

R&A

# Developing Golf.

Sharing best practice for the benefit of the sport

ISSUE  
one



## Golf is Good: pilot health campaign

How the football icon and R&A Ambassador  
Gareth Bale teamed up with Wales Golf

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“We need to create best-in-class programmes to make it easy and appealing to take up golf. The R&A can play an important role in this endeavour.”

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one

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# Welcome.

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the first issue of Developing Golf, a key element of the golf development alliance we wish to create with affiliates globally to share best practice. This alliance also includes a new R&A Portal, increased funding support and consulting with affiliates on the ground across the year to develop the strongest activation plans, supported by R&A-created global assets.

We know – and we have the data to back it up – that golf is a healthy sport when looking at elements like mental health, strength and conditioning and cardiovascular health. The R&A has created global assets that have been tested in-market in Wales to great success: golfers who saw the campaign played significantly more golf than those who did not. These assets will be rolled out internationally in 2023.

To grow our sport, it is imperative that we promote golf to the audiences who are most likely to be receptive to the idea of playing golf. The R&A has conducted multi-country research to understand who these high-potential audiences are and which propositions about golf resonate most strongly. We will be sharing the findings and practical implications of this research at The R&A International Golf Conference in St Andrews from 25-27 April.

We need to create best-in-class programmes to make it easy and appealing to take up golf. The R&A can play an important role in this endeavour by creating a global programme that amplifies the individual affiliate campaigns. This initiative is called Golf.Golf which involves a promotional campaign featuring R&A

development ambassadors, a destination website for new golfers to be directed to affiliate beginner programmes and research-backed insights into the most successful beginner programmes. It is being tested in Scotland and will be rolled out internationally this year.

We also need to continue our efforts to encourage more women and girls to play the sport and take leading positions in the management of the golf industry. We will be creating powerful new content programming in 2023 and expanding our Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme.

Creating effective pathways and high performance programmes for elite amateur golfers internationally is important to ensure we have inspirational role models for aspiring golfers. The R&A has worked with industry experts to create templates that will help both developed and developing affiliates in this area.

Finally, creating accessible and appealing facilities that fit with the lifestyles of today's golfers is a key strategy for ensuring golf thrives in the future. The new R&A Golf It! facility in Glasgow will open this year and we plan to support the development of more facilities in the future.

We look forward to working with you on all of these exciting areas in the months ahead.



*Phil Anderson*

Chief Development Officer  
– The R&A



**R&A**  
Ambassador

# Gareth Bale.

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**The world-famous former  
footballer discusses his love  
of golf and explains how he is  
working alongside The R&A  
to promote the sport**

**Gareth Bale** is, by common consent, the greatest Welsh footballer of all time. He is also a long-time golfer who has used the sport throughout his career as a way to relax and switch off between high-profile matches. As recently as last November, he was scoring a penalty for Wales in the World Cup finals in Qatar. Now, having just announced his retirement, it is a fair bet that he will be spending more time on the golf course. In fact, when *Developing Golf* caught up with him, he was in the middle of an off-season golf break in Florida.

### **Take us back to the days when you started playing...**

There used to be a par-3 course in Cardiff, which was nothing fancy, just a normal pitch-and-putt where you turned up, you hired a 7-iron, a sand wedge and a putter and off you went. I remember my dad taking me and a couple of friends and thinking we were good – and we were terrible. But football was so dominant in my life, I was really committed to it. In the summer when the season stopped, that's when I did a few little things like tennis and golf.

Then when I was at Tottenham, there was a group of players that played. I went out on the course and just started playing from there – with a big, massive slice trying to smash the ball as hard as I could.

In football it's such a big thing, especially in England. At Tottenham it was the likes of Michael Dawson, Brad Friedel and Carlo Cudicini. We all joined a club called Abridge. That's how it started, and I just got the bug.

