



Women in Golf
Leadership Development
Programme



Graduate Story

Amelia Lewis

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In the summer of 2019, The R&A launched the Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme, part of the organisation's ongoing commitment to the Women in Golf Charter.

With huge opportunities to grow golf globally through the increased participation of women and girls at all levels on and off the course, there remains a significant focus to help drive a more inclusive culture worldwide.

A second group of talented women have since graduated from the programme, learning, developing and growing as individuals in their chosen field – a feat even more impressive given the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Amelia Lewis, Regional Manager UK at Players 1st, was among the second group and here she shares her story of her experiences and how she has benefitted...

25 ● The number of weeks in 2020 that I spent training for two marathons that I have yet to even see a start line. Which is why I am unashamedly proud to have graduated from the other big commitment I made last year.

My background.

With a background in sports marketing and sponsorship, I had enjoyed the most recent five years with Two Circles, a data driven sports consultancy. This is where my interest and passion for behavioural and attitudinal analytics really took off. Also, as an enthusiastic (but very amateur) golfer myself, I organised the inaugural company golf day, and it became my personal mission to increase the female participation in future events.

My desire to work within golf was the cause of sending a speculative email to a newly-engaged preferred partner of England Golf called Players 1st. Established in Denmark in 2012, the leading software business provides golf and sports clubs a platform in which to customise and launch customer experience surveys, and access real time results and feedback. Having anticipated an opening for a UK-based role to service this partnership, I did everything I could to ensure I was considered if a role came to fruition.



Amelia with Georgia Hall and Morten Bisgaard, CEO of Players 1st

Applying for the programme.

I had only been working in the golf industry for nine months before, somewhat ambitiously, applying for The R&A's Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme (WIGLDP). A LinkedIn connection was part of cohort one, but I was unsure if I had the required experience or credentials to be considered. Thankfully, I did!

One of the main reasons the WIGLDP appealed to me was to continue to grow my network and learn from others across the industry. It was also an opportunity to realise my personal mission to be directly involved in driving the presence of women in golf forwards. Players 1st became a proud signatory of the Women in Golf Charter, led by The R&A, in 2019.

Part of something special.

The onboarding day took place at Royal Mid Surrey Golf Club. As a dual commitment from both delegates and sponsors, the sessions took place alongside our Line Managers, with the focus on effective communication, and awareness of methods to support and challenge to drive performance. It was during this that I realised we were part of something special.

Since then, I've been fortunate to have enjoyed two fantastic days at the Home of Golf in St Andrews, despite Storm Dennis' best efforts to prevent this from happening. The group bonded through a mix of practical, theory and reflective sessions. Pushing us out of our comfort zones, discovering our personality traits and creating our own leadership purpose. The delivery of some great resources, theories and tools and feedback equipped us for the remainder of our journey. Little did we know that Lockdown 1 was about to shake our world's just a few short weeks later.

As I reflect on my personal journey, recent coaching sessions have provided some immediate developments. Encouraging me to take risks, become more aware of the way I react to certain situations and how I can positively develop from different outcomes, good and bad. It's also okay to know what I don't know. I have heard this a lot in leadership podcasts, and whilst these are some of the greatest leaders, entrepreneurs and experts in their fields, this is a great leveller in attitude to aspire to.

Working remotely.

The remaining course schedule was adapted and delivered remotely, and we were still able to tackle the project element of the programme. Working in a small working group, our recommendations would form the basis of The R&A's future considerations of establishing a formalised WIGLDP alumni. The group were completely committed to the brief, and our regular team meetings had a huge impact on the way I handled much of the uncertainty of 2020.

The group flourished once we started to consciously observe our personality traits and enabled us to work with our strengths and weaknesses, as individuals and as a group. Delivery of the project recommendations was one of the key milestones and highlights for me across the programme.



Cohort 2 during their Virtual Graduation

As the formal elements of the programme wound down, we continue to be inspired from the mentoring sessions. I already know that the honest and reflective conversations will continue to benefit my future growth and ambitions, both personally and professionally. And as I continue to explore development opportunities with my Line Manager, Morten Bisgaard, CEO, he shares these thoughts on his experience:

“The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do”, once said by Steve Jobs, but fits The R&A's WIGLDP perfectly. I believe that if we really want to change the game of golf we have to start from within and the WIGLDP is a solid investment in the future. Players 1st are proud to be a signatory of the Women in Golf Charter and I cannot recommend the programme highly enough.”



Amelia's certificate of achievement and recognition for her work

Graduation.

Along with the delegates from cohort one of the programme, we were able to graduate together virtually, and I am extremely pleased to hear that a third programme has been confirmed. I am sure there will continue to be many other happy graduates in the years to come.

It was great that Georgia Hall, the former AIG Women's Open Champion, came to the onboarding of the second cohort, and joined at the end of the graduation to offer her congratulations.

It's been a privilege to be a part of this programme, alongside such an ambitious group and delivered by a brilliant team. I can honestly say that I continue to develop from these experiences and am now more motivated than ever to continue my mission to inspire future female golfers, peers, and industry leaders in this very special sport.

Programme overview.

“It has been great to see 20 women so far graduate through the WIGLDP. Amelia, like all the women on both programmes, has really embraced the learning and been able to put it into practice. They have all received strong support from their Line Managers, as well as being part of a network learning and supporting each other.

“To illustrate the impact of the WIGLDP programme to date, over 50% of the women involved in group one are now in more senior roles, while six in the second group have either been promoted or been retained within their organisations during a period of change.

“During COVID-19, the second group were determined to complete the programme. The challenge was trying to develop some elements remotely, to ensure we could still deliver the same quality and have the same impact. The group really embraced the challenge of working on the programme and continuing their journey online. We were actually able to facilitate an even better session with their Line Managers doing it virtually, so it has afforded us a lot of learning around what is possible. Ultimately, we now have a regular programme, a blended option and a fully virtual option, which is a benefit from the challenges we have overcome in delivering the programme.

“I was convinced that this programme was needed, having spoken to many women working in sport, and in golf. We have afforded women the opportunity to develop the professional skills that are needed in leadership positions and to maximise their future potential. Not only have The R&A supported their progression, we have put a mechanism in place to give them all something to lean on through the networks created. We now look forward to seeing the women progress in their careers with interest.”

Jackie Davidson

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – GOLF DEVELOPMENT AT THE R&A



Jackie Davidson, Assistant Director – Golf Development at The R&A

The R&A's Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme is open to signatories of the Women in Charter and is aimed at supporting the development and progression of women who have the potential to become future leaders within the golf industry.



Each individual is sponsored by a senior manager within their team/organisation, who also must give their commitment to engaging in the planned sessions. The schedule and recruitment process for the next programme will be released in early March.

For more information, please [email](#) Jackie at The R&A.