

(sent to Falkirk Herald)

Junior golf programme up and running at Bonnybridge Golf Club

Ten Denny Primary School Children are amongst the first in Falkirk to enjoy golf lessons at a local club following the recent formation of the Falkirk Junior Golf Partnership, a joining of forces between clubgolf, Scotland's junior national golf strategy, and Falkirk Council's Active Schools and Sports Development Team.

Between January and April, P5 children in four of Falkirk's eight school clusters got to grips with the multi-coloured clubs, rubberised balls and Velcro targets of firstclubgolf, the strategy's introductory game. Taught in school by link workers, the six-week course has been designed as a safe and exciting introduction to the game for nine year olds.

Last week, Bonnybridge Golf Club, one of four local clubs signed up to the programme, opened its doors to children from Denny Primary who enjoyed their school golf experience and chose to progress to the second level of the player development pathway.

"Golf requires young recruits and so we are delighted that these children decided to come here and play," said Hamish Mullen from Bonnybridge, one of the Club's three fully qualified volunteer coaches.

"We are in clubgolf for the long term and our hope is that these children will go on to become members."

The fact that as many as half of Denny Primary's initial group of 20 clubgolfers elected to move on to take lessons at the Club is testimony to the popularity of the game amongst children. Lesson 1 of the clubgolf's Stage 1 syllabus at Bonnybridge covered the fundamentals putting and chipping. The twelve-week course will teach every aspect of the game including rules and etiquette.

"Everybody enjoyed Monday night's coaching," said Mr Mullen. "The coaches are very positive and are determined to keep it going; the children were very interested and attentive. They are all very good and one young girl showed exceptional potential."

Falkirk Carnmuirs, Falkirk Tryst and Polmont Golf Clubs will soon join Bonnybridge in giving local children access to their courses, and if a fraction of the 200 children in Falkirk who experienced firstclubgolf this year sign up they will have their hands full.

"Having clubs like Bonnybridge on board, who have done very well in finding members willing to become coaches, is a big move forwards," said Active Schools Co-ordinator, Elaine Brierley.

"The children loved the firstclubgolf equipment and we are delighted that half of the group which started the game at school have decided to move on to the Club.

"Most of these children have never had the opportunity to play golf or experience this environment before. But now there is a pathway in place for the kids to progress and they are clearly loving it."

Notes for editors:

- clubgolf is a partnership between the Scottish Golf Union, the Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association, the Professional Golfers' Association, the Golf Foundation and **sportscotland**. The strategy has been developed as a direct result of the Scottish Executive's commitment to introduce every nine-year-old child in Scotland to the game by 2009.

- clubgolf is funded by the Scottish Executive which has committed £500,000 per year to the scheme through **sportscotland** until 2009.

- As Scotland's national junior golf strategy, clubgolf is backed by Scotland's most famous golfers, Paul Lawrie, Sandy Lyle, Catriona Matthew, Colin Montgomerie, and Scotland's First Minister, Jack McConnell, MSP and Sports Minister, Patricia Ferguson, MSP. It aims to provide new opportunities in the game for every child in the country and to increase participation in the sport by adopting a totally new approach to the development of junior golf.

- clubgolf has been introduced at a point where, of the 260,000 members in the 580 clubs north of the border, the average age is between 42 and 44 years old. This figure is likely to rise in line with the demographic trend of an ageing Scottish population. Although memberships have grown at a rate of just under five percent during the past decade, there has been an increase of almost 20 percent in the number of courses built over the same period.

- clubgolf aims to build on existing traditions and club infrastructures to develop a new and innovative approach that will introduce new participants to the game and secure the sport's future.

- Clubs across Scotland are playing a vital role in the clubgolf strategy. Following clubgolf's six-week firstclubgolf course, children have the opportunity to progress to the second phase of clubgolf's Player Pathway, Stage 1. Hosted by their local clubs, Stage 1 is a 23-hour course, covering the fundamentals of putting, chipping, full swing, rules and etiquette, taught by the club's fully trained volunteer coaches. After Stage 1 there are a further four stages on the Player Pathway.

clubgolf's targets for 2009 are:

- 50,000 9 year olds introduced to clubgolf every year through firstclubgolf
- 50,000 9-14 year olds retained in the clubgolf programme at any one time
- 20,000 9-14 year olds experiencing golf in a community golf programme setting
- 200 clubgolf centres (golf clubs and community linked centres delivering some of the above)
- 20 junior clubgolf facilities (new clubgolf facilities)
- 40 affiliated junior golf facilities (driving ranges/practice facilities utilising the clubgolf brand)

- Ends -

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Or visit clubgolf's official website: www.clubgolfsotland.com