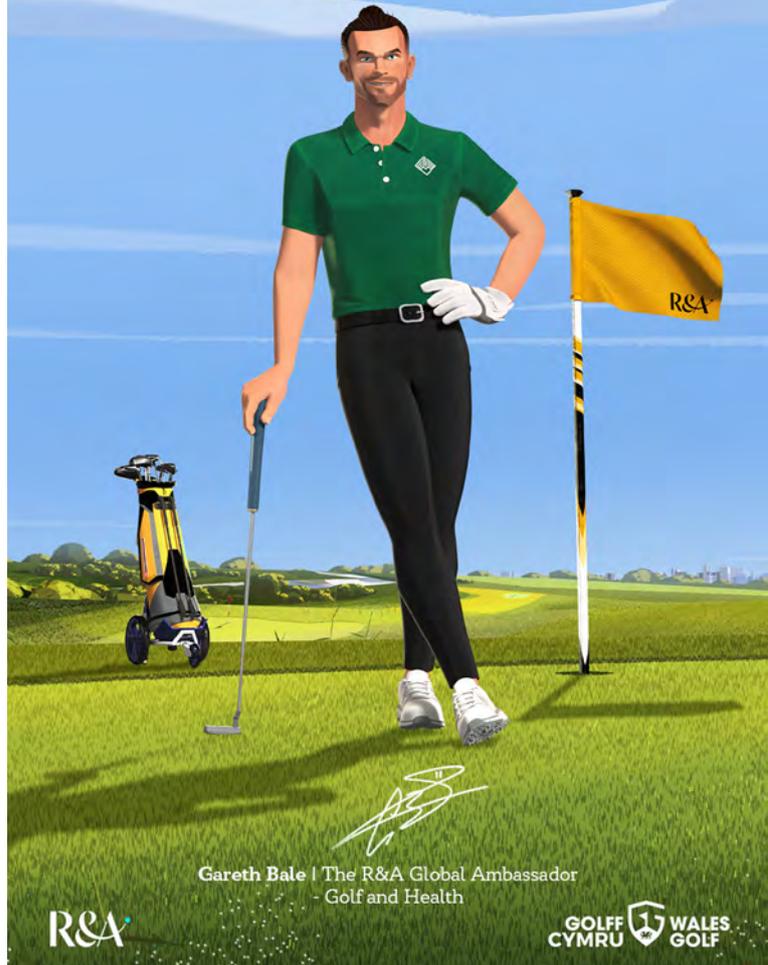
### **Your skills have developed a lot since those days – is it true you are a three handicap?**

Yes, around a three. As much as people say I play a lot of golf, I actually don't play an awful lot. It's a character that they've created. Of course, I love golf and I'm happy for the media to write about it. But I don't really get to practise an awful lot. I just enjoy the game and I enjoy practising when I can – if I can pop to the range for an hour I just love to keep ticking over.

### **Can you explain how you use golf to help you relax and take your mind off the day job?**

It's progressed over time. It's not just getting away from football – I actually really enjoy playing the sport. But in terms of using it as kind of a getaway, yes. Being in football and in the spotlight, even if you go out to the shops, people are coming up to you and taking pictures and you are just constantly in this kind of football

**no matter how  
intense your day job,  
golf is good for you.**



**“It really gives me that respite away from the pressures and the stress and it's a lot of fun which keeps me smiling as well.”**

bubble. I feel like when I go to the golf course, whether on my own or with friends, you just have three-and-a-half or four hours. You get out there, you get some fresh air, you concentrate on golf, you're not thinking about football, you're not in a bubble where people are coming and taking pictures and adding more stress on to you. It's a really nice getaway – it's you with your friends having a laugh and the golf course challenging you in a different environment. It really gives me that respite away from the pressures and the stress and it's a lot of fun, which keeps me smiling as well. It's a big hobby of mine and I think everyone will tell you hobbies away from work are very important to keep your mind fresh and keep you mentally healthy. It's been something that's been massively important for me to be able to do.

**How does preparing to take a free kick or a penalty at football compare to that opening tee shot on the golf course?**

I feel like it's slightly more nerve-racking to be hitting the first tee shot to be honest. Especially when you're in front of maybe a crowd or playing with a PGA Tour player or a DP World Tour player. It's definitely a bit more nerve-racking for me. You get that nervous energy, that adrenaline rush. I practised football since I was three years old, and I played professionally for a long time, so I've taken penalties in big situations. You trust in what you're doing. Whereas on the golf course, I don't exactly know where my ball is going to go every time. It's just a different environment, a

“**Golf is definitely something that's great for your health – four hours of walking is a very healthy thing to do.**”



3.0

**Gareth's handicap**

49.8m

**@ Instagram followers**





“When I go to the golf course, whether on my own or with friends, you get some fresh air, you concentrate on golf and you’re not in a bubble.”

different sport. Golf is more alien than football. I just find it more nerve-racking on the course and especially when you’re playing against your mates for the win.

**Could you touch on the difference between an instinctive sport like football and golf where you have so much time?**

I always found that whenever I was playing well in football, I never used to think about anything. I was on the pitch, concentrating on where the ball was, where I need to be. But when I received the ball, I was never really thinking about anything, it was all just instinctive.

Whereas when you are standing over any golf shot, you’re thinking about your takeaway, you’re thinking about your strike, you think about the wind. If you pause for too long, you know that it’s not going to be as good a shot as if you keep to your routine and keep that athleticism going in your swing where you don’t pause. You keep moving slightly to keep your rhythm going.

They are just two completely different sports. One’s obviously reactive, and the other’s very static, with a lot of mental thinking. I think golf

helped me in football. I was able to be a bit more patient if I hadn’t played well so far in a game or the ball hadn’t come to me. I could stay a bit more patient because in golf, if you’re not playing well, if you get frustrated, you play worse normally.

It taught me that sometimes you’ve just got to wait for the moment and be patient and normally then you’re able to play better.

**Why should people get into golf?**

The first thing is that every new player wishes they started playing it a long time before they did. So that’s one thing.

It’s a lot of different reasons for different age groups. I wish I started playing when I was younger, because you get to be a bit more social with your friends. Playing football, you don’t really talk to anyone. When you’re a bit older, and you haven’t necessarily got a hobby, or you’re not really going to the gym, golf is definitely something that’s great for your health. Four hours of walking is a very healthy thing to do. A lot of adults probably don’t get as much exercise as they need because they have

# 11

**Gareth's preferred shirt number on the football pitch**

# 111

**International appearances**

# 41

**International goals**

# £85m

**Transfer fee to Real Madrid**

busy lives, they have jobs, they have stuff to do and going out on the golf course with some friends and playing for four hours is very healthy to boost your physical fitness to build some capacity and potentially lose weight.

A lot of people are stuck in the house – they don't have a hobby, they don't have anything to do. On the mental side, you need to keep your brain stimulated. To be able to go out for four hours on a golf course – and not necessarily four hours, you could do nine holes, you could do six holes, whatever it may be – to go out with some friends to get in the fresh air, to get off your sofa, is great. It's important to get out and free your mind and have some fun. I think it definitely goes a long way for your mental wellbeing and also your physical wellbeing. ●

## **Gareth and The R&A**

"I've always wanted to try and promote golf in whatever way I can. I always try and do stuff back in Wales. We did a festival of sport last year, which we've been planning for a few years, trying to get more kids into golf and create an environment where kids can come to try other sports to see if they like them. A lot of people just play one sport and don't necessarily try the others. We tried to put on an event where there was a golf tournament, but there was stuff to do for football, rugby, table tennis and tennis. We were trying to put an event on where kids can come out for the day and try different sports and see if they enjoy them. If they do, then they can find programmes to get involved and start from there. We were doing the golf side.

"I spoke with The R&A and Wales Golf, and things just kind of progressed. I want to try and help golf in Wales. They obviously promote golf around the world, and the relationship started like that.

"I often speak with Niall Horan and Mark McDonnell at Modest. They were already involved with The R&A. So speaking with them got me introduced to The R&A, and then it was obvious that we both had similar ideas. With my platform, in terms of my social media and who I can reach, it was good to be able to use that platform to try and promote golf, especially in Wales. And it was just a partnership that was both heading in the same direction and we could help each other. Obviously, it's an honour to be an ambassador for The R&A. They're an incredible organisation. Just to have a relationship with them is something great to be involved in. Hopefully, there's a lot of stuff we can do together in the future."

# golf is good

## Golf and Health.

It is seven years since The R&A sought to actively raise awareness of the health benefits of golf. The project has developed on a global basis and last year saw a pilot in partnership with Wales Golf

**GOLFF  
CYMRU**



# Good for you.



## The scientific research behind the golf and health pilot campaign

The **British Heart Foundation (BHF)** has recommended that everyone should aim to do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week – so a brisk round of golf is ideal.

Scientific research has indicated that golf, as a physical activity, can help prevent and treat 40 major chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart attacks, stroke, breast and colon cancer, depression and dementia.

The sport can also help strength and balance, improve quality of life and provide aerobic exercise, while the social benefits of playing also contribute to a healthy lifestyle, including social interaction and regular connection with the outdoors.

Phil Anderton, Chief Development Officer at the R&A, said, “The sport can provide a fantastic opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to have fun, get fit and socialise with family and friends – something that is important in modern society. We need to position golf as a leisure pursuit that can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone and encourage advocacy for the sport as a moderate intensity physical activity by government agencies, public health bodies and health professionals.”

The key drivers of the campaign are:

- Mental health
- Golf can keep you physically active for life
- Golf improves co-ordination, balance, muscle strength and endurance
- Golf helps you connect with friends and family
- Relaxing outdoors and interacting with people reduces stress/anxiety

73%

**Current on-course golfers who are likely to play more because of the campaign**

86%

**Say the campaign has increased their awareness of golf’s health benefits**

### Three campaign goals

- Encourage interest in participation
- Improve the sport’s image
- Increase advocacy for golf by decision makers

## Golf and health: A timeline

2016

**The R&A aims to raise awareness of the health benefits of golf**

2018

**First International Congress on Golf and Health held in London**

20

**Summary report on Golf and Health 2020 – is p**

# 65%

of current golfers who had seen golf and health advertising had played more golf than usual in 2022...



...compared to

# 48%

of current golfers who hadn't seen advertising

## 20

port – called  
health 2016-  
published

## 2022

Pilot campaign featuring  
R&A Ambassador Gareth  
Bale launched in Wales

## 2022

Second International  
Congress on Golf and  
Health staged in Edinburgh

Case  
Study



GOLFF CYMRU  WALES GOLF

# The Golf is Good campaign.

Wales Golf was invited to pilot The R&A's campaign to link golf with health benefits in the summer of 2022



**Hannah McAllister** is the Chief Executive of Wales Golf.

It is a campaign that has lodged in the public's imagination – for both golfers and non-golfers alike. Wales Golf had the good fortune to enjoy a longstanding relationship with the former football star and R&A Ambassador, Gareth Bale. The Golf is Good pilot campaign tapped into Bale's worldwide fame and hero status in his home country to encourage existing golfers to play more and to plant the seed to non-golfers of taking up the game.

It represents a powerful example of how The R&A can work in partnership with a federation in its local market for the good of the game.

We asked the Chief Executive of Wales Golf, Hannah McAllister, to tell the story of the campaign from their perspective.

**Tell us how the campaign started from a Wales Golf perspective?**

I received a call from The R&A outlining it would like to pilot a large campaign to showcase the health benefits of golf with a governing body that is really connected to their golf clubs, and who could analyse the impact of the campaign.

The research said that if non-golfers and golfers were more aware of the health benefits they were more likely to take up the game, or to play more.

We had an existing relationship with Gareth Bale and linked The R&A up with him. The research said that if the messages could be endorsed by a high-profile sportsperson or celebrity, it would really boost the campaign and get the message out to a wider audience.

At Wales Golf, we want to get our existing golfers playing more, but we also want more people to be playing and from a wider network of people to increase our diversity.

So we were really excited by that.

**What were The R&A able to bring to the project?**

As we're a relatively small federation, we don't have a communications team, it's just one person. The R&A said that all of the resources would be produced for us. For part of our population their first language is Welsh, so they also supported us, which really went down well with both the clubs and the Welsh public. They also supported us with finding a local agency to help us activate the campaign.

There is absolutely no way we could have invested that much income into producing those



**Golf in Wales**

**142**

Golf clubs

**53,000**

Registered golfers

**17**

Staff members

**1**

Staff working in the communications department

**“We're so proud to be associated with a high-quality campaign that really summarises and visually outlines in a really attractive way all of golf's health benefits.”**

high-quality resources with the Gareth Bale assets, the infographics and animations.

The R&A can connect. They provide the resources. And they can share good practice.

### What did Wales Golf need to do?

We've got 99% engagement with our clubs and we have a golfer database as well. We're also connected with the Welsh Government and the sporting sector. What we were able to bring is that connectivity to the golfers and the golf clubs – and also a team that's really keen to promote the wider health messages to the community.

### How important was Gareth Bale's involvement?

We already had a relationship with Gareth, so that was great. What was fantastic was that he has a huge social media following and had committed to posting the campaign message.

If a federation has somebody they utilise – not necessarily a golfer, but somebody from sport or a social media influencer – I think The R&A would support them in putting that person into animation form.

We can also use these assets again this year. We now know what creates an impact and what doesn't so we can roll things out locally in a different way from how we might have done previously.

### Can you explain how the pilot worked in practice?

The major area we had to work on was to make sure the pilot benefitted the golf clubs, the golfers and also those coming into the sport. We wanted to produce an easy call to action for each of those audiences.

We have Flexi Club, where non-members of golf clubs can become part of a community and gain an official handicap. We have New to Golf, which is a scheme run by 50% of the golf clubs in Wales, where new golfers can access lessons and there's a pathway into golf membership. We liaised with the PGA to ensure their Find a Golf Lesson call to action was on our website. We also have an area where people could look at all the golf clubs in Wales and contact them if they wanted to

“ We had an existing relationship with Gareth Bale and linked The R&A up with him. The research said that if the messages could be endorsed by a high-profile sports person or celebrity, it would really boost the campaign and get the message out to a wider audience. ”

For more information about golf and health promotional activities within your region, please contact your respective R&A development manager or director. Golf and health will also be a key topic for discussion at The R&A International Golf Conference in St Andrews from 25-27 April.





