

(Sent to P&J, North Star, Northern Times, Forres Gazette, Nairnshire Gazette)

Former Walker Cup player, Hugh Stuart opens New Forres Golf Club practice facilities

Former Scottish Amateur Champion, Hugh Stuart returned to his native Forres today to unveil new practice facilities which will give young Moray golfers better opportunities than ever to develop their skills.

Mr Stuart was a Forres Golf Club junior member in the 1950s. He turned professional aged 18 before returning to the amateur ranks two years later. In 1971 he helped the Great Britain and Ireland team release the USA's Walker Cup stranglehold. The home team beat America 13-11 at St Andrews. A year later he captured the Scottish Amateur title.

Half a century on from Mr Stuart's own junior days, a new generation of young golfers in Forres has never had it better.

"We have put a lot of work over the winter into developing the new facilities," said Forres Pro, Sandy Aird. "We now have an eight bay driving range, we are preparing five short par 3 holes for the junior development, and we have an Arena Green where you can practice your bunker play and pitching.

"Except for the five short holes everything is ready to be used. They will probably need another year so the turf can knit in, or we may be able to use them later this summer."

Forres GC has an impressive record for attracting and retaining junior members. The club boasts 120 juniors and offer free membership to the under 12 year olds.

The completion of the new facilities comes at the point when Forres is preparing to open its doors to the community's children. The Club was the first in Scotland to pilot the national junior golf strategy, clubgolf's Level 3 Development course, and 16 local children are involved. Next year, the Club will cast its net wider and take in children who are experiencing clubgolf's introductory game, firstclubgolf, at school.

Launched last year by former Open Champion, Paul Lawrie, firstclubgolf is played with multi-coloured modified clubs, rubberised balls and Velcro targets, and taught by teachers. The age of nine has been identified as the best stage for children to learn and become involved with the sport.

Children who enjoy the experience can learn the basics of the game – including the fundamentals of putting, chipping, full swing, rules and etiquette - over a 20-week period on clubgolf's Stage 1 course. It is hosted by golf clubs, led by clubgolf Level 1 volunteer coaches and uses real equipment.

The new practice facilities at Forres Golf Club will provide the perfect setting for the new clubgolf trainees to make their first swings.

"The new facilities are there for all the club members but promoting the game to juniors is our priority," said Forres GC Captain, James Duncan. "The young children which clubgolf is introducing from primary schools, who are just starting and aren't ready to go onto the course straight away, will benefit the most.

"Hugh was a junior member at Forres about fifty years ago and as a great favourite at Forres, we felt he would be the perfect person to open the new practice area. He is very keen on helping juniors and we are very grateful that he came over to help us today."

Today's opening of the new Forres practice facilities coincided with clubgolf's inclusion in the Forres Pro-Am. Six teams of three talented junior players from Grampian and Highland were invited to compete in the event. A club Assistant Professional, who provided guidance and mentoring, accompanied each team.

The juniors were from Alford, Brora, Castle Heather, Duff House Royal, Forres, Fortrose & Rosemarkie, Fort William, Garmouth & Kingston, Huntly, Invergordon, Kemnay, Nairn Dunbar, Nairn, Newburgh, Royal Dornoch, Tain and Golf Clubs.

The club Assistant Professionals came from Blairgowrie, Inchmarlo, MacDonald Cardrona, Meldrum House, Royal Burgess and West Lothian.

The winning team was Michael Brand, Tain GC (3.2); David MacKay, Royal Dornoch GC (9.1); Lyle McAlpine, Invergordon GC (13). Ross Neill (pro), West Lothian GC; and Pro Ross Neill, West Lothian GC.

clubgolf teams in Forres Pro-Am (handicaps in brackets)

Team 1

Pro: Iain Donaldson, Meldrum House GC.

Team members: Jeff Wright, Forres GC (10), Tom Maddocks, Forres GC (10), Tom Dingwall, Forres GC (7).

Team 2

Pro: Nick Holligan, Royal Burgess GC.

Team members: Ewan Noble, Kemnay GC (4); Steven Joss, Alford GC (10); Grant Carnie, Newburgh GC (3).

Team 3

Pro: Steve Johnston, MacDonald Cardrona GC.

Team members: Lewis Reid, Fortrose & Rosemarkie (5.5); Callum Stewart, Brora GC (8.4); Garry Dunlop, Fort William GC (10).

Team 4

Pro: Ross Neill, West Lothian GC.

Team members: Michael Brand, Tain GC (3.2); David MacKay, Royal Dornoch GC (9.1); Lyle McAlpine, Invergordon GC (13).

Team 5

Pro: Hamish Patullo, Blairgowrie GC.

Team members: Stewart Stalker, Duff House GC (9); Dennis Grant, Huntly GC (5); Michael Taylor, Garmouth & Kingston GC (7).

Team 6

Pro: Craig Stewart, Inchmarlo GC.

Team members: Neill Howitt, Nairn Dunbar GC (Scratch); Fraser Fotheringham, The Nairn GC (0.8); Jamie Treasurer, Castle Heather GC (6.8)

clubgolf Adult Team

Audra Booth, clubgolf Grampian Regional Manager.

Martin Ritchie, clubgolf Tayside & Fife Regional Manager.

Louise Clark, SLGA.

ATTENTION NEWS AND SPORTS DESKS

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

Forres Golf Club opens new practice facilities

Former Scottish Amateur Champion, Hugh Stuart, Forres GC Pro, Sandy Aird and Forres GC Captain, James Duncan will on Monday (17 April) unveil Forres Golf Club's new practice facilities which will give young Moray golfers better opportunities than ever to develop their skills.

The new facilities, aimed primarily at juniors, comprise an eight bay driving range, five short par 3 holes for the junior development, and an Arena Green for practicing bunker play and pitching.

The completion of the new facilities comes at the point when Forres is preparing to open its doors to the community's children. The Club was the first in Scotland to pilot the national junior golf strategy, clubgolf's Level 3 Development course, and 16 local children are involved. Next year, the Club will expand its junior operations to take in children who are experiencing clubgolf's introductory game, firstclubgolf, at local schools.

The practice facility's official opening will coincide with clubgolf's inclusion in the Forres Pro-Am. Six teams of three talented junior players from Grampian and Highland have been invited to compete in the event. A club Assistant Professional, who provided guidance and mentoring, accompanied each team.

The juniors are from Alford, Brora, Castle Heather, Duff House Royal, Forres, Fortrose & Rosemarkie, Fort William, Garmouth & Kingston, Huntly, Invergordon, Kemnay, Nairn Dunbar, Newburgh, Royal Dornoch, Tain and The Nairn Golf Clubs.

Timings:

Place: Forres Golf Club

Date: Monday 17 April

Schedule:

1.00pm – Official opening of new practice facilities by former Scottish Amateur Champion, Hugh Stuart, Forres GC Pro, Sandy Aird and Forres GC Captain, James Duncan

1.15pm – Photo opportunity for clubgolf teams competing in Forres Pro-Am

Photographs from the official opening will be available from clubgolf Press Officer, Rob Eyton-Jones: (T) 07775 746981 (E) rob@eyton-jones.co.uk

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, 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.

- Clubs across Scotland are already playing a vital role in the clubgolf strategy. