidentally, Jess was also a student at Tarleton until 2015. She went over as a seven-handicapper and returned playing off one.

“When I went over in 2011, I didn’t have a coach so I didn’t have the shots. I had an old-style draw and couldn’t hit a cut to save my life. Now I hit cuts all the time.”

A strong finish at the 2014 US National Championships (Division Two), where she finished fifth, convinced the

24-year-old that she was perhaps better than simply a solid female golfer. She’s now hoping that her performance in the Country Championships will gain her entry into next year’s Oates Vic Open.

“Either way I’ll probably try the Australasian Qualifying School.”

Jess is living proof that you don’t have to be swinging a golf club as an eight-year-old to be a successful player. She didn’t really get into the game until her final years at high school.

“I’d played most sports, but I really only took to golf seriously when I

realised I wasn’t going to be any good at anything else.

“I got a scholarship to a junior college in West Texas when I was 18, then transferred to Tarleton.”

Jess is currently working in the pro shop at Growling Frog Golf Club as a retail assistant. If her golfing dreams aren’t realised for whatever reason, she’s thinking of doing a massage course.

As for this year’s Victorian County Championships, they were again a resounding success with 74 players contesting the individual women’s title, played over 36 holes of stroke with the top eight qualifiers then going into matchplay.

The player with the best 36-hole gross score wins the coveted Betty Kernot Trophy and this year it was won by Jess, incredibly for the third time, some consolation perhaps for losing a see-sawing final which always promised to be a tight affair. Her two-round total of 145 was two shots better than runner-up Casey.

In the matchplay final, Casey birdied the third and fourth holes to go two-up, but Jess fought back and the pair were square at the turn.

Jess then went two-up after 13 holes, but this time it was Casey who hit back, winning four holes and charging to her second successive title.

“It was very close between Jess and I,” Casey said. “We played together on the Wednesday and we both played really well, so I knew it was going to be a tough battle on the Friday.

“I was happy to play well on the final few holes to get up. We’re pretty good friends, so it’s always fun to play against her.”

In the Foursomes, Casey and Jo Flaherty carded a pair of 74s to finish on 148, 12 shots clear of Johanna Wyllie (Tambo Valley) and Jess.

It’s been a very successful year for Jo, too. She was a member of two winning pennant sides on successive days - with Commonwealth in Melbourne Metropolitan Division One and for Port Fairy in Scratch Division of the Western District Golf Association - and has posted several strong results in individual events, including a second at the Victorian Par 3 Championships behind - you guessed it - Jess, with Casey in third place.

GET ON COURSE, LADIES

The transition from beginner clinics to on-course play can be fraught without a helping hand. JANELLE WARD looks at a pilot program devised by Golf Victoria to make things a lot easier for women starting out in golf.

Every golfer stands over the ball on the first tee and nervously hopes he or she will hit a decent shot to get the round underway.

So spare a thought for the beginner who can feel the eyes of anyone within 200 metres burning a hole in the back of the head as they make their way to the tee.

Making the transition from clinic to course can be a test of courage. But that no longer needs to be the case – for women, at least.

Golf Victoria has created a pilot program for female beginners aimed at helping them develop the confidence and skills to get on course – to take air shots, lost balls and a plethora of rules in their stride... and have fun.



Course management is a big part of the Get On Course program.

Appropriately, it's called Get On Course and Golf Victoria is understandably excited about its capacity to get more women playing regular golf.

The Get On Course program was developed in line with the 2015 Australian Golf Landscape research, which showed that key needs to generate more play centre on fun and social options, followed by options to play a shorter game, connection with the

people with whom we play, and a clear pathway for learning and development.

Get On Course meets all of these key needs.

While the program is still in its infancy – it was launched in mid-June and has had to contend with a bleaker than usual Melbourne winter – it is already empowering women beginner golfers across Melbourne.



Girls just wanna have fun after they've played, too. From left, Get On Course program co-ordinator Erica Kreymborg, Shannon Maxwell, Leisure Management Services Programs and Events Manager Kristine Nyblom and Wendy Richards.

Get On Course is offered at eight public courses – Northcote, Brighton, Riverside, Ivanhoe, Altona Lakes, Glen Waverley, Elsternwick and Oakleigh, which are run by Leisure Management Services. Golf Victoria Development Manager Ben Sweeney explains that these courses offer great flexibility with playing times, a relaxed atmosphere, and generally have a driving range.

He emphasises that Get On Course builds on the foundation established by excellent beginner programs such as those run by Jody Hawkins at Altona Lakes and Robyn Sottile at Riverside.

“Get On Course is part of a strategy to change the perception of golf,” says Ben. “We want to get younger people and more women into the game. This is a call to arms. We want existing golfers – men and women – to spread the word. We particularly want male golfers – because 80% of golfers are men – to encourage women to play.”

Get On Course program co-ordinator Erica Kreymborg backs that mission.

“Surely every golfer knows someone who could be playing,” she says. “We want to re-establish some good (female) numbers in golf. We want growth.”

Erica describes the program as a “no-brainer”. “It bridges that gap for women who have had some lessons or attended a clinic or two but don’t have the confidence and knowledge to navigate their way round a course,” she says.

Unless a knowledgeable friend or partner can help a novice make that transition – and, let’s face it, partners don’t always make the best teachers – options are limited.

Erica, who plays off a single-figure handicap, says: “This is the next step. You do your Play Golf, your SwingFit, you go out to the driving range, you do your clinics. But what do you do after that?”

“You’re not good enough or confident enough to go out yet by yourself. If you know someone who plays golf, that’s great, but a lot of women don’t. This is a great platform. We’re all in the same boat in Get On Course. No-one needs to feel embarrassed or intimidated in any way. We remove the pressure. We learn together and make sure we have a bit of fun. Because golf should be fun.”

For Leisure Management Services, offering the host venues for the programs is a great investment.

“We think it’s a wonderful idea,” says Kristine Nyblom, Programs and Events Manager at LMS. “We’re more than happy to offer our golf courses because we like women in sport. We’re very happy to run with it; we think it’s a great initiative and it helps us as all. Erica will get the women in, we hopefully get lessons out of it, the number of green fees will increase – it’s a win-win for everyone.”

The most recent Australian Golf Club Participation Report noted a 2.1% increase in rounds of golf played throughout Australia in 2016 – a continuation of a positive trend. However, an area of concern was the game’s performance in attracting female members.

It found that only 15% of new club members in 2016 were female. This “means that only 20% of members are female, down from 21% in 2012”, the report stated. “Additionally, the rate of decline in female membership was 3% in 2016, far greater than the 0.2% decline in male members.”

Erica sees several reasons for the decline, among them fewer stay-at-home women and the fact that the game is considered time-consuming.

Get On Course takes those factors into consideration, with sessions available across all seven days of the week and limited to two hours.

"The program is kept to two hours (playing an ambrose format). It doesn't matter whether we play four holes or nine, we stop after two hours. That way, the women know that if they have to get back to creche or whatever, in two hours they'll be able to. And a beginner can learn and hit a lot of shots in two hours."

So, what are the key elements of Get On Course?

1. The program operates at eight public courses across Melbourne – Northcote, Brighton, Riverside, Ivanhoe, Altona Lakes, Glen Waverley, Elsternwick and Oakleigh.
2. Sessions can accommodate up to 12 women and run to a strict two-hour timetable.
3. The cost is \$30 per session, which includes green fees, clubs and balls.
4. The only things you need to provide are comfortable clothing and runners.
5. Your mentor will walk the course with you and explain the rules, the scoring, advise on club selection and offer tips as you play.

6. You can attend as many sessions as you like until you feel ready to "graduate". Mentors can also advise on how to go about joining one of the myriad women's clubs that play at Melbourne's public courses.

Erica says that women who have been doing Get On Course have been thirsty for knowledge. "They know where to tee off from, they know to call people through if there is a lost ball or slow play, they know about a provisional ball. They've learned the basics of the game. It's also a great networking tool for them. They get to meet other like-minded women."

Golf Victoria can also offer Get On Course participants guidance on joining a club in their area when they are ready, growing female participation along the way.

As Erica says, "the only way to improve your golf is to play regularly and the best way to play regularly is to join a club."

For more information:
www.golfvic.org.au/get-on-course

Kristine Nyblom (left) and Erica Kreymborg are creating the pathway to Get On Course.



WENDY FINDS THE PATHWAY TO PLAY

"If it wasn't for Get On Course, I probably wouldn't have gone on with golf."

That's how Wendy Richards sums up her fledgling golfing journey.

Wendy had never played golf but friends did, so she decided to have some lessons. She had six one-hour sessions learning how to swing a club, how to putt. But she was at a loss as to how to put that into practice on a course. The lessons had given her no insight into how to actually play a round on a course.

Fortunately, a friend directed her to the Golf Victoria website and to Get On Course.

"My friend knew that I'd had some lessons but that I didn't know where to turn next," she says. "Plan B would have been one of two options - either forget about it and don't even continue or just go out on a course by myself at a really quiet time and have a play around until I was brave enough to take the next step. But that wouldn't have helped me with rules or etiquette, or my development.

"Get On Course has been invaluable. It's a really easy pathway into actually playing golf – it's non-threatening and great value.

"Erica (Kreymborg) has been a marvellous mentor. I've had five sessions, learning about rules and etiquette and which clubs to use, without feeling intimidated, like I'm letting anyone down.

"Now I'm feeling confident enough to head out with a friend and another couple of women for nine holes at Yarra Bend for a proper game. I'll have to think for myself, decide which club I'll use and behave myself – mark my ball properly, not move it when it's not on the green, things like that."

Wendy is also pleased to have had the opportunity to play on a number of courses where the program is offered.

"It's so easy to check out the session times in upcoming months at assorted courses and book what suits you. Because of that, I've got to experience different courses."

Wendy says she feels her golfing journey may be a long one, but admits she loves it when she hits a good shot. And that can be all it takes.



Wendy (left) and Shannon say Get On Course has given them much more confidence.

SHANNON BITTEN BY THE GOLF BUG

Outdoors is where Shannon Maxwell prefers to be, so it was probably inevitable that the trail runner and hiker was going to try her hand at golf at some time. Particularly as her husband also played.

Her golfing journey started several years ago with some clinics and visits to the driving range. Her husband offered his advice but in Shannon's words, "that's like having your parents teach you to drive."

"I did a few beginners' clinics several years ago but it was a long time between drinks," Shannon says. "Work and life got in the way and I did nothing more on the golf front for a long time. Eventually I played again and decided to try to take it further."

But... how to make that transition from driving range to course?

"You go to the driving range and hit some beautiful balls, but I found it hard to replicate that on a course."

Enter Get On Course.

"I learnt about Get On Course via an email and it was exactly what I was looking for. The program fills a massive gap. It's been a huge learning curve for me.

"I've been out with Erica (Kreymborg) four or five times now. I've learned so much. I'm more settled.

"There's a bit to work on, though," Shannon jokes. "I could go around with a driver, a seven-iron, a pitching wedge and a putter.

"When I stand on the first tee, I'm riddled with nerves - and I'm not normally like that. I look forward to getting beyond that. It's a very mental sport."

Shannon - like every other golfer - says she is aiming for consistency and hopes to meet some like-minded females with whom she can continue her golfing adventure.

"I'm bitten," she says. "I'm like a dog with a bone. I just want to get better."

 Peter Thomson



PGE is excited to introduce the Peter Thomson Golf signature range.

peterthomsongolf.com

QUALITY CRAFTSMANSHIP PERFORMANCE

 PROFESSIONAL GOLF EQUIPMENT

T + 61 3 9594 1122

E sales@progolfequip.com



Your drive. Our passion.

Mercedes-Benz Geelong is an authorised Mercedes-Benz dealership with an extensive range of New, Demonstrator and Pre-Owned Mercedes-Benz vehicles.

We love golf and our vehicles are the perfect buggy to get you to and from the course with ample room for your clubs.

Drop in and see us, we are located an hour from Melbourne on the Princes Highway, gateway to the Surf Coast region.

www.mbgeelong.com.au

Mercedes-Benz

The best or nothing.



Mercedes-Benz Geelong 1 Settlement Rd, Belmont (03) 5249 8200 LMCT 10391

JASON'S DREAM REVIVED FOR EUROPE

JUST WHEN 2010 VICTORIAN OPEN WINNER JASON NORRIS WAS ABOUT TO GIVE UP ON HIS JOURNEY AS A TOUR PLAYER, HIS DREAM WAS REVIVED. GOLF'S FUNNY LIKE THAT, AS **BRIAN MELDRUM** REPORTS.

Walking off the ninth green at the Natadola Bay Golf Club in the final round of the Fiji International in late August, Jason Norris turned to his caddie and said, "At least it's on camera; otherwise no-one would believe it."

The 44-year-old journeyman had just holed a five-metre putt to give him his sixth birdie on the outward nine, a four-shot lead and the glimpse of a dream on which he'd all but given up.

The wry comment was, perhaps, as much about his own amazement at finding himself with the opportunity not just to win a big money tournament, with a winner's take of \$237,500, but to play with the greats on the European Tour.

The Fiji International was a co-sanctioned event and carried a full year's exemption on the European Tour, as well as a two-year exemption on the Asian Tour.

Of course, four-shot leads have been known to disappear in a twinkling – think Open Championship 2012, think Adam Scott – and, indeed, Norris made a three-putt bogey on the 10th. All in all, though, he kept a cool head, something he's not always been able to manage, and was able to enjoy the luxury of walking up the 18th with a three-shot lead and his approach shot sitting just four metres above the hole.

"It was unbelievable, really," Norris said. "You know straight away what it means but you're just so emotional and amazed, it's hard to grasp."

It was the sort of thing Norris imagined himself one day doing, back when he captained Spring Valley to its one and only Metropolitan Division One

pennant win in 1993 and, later, as captain of the Victorian Colts team.

He turned pro in 1996 but, like so many before him, found the 'play-for-pay' game pretty tough and had to take on part-time jobs, such as working in a bottle shop, to stay afloat.



Jason Norris won the trophy and so much more when he claimed the life-changing Fiji International.

His fortunes took a turn for the better in 2007 when he won both the NSW Open and the WA PGA and, in 2010, he won the Victorian Open. But a bout of viral meningitis in 2013 slowed him down and in more recent years, his hopes of winning a 'big one' began to fade.

By then he'd moved from Melbourne to Adelaide and in January last year, he elected to take a job in the pro shop at The Grange Golf Club, needing a more regular income to support his family – wife Sarah and children Tarlie, 12, and Bailey, 6 – having lost all but his basic playing rights.

In early August the realisation that time was running out for him caused Norris to have a re-think and he approached his boss, The Grange's head pro Warren Mercer.

"I said, 'Mate, I'm sorry to do this to you but I reckon I've only got a year or two left in golf (as a touring pro), so I want to have one last crack at it'. He understood. He's a fantastic guy." A week later, Norris was on a plane headed for Fiji.

Funnily enough, on the way over, his caddie Shannon Aistrop said, "We could be going to Europe next year," to which Norris replied, deadpan, "Yeh, good onya." He reckons Aistrop, a businessman and also a paramedic,

is very switched on mentally and that fed through to him when the pressure was building towards the end of the Fiji tournament.

At one stage late in the final round, Norris' best mate on tour, Victorian Peter Wilson, got to within two shots of him but made a disastrous double bogey on the final hole and not only cost himself any chance of winning but also a big chunk of prizemoney.

Yet it was Wilson who was first out onto the green to embrace his pal, to celebrate the win. "How good is that!" Norris said. "He was thrilled for me." As were a lot of his fellow pros with whom Norris is a very popular figure. "Couldn't happen to a better bloke," was the comment of Jarrod Lyle.

Norris had to make some quick but necessary decisions upon his arrival back in Adelaide. "There's just not me to consider; it involves the whole family," he said. It is likely all of them will go to Europe next year but the immediate future saw Norris head off in early September to play two European events.

With little tournament practice apart from the event in Fiji, for Norris it was more of reconnaissance mission. At the European Masters in Switzerland, he started the second round four over the card but got back to square – the cut line – with three holes to play, only to make a couple of late bogeys and miss out.

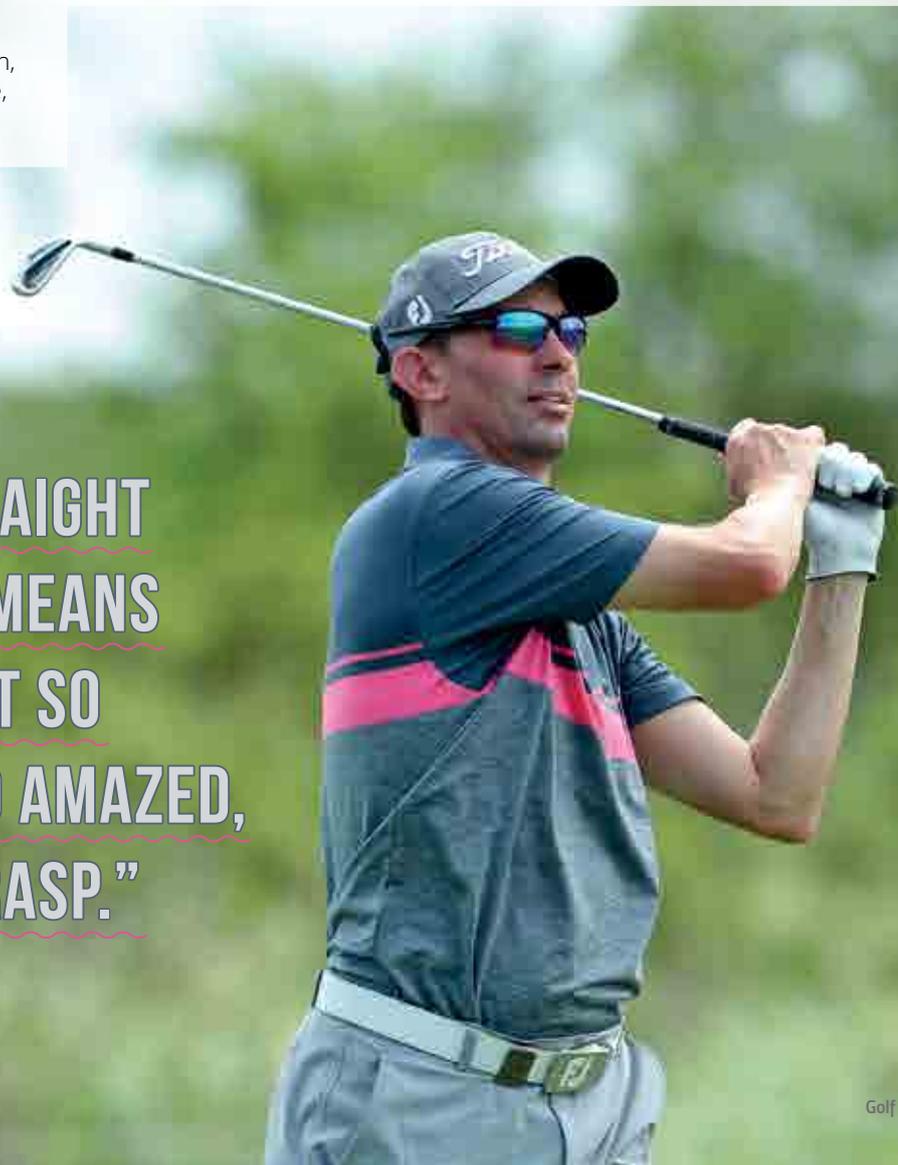
A week later he struggled in the first round at the Dutch Open and two double bogeys in round two sealed his fate.

Still, it was a taste of what will be in store for him next year, while at the same time giving him tournament practice for a couple of tournaments on the Asian Tour where, courtesy of his win in Fiji, he entered the top-10 on the money list.

"If I can play well and can get into the top-four, I'll get a start in the WBC-HSBC Champions in China," Norris said.

Just for the record, the WBC-HSBC event carries prizemoney of \$11.7 million. And to think, just over two months ago Norris would barely have given...no, he WOULDN'T have given that tournament a thought.

**"YOU KNOW STRAIGHT
AWAY WHAT IT MEANS
BUT YOU'RE JUST SO
EMOTIONAL AND AMAZED,
IT'S HARD TO GRASP."**



CHRISTIAN WINS ACCLAIM

The Victorian Golf Industry Awards in August recognised outstanding contributors in a variety of areas, none more heartwarming than the story of the Victorian PGA Teaching Professional of the Year.



Christian Hamilton

Christian Hamilton remembers the first time that the concept of inclusion, nowadays his passion in golf, came into his mind.

Hamilton, 37, named the Victorian PGA Teaching Professional of the Year at the 2016-17 Victorian Golf Industry Awards, was a teenager when he began caddying for a friend, Eric Hales, at Peninsula Golf Club.

Hales was blind, and Hamilton drew so much from the experience that he carried the bag for his friend weekly.

A few years later, Hamilton as a young pro took the process a step further when he joined Sandhurst Club as Head of Golf Operations, starting up a string of inclusion programs with his friend and mentor, then Sandhurst professional and Head of Coaching, Stuart Leong.

At Sandhurst, Hamilton's clinics for amputee golfers, undertaken with the help of Limbs 4 Life, drew widespread praise over five years. "Working with amputees, I saw it was very much therapy for a lot of people, it allowed them to talk to other amputees, you could see the other benefits that come from it. It wasn't just about the golf, that is secondary to me. It's more about the person's enjoyment, how much they get out of it."

Hamilton, who grew up playing his golf at Long Island Country Club in Frankston, had subsequently dabbled as a touring professional for three years, run a driving range at Wantirna and spent time at Royal Queensland and Cranbourne as a teaching professional.

But at Sandhurst from 2006, he could see his path. It was about inclusion, the opening up of golf to people with physical and intellectual disability, and Hamilton has taken to it with a determination that is admirable. In 2016, he put a proposal to Golf Victoria and Golf Australia for an inclusion program to be run on a national basis and the governing authorities jumped at the chance.

Hamilton created an inclusive coaching accreditation scheme that has already been taken up by nearly 60 professionals around Australia. They are to become the touch point for golfers with disability looking to get back into the game.

Hamilton, now National Inclusion Manager for Golf Australia and Golf Victoria, thinks the surface has barely been scratched. "The numbers are huge," he says. "In Australia, I think around 20% of people have some sort of intellectual or physical disability, and that includes obviously things like arthritis. It's a huge market, and there's a real thirst to get back into sport and

recreation and we've got a sport that can actually deliver that. There aren't too many that can deliver the same outcomes as we can."

Hamilton was presented with his PGA Teaching Professional award for 2016-17 at the Victorian Golf Industry Awards Night in August. Though surprised, his mind immediately turned to what it meant for the sport. "It gives me an opportunity to reflect on what I've done personally, in my own career," he says. "But to be honest, it's a great thing to use that as a platform to shine some more light on this area. That's the best thing because we've created such a groundswell now. We're seeing change. We're making inroads."

Other Victorian Golf Industry Award winners included Alizza Hetherington and Brett Coletta, named 2016 Female and Male Amateur Players of the Year.



Alizza Hetherington and Brett Coletta

Hetherington won the Women's Victorian Amateur Championships as a 16-year-old last December and the Victorian Girls Championship months earlier. She has gone on to represent Australia in the Queen Sirikit Cup in China and the Junior World Championships in the United States.

Coletta won the Izuzu Queensland Open as an amateur, along with runner-up finishes in the Asia Pacific Amateur Championship and New South Wales Open. He has since turned pro, competing on the Australasian and Canadian PGA Tour.

Denis McDade was awarded the 2016-17 Victorian PGA Coach of the Year. McDade's students have won in the US, Europe and across the world, including Marc Leishman, who won the Arnold Palmer Invitational and BMW Championship in the US this year, and Marcus Fraser, the winner of last year's Maybank Championship in Malaysia.

– **MARTIN BLAKE**

2016-17 VICTORIAN GOLF INDUSTRY AWARDS WINNERS

AMATEUR PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

Alizza Hetherington – *Female*
Brett Coletta – *Male*

VICTORIAN PGA CLUB PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Travis Harrison – *Brighton Public Golf Course*

VICTORIAN PGA TEACHING PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Christian Hamilton – *Golf Australia National Inclusion Manager*

VICTORIAN PGA COACH OF THE YEAR

Denis McDade – *Bann Lynch McDade Golf, Yarra Bend Golf Complex*

VICTORIAN PGA MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Jeff Graham – *Goonawarra Golf Club*

VICTORIAN PRO-AM ORDER OF MERIT WINNER

Andrew Martin

VICTORIAN REGIONAL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Dorothy Mortlock – *President, Golf Peninsula Vic*

GOLF CLUB OF THE YEAR

Bairnsdale Golf Club

CLUB EMPLOYEE AWARD

Clayton Howell – *The Eastern Golf Club*

GMV EXCELLENCE IN MANAGEMENT

Barbara Kelly – *Chirside Park Country Club*

APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Joel Manson – *Anglesea Golf Club*

SUPERINTENDENT RECOGNITION AWARD

Michael Freeman – *Huntingdale Golf Club*

VICTORIAN PGA LEGENDS PRO-AM OF THE YEAR WINNER

Shepparton BMW Victorian Senior Open played at the Yarrowonga Mulwala Golf Club Resort and the Black Bull Golf Club

VICTORIAN METROPOLITAN PRO-AM OF THE YEAR

Eynesbury Masters

VICTORIAN REGIONAL PRO-AM OF THE YEAR

Barwon Cleaning Supplies Portarlington Pro Am

VICTORIAN GOLF HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

- Sam Berriman – *Eminent golf course architect*
- Harold Knights – *Decorated golf coach and long-time PGA Member*
- David Inglis – *Founder of the Australian Masters and The National Golf Club*
- Jack Dillon – *Long serving golf journalist*
- Bill Richardson – *Renowned golf administrator*
- Rosemary Wakeham – *Golf administrator and advocate for women and girls golf*
- Vi Teesdale – *Golf administrator much loved personality*
- Claude Crockford – *Illustrious golf course architect*



ACES HIGH

By Geoff Cooper

Every day, every week, of every year, club golfers suffer regular golfing frustrations and occasional highs. Earlier this year, Kenny Emslie of the RACV Country Club in Healesville achieved something that lends inspiration to all, landing four holes-in-one in the space of only three months.

Kenny, a member at Healesville for four years, aced the 130-metre 10th hole on March 11, the 141-metre 13th on April 25 and backed those up with two more on his lucky 10th hole, on May 16 and again on June 6.

Despite being a short course, Healesville Country Club is no pushover. The 10th hole is a brute, the bunkers on each side appearing to have a unique vortex that sucks any slightly wayward ball into them. And the 13th often has a westerly wind that is inclined to blow balls into the kangaroo-infested bush on the left.

Being a typically dour Scotsman, Kenny played down his freakish achievement.

"Two of them were just lucky," he said. "The other two were pretty good shots, I guess." As near as he comes to boasting, he did add, "I had one years ago but as I was playing on my own, I guess it doesn't count."

Originating from Aberdeenshire in Scotland, Kenny has called Australia home for 32 years. Even though hailing from the birthplace of golf, Kenny does not see the game as running through his tartan veins. For 15 of his years here, he played golf only five or six times annually. Only since joining the Healesville RACV four years ago has he become serious about the game. Who knows what he might do if he really put his mind to it!



BALLARAT GOLF SCHOLARSHIP

Promoting golf to the next generation is vital to the game's health and with that in mind, Ballarat Golf Club is offering a scholarship to a talented junior in the district.

The scholarship includes membership to both Ballarat and the junior's current home club, a 2018 Oates Vic Open Behind the Ropes experience, full game analysis by a professional, a half-day experience at the PGA Centre for Learning and Performance and a Titleist gift pack.

"This scholarship aims to provide an opportunity to a young golfer out there who may not have regular access to our club, or any club for that matter," said Ballarat Golf Club General Manager Michael Phillips.

Applications are open until November 30 to anyone under the age of 18 living in the Ballarat District Golf Association region. Visit www.ballaratgolfclub.com.au for more information.



ON THE RISE

Continuing the column which highlights the wealth of talent on the Victorian golf scene, JOHN MACK profiles our Star On The Rise, Spring Valley junior Tiana Wanigasekera.



Tiana Wanigasekera is playing above her age.

There's a young lady wandering the fairways of Spring Valley Golf Club who's proving a formidable opponent both on and off the course.

She's only 13, but Tiana Wanigasekera has already won two senior championships at the club in Melbourne's southern suburbs.

And apart from 14 hours of golf practice and her schoolwork at Parkdale Secondary College, Tiana also fits in two sessions a week of krav maga, a form of martial arts developed by the Israel military.

"I do it for protection but it's also good for my fitness," she says.

Tiana's first Spring Valley title was the 54-hole club championship in March, at the age of 12, which she won by eight shots after a final round of 78 on the par-74 layout.

And in August, she teamed with Erica Kreymborg to win the Spring Valley foursomes title, a year after finishing runner-up in the same event.

But Tiana's golfing achievements don't stop at her home course.

She has been a major player in the club's pennant team for two years, winning three from seven matches in 2016 in a season which unfortunately saw Spring Valley relegated from Division 2.

But she really found her pennant feet this year, winning all her six matches at number four or five as her club marched into the Division Three final against Green Acres at Keysborough.

There she raised her game to another level again, blitzing her opponent 9&7 to make it seven wins from seven, although Spring Valley went down 4-3 in an agonisingly tight struggle which saw two matches decided at the 19th.

Tiana also earned a place in the Victorian Under-12 team for the School Sport Australia national titles in Murray Bridge in South Australia and has now been selected for the Victorian Under-15 state team and the Under-18 development squad.

Tiana gained her love of golf by watching dad Del practising when she was seven. Her first handicap, at the age of nine, was 42 but that is now down to six.

Del, an eight-handicapper at Spring Valley, says his daughter took to the game immediately. "She watched me hitting balls and wanted to do the same. So she tried it and off she went from there," he says.

Del is now her caddie in pennant and major events. "We talk about how to play her shots," he says. "But it's a typical parent-child relationship... sometimes she listens, sometimes she doesn't."

Tiana agrees that's pretty much how it works. "He knows more about my game than anyone and he tells me what shots to play," she says. "But sometimes I don't agree, so he says, 'Okay, play whatever shot you want'."

Tiana sees her short game as a major weapon in her golf armoury, particularly putting from under about six metres. "My longer putts aren't so good but I've been working on that and it's getting better," she says.

"I love golf because it's a real challenge. I'd like to turn professional and I'd like to go to Stanford University, because that's where my role models Michelle Wie and Tiger Woods went.

"I attended a seminar in Melbourne earlier this year to find out what it takes to get to Stanford."

Tiana's coach for the past seven years has been Adam Fraser of the Melbourne Golf Academy, the older brother of European Tour player Marcus.

He can see no limit to her achievements if she can maintain her focus through the teenage years when other activities can derail promising sporting careers.

"If she doesn't get distracted and keeps the right balance between golf and the other things in her life, she can go all the way," Fraser says.



THE GAME IS BETTER WHEN YOU ARE AMONG FRIENDS

For reasons that are not entirely clear even to me, I have a fascination with the 45th President of the United States. Or more specifically, with Donald J. Trump's love of golf.

Perhaps it's that I care for the planet, but I find it gobsmacking that by the reckoning of people who get paid to keep track of this stuff, Trump played golf - or at least visited his golf properties - 58 times in his first eight months in the job as POTUS.

It's certainly a decent amount of golf given the myriad complications he has met, from Kim Jong-un to Afghanistan to America's dreadful gun violence. But The Donald, it seems, likes playing golf with his mates, and I am not necessarily about to frown upon that.

Which brings me to the point about golf. Is there another game that promotes the idea of friendship and fraternity better than golf? I seriously doubt it.

Most people I know prefer playing golf with their friends rather than solo, because, to them, the game is as much about the chat and banter between shots as it is about the actual playing. Personally, I don't mind playing alone, hitting a couple of balls and trying to improve (alas, with limited success). But there is no doubt the experience is enhanced by the presence of people whose company you enjoy.

It's true at every level of the game, even at the very top, where the big money and fame is involved, and this has been no more evident than 2017. When the Texan wunderkind Jordan Spieth won the Open Championship with that remarkable see-sawing final round at Royal Birkdale in July, he had moral support that went beyond his ubiquitous caddie and close friend, Michael Greller.

Spieth was staying in a rented house near Birkdale with a bunch of his golfing friends and that Sunday night, after he found his way around the links in 69 to win by three shots, famously dropping by the practice range at the 13th, he drank hard liquor from the old claret jug with most of them.

Amongst the group was Justin Thomas, the brilliant young pro from Louisville, Kentucky, who snapchatted video evidence of this late at night. As they do, of course.

Fast forward a month and 24-year-old Thomas won the final major of the year, the PGA Championship at Quail Hollow in Charlotte, with a display of golf that left everyone in awe.

And as Thomas made his way to the scorer's hut, there was Spieth, with a slap on the backside to say: 'It's your turn now.' Thomas said Spieth's win at Birkdale had made him

jealous, and it is fair to suggest that these brilliant young players are driving each other forward.

The bond was never more evident than at the Presidents Cup – and you can throw Patrick Reed into that mix, too.

Friendships seem to thrive in golf, although it is not all milk and honey. In the 1920s, Gene Sarazen's contempt for Walter Hagen was well-known, Sarazen annoyed that Hagen called him 'kid'. In more recent times, the golfing gods of Nicklaus, Player and Palmer managed to compete like bulldogs by day but retain their friendships off the course, but not so much Phil Mickelson and Tiger Woods, or Tiger and Sergio Garcia for that matter.

Woods reportedly told a friend after flogging the Spaniard at the 2006 Open Championship: "I just bludgeoned Tweetybird." All of which was a reference to Garcia's all-yellow garb that day at Liverpool, and the early stages of an enmity that continues.

Woods does have many friends on tour, including Jason Day, who grew up idolising him and now leans on him for advice quite regularly. Many of the Australians hang together; notably John Senden, Greg Chalmers and Rod Pampling, who live near each other in Dallas, are all close, as are their families.

Aaron Baddeley is on a best-buddies basis with Bubba Watson nowadays, but Badds and Adam Scott have never been close, despite the fact they came through the system together. Scott beat Baddeley to win the Australian Boys' title in 1997 and 1998 but their relationship suffered when they were chosen to represent their country overseas and Baddeley elected to practise with other players, a teenaged snub that he might well regret.

Big time sport is meant to be war without the shooting, but generally you cannot say that in golf, where the duel is mostly with the course. Thomas and Spieth have been friends for years; after the former's win in North Carolina, a photograph emerged of the pair in France, representing the USA at a junior championship when they were 14, Thomas munching on a hamburger.

Thomas likes to prank Spieth. At Kapalua in Hawaii in the PGA Tour's 2017 opener, he rearranged the sign marking his pal's place in the car park with the description: 'Golden Child'. It is a description that Spieth loathes, and Thomas knows this.

Revenge was on the Texan's mind, so that when Thomas returned to his place in the car park the next day, his courtesy car had been towed. He needed no prompting to work out who was responsible, and the Golden Child description had been removed. Lesson learned.

We are so lucky to have Spieth coming to our country for the

Emirates Australian Open in November, his fourth visit in as many years, this time to defend the title he won at Royal Sydney in a playoff last year. Those who were around the amphitheatre of the 18th green will not quickly forget the lasered iron shot to four metres in the playoff, nor the putt, drilled into the back of the cup for the win. Melburnian Ash Hall, who had reached the playoff, said it for everyone that day: "I knew he'd make it."

I would love to see Thomas in Australia soon. He's small -- just 178 cm and 70 kg -- but immensely powerful in the manner of the modern golfing athlete, and like Spieth, he is classy in his demeanour as well. The Presidents Cup in 2019 at Royal Melbourne, where he will surely be a US team member, cannot come quickly enough.

What of Mr Trump? Well, he thought himself sufficiently well-qualified as a single-figure player to text Spieth after his win at Birkdale and offer his ear if the younger man needed advice on his game. He was surely joking.

But as the song goes: 'That's what friends are for.'





**If drinking isn't okay here,
why is it okay before we drive?**



play golf

two players and
a cart JUST \$79*

Ranked in Golf
Australia's
Top 100
Golf Courses



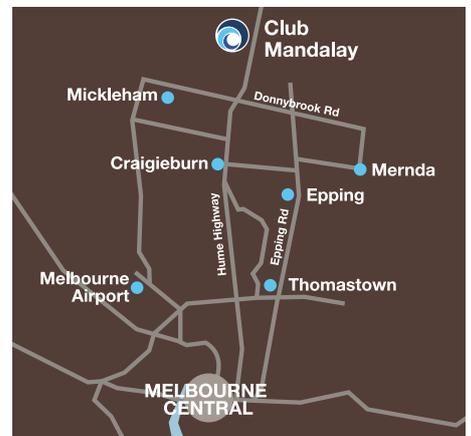
Group golf
from \$35*
per round



Club Mandalay is the latest golf course designed by 5 times British Open Champion Peter Thomson and the team at Thomson Perrett and is located just 40 minutes from Melbourne's CBD and only 20 minutes from Melbourne Airport.

Located in the northern suburb of Beveridge, just off the Hume Highway, the par 72 course measures 6285m and offers spectacular vistas, superb playing surfaces and is a must play for every golfer.

For golf reservations or further information please contact our Club Professional James Pratt on 03 9037 3700 or visit clubmandalay.com.au



Club Mandalay, 430-450 Mandalay Circuit, Beveridge, VIC 3753
T 03 9037 3700 E info@clubmandalay.com.au
clubmandalay.com.au



Proudly managed by
avid
SPORTS

Iconic Thomson Perrett Designed
**CHAMPIONSHIP
GOLF COURSE**



*Full terms and conditions available at clubmandalay.com.au