“What we were able to bring is that connectivity to the golfers and the golf clubs – and also a team that’s really keen to promote the wider health messages to the community.”

play. So people had a way of knowing how to act on the campaign.

We had to commit to weekly meetings, because there were a lot of partners coming together, and to ensuring that we could get the key messages out to our network and connect with the golf clubs as well.

The R&A helped us provide resources to golf clubs. There was a club information pack and also promotional resources like A-frame banners that the golf clubs could place on tables as well as drinks mats.

We also had to connect with Gareth Bale.

When we launched, we went to a golf club with local press there to hear from new golfers to bring the campaign to life.

At the Cazoo Wales Open, we connected with the British Heart Foundation to give the campaign credibility and share it with their networks. We were also able to get the animation on the public screens at the event, which was really striking.

**How proud are you of the campaign?**

I'm so proud to be associated with a high-quality campaign that really summarises and visually outlines in a really attractive way all of golf's health benefits.

Golf is not just a benefit to the sport sector. We have a part to play in the impact that we have on people's mental health and wellbeing as well. I was really proud when the campaign was shown on Sky Sports.

Now The R&A has helped us produce this campaign, they can share it to their affiliates and we can all benefit from that overall investment.

It was great for Wales Golf to be involved in this fantastic health campaign – and it was noticed by other sports across Wales too.

**What difference has it made to your organisation?**

Understanding how to collaborate with creative agencies has taught us a lot. We've learnt additional skills that we can roll out within our team.

Being able to record the impact has allowed us to appreciate the worth of investing into good, paid advertising. We wouldn't have been able to afford that ourselves.

Having a research company, like Sporting Insights, involved to record the impact from the golfers themselves, proved to us and my board that the investment was actually worthwhile. ●

# Securing golf's future means making bold choices.

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**The pandemic taught us that adapting to change and seeking a fresh approach can make golf more attractive to new players**

**Two** years of solid growth in golf club membership, catalysed by a global pandemic, came as a very welcome surprise after years of steadily declining numbers. In business, the pandemic necessitated adaptations in working patterns, triggered an explosion in online trading and saw companies pivoting to remote communications. If you needed to see the whites of their eyes to do a deal, you had to see them on a screen. Golf has survived. It has thrived. But if it doesn't now adjust to a world that has materially changed, the halcyon days of growth will soon be a distant memory. If years of pre-pandemic decline taught us anything, it's that the old ways aren't always the best. So where are the solutions?

## **All golf is golf**

Objectively, golf looks like a big investment: the cost of club membership, equipment and coaching can add up to prohibitive sums before you've even hit a ball. But there are other routes into golf that are less financially onerous. From driving ranges to simulators to crazy golf: why should these forms of golf not be embraced and encouraged? Over the next few years,

Scottish Golf will further validate and legitimise participation in all kinds of golf. A happy side effect may be that these activities become gateways to on-course golf. This strategy sits alongside bold new initiatives such as Golf.Golf from The R&A – a selection of new programmes, delivered in golf clubs, that encourage newcomers to the sport and offer a more holistic, welcoming experience.

## **New markets**

The value of Scotland's golf clubs cannot be overstated. And it is in the vicinities of the club that this value is most acutely felt. Clubs bring people together: they create local jobs, community cohesion and continuity in families whose membership spans generations. Their survival is essential and financial resilience is key. That means more proactive courting of the independent and visitor golfer markets, but beyond the high-season international golf tours. Smaller clubs can tap into a rich domestic visitor market. Not only can they ask for higher green fees but secondary sales are typically higher from visitors, whether through the club bar or pro shop. To attract this audience, clubs must ensure

571

Affiliated golf clubs in Scotland

210,012

Golf club members in Scotland

£4.17m

Scottish Golf's 2021 income

their venues, their brand and their local partners, are effectively communicating an ethos of openness and friendliness. It is an opportunity too profitable to miss.

#### Digital and Technology

To date, Scottish Golf is the only governing body outside the Antipodes to offer a comprehensive club management tech system to every affiliated golf club. It wasn't an easy sell. People questioned whether a governing body should even be in tech. But as we now stare down the barrel of a cost-of-living crisis and golf clubs

“As we stare down the barrel of a cost-of-living crisis and golf clubs scan the P&L for efficiencies, golf's governing body in Scotland is delivering real-world economic solutions.”

scan the P&L for efficiencies, golf's governing body in Scotland is delivering real-world economic solutions.

#### Representation

Golf is to be celebrated, not least for its uniqueness as a sport that can be played well into old age. However, Scotland's playing population is not truly representative. Indicative numbers from female junior participation this year are encouraging, but the fight for greater diversity does not stop there. Over the next few years you will see Scottish Golf establish important strategic partnerships that redress this imbalance. There is so much on the agenda here: creating more competitive opportunities for disabled golfers, discussing the sensitive issue of gender in sport, and much more. Golf belongs to us all and by bringing it to new audiences we can ensure its continuing success. ●



**Martin Gilbert**  
is the Chair of Scottish Golf





Case  
Study

# Getting women into golf.

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The Danish Golf Federation created a framework to give hundreds of women the chance to try golf for the first time





**Jonas Meyer** is Head of Development at the Danish Golf Federation, which has 186 member clubs.



His colleague, **Sarah-Cathrine Wandso**, is a Development consultant, with one of her areas of specialism being women.

**The R&A** supported the Danish Golf Federation in creating an effective, targeted social media advertising campaign for a series of eight-week programmes at golf clubs across the country. Each session included golf on the course as well as an additional activity designed to establish social bonds between the participants. By the end of the programme, the aim was for the women to be equipped with the confidence to play without supervision. A remarkable 75 per cent of the women have continued to play after their programmes concluded.

#### Why did you target female golfers?

**Jonas Meyer:** "In a lot of our social media lead-generating activities, we saw that the majority signing up were women. Especially on Facebook, we saw that 60 per cent were women. Yet within the golf clubs, it is 28 per cent females. So we saw a change pattern.

"In Sweden, they have done a lot of 50-50 – trying to change the entire setup around the golf club in order to get more female leadership. We felt we should start with recruitment so we had a conversation with The R&A saying if we should do something together, this could be a place to start. It's not only Denmark – Holland and Finland are also involved. We wanted to do a national programme using social media in order to attract women golfers.

"We knew that the social part of a programme, gluing the women together in a social community, is a lot more important than anything else.

"We introduced it to the Danish golf clubs that we wanted to test it as a pilot in March 2022 and ended up with 33 clubs participating, which is 18 per cent."

#### How did you structure the programme?

**Sarah-Cathrine Wandso:** "We found out that the programme should be around eight weeks. That was best for all the helpers and all the women. Once each week they practice and once each week they go and play on the course. They do that from the beginning, because we want



## Golf in Denmark

2.8%

Percentage of Danes who play golf

75%

Participants who continued playing golf after the programme had finished

186

Golf clubs in Denmark

28%



72%

The ratio of female to male golfers in Denmark



them to be ready as golfers as soon as the eight weeks are gone. What we found out was that the social part was almost more important than the golf part. If we have them socially, they will keep playing golf.

"We have dance lessons, we have mind sessions, yoga, we walked to visit the greenkeepers just to see what they were doing. Some clubs close to the beach went swimming at night and had a sauna.

"We wanted them to do something after every session to make sure that they were together having fun. After the eight weeks we had a full group of women who wanted to keep playing golf – 75 per cent of all the women play golf today. We try to make them a group by giving them a polo or sweatshirt and a bag with the logo on.

"We wanted to make the women feel special – it's their night out and it's okay to have fun. They're perhaps not just a mum. And this is a place for them to be."

#### **How was it received by the clubs?**

**S-CW:** "One of the fun parts is when you have 20 women in pink shirts dancing on the golf course,

people notice and talk about it. We've managed to create a group of women who are actually allowed to be there. They feel like it's okay for them to be there because there are many of them. All the places where we have tried this, the club think it's a nice way to get new members because they have lots of humour, they are happy, they are enjoying themselves and they are good ambassadors for the club."

**JM:** "The boards of the golf clubs really fell in love with this programme. They can say that they're actually trying to change the golf club and the environment from the inside, from the bottom up. We try to create a group that feel safe and comfortable. Normally, when you start out in a Danish golf club, being a woman, for every time you see one female, you're going to see three or four males. We want to make sure that you meet people that look like and resemble you."

#### **Explain how you found the women**

**JM:** "Half through social media. We targeted locally and only women on Facebook within a 20-kilometre radius of the specific golf club. The



“We have dance lessons, mind sessions, yoga, and we walked to visit the greenkeepers just to see what they were doing. Some clubs close to the beach went swimming at night and had a sauna.”

attendees signed up on Facebook and they knew the content of the programme. The price is £150, which is quite a high price actually in Denmark. But at the same time there was so much value in the programmes they were willing to pay for it. Each club had 20 women signing up. The other half through word of mouth. So it's a national campaign but done locally.

**S-CW:** "We helped the clubs find the women and we helped them to make the programme. They have to find their own volunteers and their own social activities. So every single club had their own programme. We spent every single penny on the women – no money went to the golf club. It gave them a glass of wine, a polo shirt, fun activities, sandwiches. Some golf clubs have big restaurants and can make special evenings and wine tastings. Some of them don't really have anything and they just do picnics. The value proposition for the Federation was that we paid for the advertisements, we helped them with manuals, offered consultants, we did workshops. We helped them create the structure and the programme and the setup, but they paid the expenses themselves except for the marketing."

#### **How do you control the quality of the product?**

**S-CW:** "I tried to be there as much as I could. I was there for meetings. I tried to visit them during the programme. Of course, it's not very easy when you have 33 clubs. We had some workshops where we tried to give them the energy, the power, the excitement that I want them to have to prepare them for this. So that's the best way we could do it."

**JM:** "What is unique is the voluntary set-up. They really want to do something for those women because they are in the same situation as they were. Most volunteers can relate to being a new golfer in a male-dominated world. It has nothing to do with how to grip a golf club or swing it – it's all about social relationships. "As long as they feel the energy, then I think we can move forward and have more clubs participating. The overall recruitment of golfers had more women coming in, even though it was only 17 per cent of the clubs participating. Our belief is that you recruit as you look. So if we can change the look from the inside, then we will also be able to recruit more women, not only in the clubs participating, but in general." ●

**Data Source**

Sporting Insights:  
The R&A New  
Golfer Programmes,  
Qualitative Focus  
Groups, 2021



# How to make golf more appealing.

**A new piece of research spoke to focus groups of non-golfers about perceptions of the sport – and what might change them**

## **What are the perceptions that put people off golf?**

- It is a game dominated by older, white and wealthy men
- It doesn't present itself as a female-friendly sport
- It is elitist and therefore unwelcoming

## **What are the perceived benefits of playing golf?**

- Spending time with friends
- Spending time outdoors
- It's good for mental health

## **What are the key motivations for trying a new sport?**

- Being offered lessons
- The chance to try without any real commitment
- Trying something new on holiday if facilities are available

## **What are the main factors that would increase golf's appeal?**

- Play up the social element, as well as the 19th hole!
- Imagery that shows friends having fun together on the course
- Provide and emphasise alternative, shorter ways to play than a full round
- Make clear beginner programmes are: exclusively for beginners; played with others of a similar age; only require general sports attire

## **How can we make beginner programmes more appealing?**

- Try to ensure that beginners play with others in a similar age range
- Play and learn in small groups – the ideal size is four to six people
- Ensure we encourage friends to come together and spend time together



# Increasing junior participation.

**The Thailand Golf Association is working hard to find the next Attaya Thitikul and Kiradech Aphibarnrat**

**Thailand** has produced many outstanding golfers, including Attaya Thitikul, Kiradech Aphibarnrat, Ariya and Moriya Jutanugarn, Thongchai Jaidee, Patti Tavatanakit, Jazz Janewattananond and, most recently, Ratchanon Chantanawat.

The Thailand Golf Association (TGA) sits under the Sports Authority of Thailand with responsibility for the development of elite golfers. It first received funding from The R&A six years ago. Operating from headquarters in Bangkok, the TGA delivers golf across six regions and has five core members of staff.

We spoke to TGA official Jittra Siamwala, and Keng Songyot, TGA's Director of Junior Development, about the association's work.

## **What does the TGA deliver?**

To create a pathway for children into the sport, the TGA supported each of its regions to deliver golf camps for children aged nine to 17 to help develop local young talent, with the aims of introducing new children to the sport and supporting continued elite level success.

Typically two-weeks long and delivered by local golf professionals, the camps run between April and June, and the regions are given autonomy over how they plan and deliver their camps.

The camps have three main objectives:

1. Basic swing analysis to help junior golfers understand their swing fundamentals

2. Short game development to help lower their scores
3. Understanding the importance of fitness, nutrition and positive attitudes for golf

### **What is their strategy?**

Golf is a popular sport in Thailand. Most Thai children are aware of the sport, but whether they end up participating or not often depends on whether their family encourages their involvement. Elite success can depend on the level of support a family is able to offer.

The TGA has identified two key benefits for young people who become elite golfers.

Firstly, they can use their golf skills to apply for college scholarships abroad – often in the USA or UK. Secondly, for talented juniors who don't turn professional, there remains an opportunity to change their career path into the wider golf business – which is growing in Thailand.

### **What was the outcome of the activity?**

Since 2016, golf camps have been run across the six regions of Thailand, with 250 children taking part in 2022, and places at the camps regularly selling out in advance. As well as introducing new players to golf, the camps also help identify golfers who may go on to represent Thailand.

### **What advice would the TGA offer?**

Both Jittra and Keng attribute various factors to the success of elite Thai golfers to date.

Firstly, while the support of parents and family is inescapable, those players also demonstrated discipline in their practice routine and worked incredibly hard in pursuit of their goals.

Secondly, the TGA also played a significant role in their development, offering financial support for any players representing Thailand in major events, such as the Asian Games, while Aphibarnrat flew the flag at the Olympic Games too, all with the support of the TGA. Some also played in The R&A's Junior Open.

### **What would the TGA like to do next?**

The TGA limit the capacity of the camps to ensure a quality experience. They would like to expand the camps to introduce more young people to golf. The association would also like to provide Thai children with more opportunities to participate in tournaments, not just for the sporting competition but also for the potential educational opportunities that arise from overseas college golf scholarships. Finally, the TGA would like to continue to develop the Singha Thailand World Golf Championship. ●



## **Golf in Thailand**

# 247

Golf courses

# 15,076

Registered players

# 5

Members of staff at  
the TGA

# 250

Children taking part in  
golf camps each year

“As well as introducing new players to golf, the camps also help identify talented golfers who may go on to represent Thailand in the future.”

“ We have some great people, and we are committed to working with our affiliates around the world.”

# Meet The R&A team: Kevin Barker.

## The R&A's Director – Golf Development, on the changing face of the organisation and what really gives him job satisfaction

**Kevin Barker** has been working for The R&A since 2000, first in the Rules department and now as Director – Golf Development. A strong golfer in his own right, he plays off a handicap of one and is a member of the St Andrews Golf Club.

He works with all major stakeholders in Great Britain and Ireland, and is a trustee at the Golf Foundation, the organisation that currently receives the biggest financial support from The R&A, presently £500,000 per annum. He also has responsibility for Africa and leads on golf and health, as well as golf for the disabled.

### Tell us about your background

I was a lawyer before I joined The R&A in 2000. I worked in the Rules department for 17 years, helping with the revision of Rules, refereeing events, answering queries and conducting Rules education. Then I moved over to Golf Development.

### Describe your current role

I am a Golf Development Director, with regional responsibility for GB&I and Africa. I also have strategic responsibility for the GolfSixes League,

golf and health benefits and golf for the disabled.

In terms of GB&I, a lot of the job involves working with the home nation associations and The PGA, BIGGA, the GCMA and the Golf Foundation. I'm a trustee of the Golf Foundation and am on their board. We work very closely with them. It's about collaboration, trying to find economies of scale, trying to find projects that we can all align on. I think we all want to see golf develop and grow because then we all benefit.

Africa is arguably a more developing continent in terms of golf compared to others, although golf has a long and proud tradition in many of the countries. There is a real mix of emerging, developing and developed golfing nations, and what you can do with a small country in Africa may be very different from what it would be with Kenya or South Africa. It's trying to assess what their strategy is and how that aligns with our strategy and how we can best assist.

GolfSixes League is an initiative that the Golf Foundation started in GB&I a few years ago following the tour event of the same name. This junior version has been hugely successful and we've invested heavily in it in recent years to expand it and also to roll it out



## About Kevin

**Born:** Glasgow

**My first job:** Allied Distillers, in the production side

**Personal:** Married with two teenage boys and a golden retriever

**You might not know:** I love gardening on a summer's day with the radio on or a podcast and a beer

**Favourite sports team:** Celtic

across continental Europe in collaboration with the Confederation of Professional Golf and with the support of some Ryder Cup European Development Trust funding. We think it's a really good initiative, targeted at juniors.

We conducted a very successful golf and health campaign pilot in Wales last summer and are looking to roll out those resources to others this year. In the area of golf for the disabled, I'm delighted that we will be staging the inaugural G4D Open at Woburn in May and we're looking to establish a much closer relationship with EDGA so that they can provide the expertise, resources and guidance that we need.

### What's the most satisfying part of your role?

When you look at how golf can make a difference on an individual basis, that's what I find most satisfying. To give you an example, we have been piloting a social prescription programme in Fife in Scotland, so you could go along to your doctor, and they'd say you need to take some more exercise, or that you're suffering from stress and anxiety.

Rather than prescribing you some medicine they would refer you to go and play golf. It was great to hear the participants' stories, in terms of how

golf had helped them with mental wellbeing, for example. When you listen to them talk, you realise that golf can make a difference to people's lives.

### Sum up what The R&A means to you

The R&A has grown hugely and has changed with the times. At their heart, the people within the organisation want to make a difference. We're passionate about what we do. We have some great championships, we have some great initiatives, we have some great people and we are committed to working with our affiliates around the world. It's a good organisation to work for and one respected around the world. ●

**Kevin Barker**

Director – Golf Development



# R&A



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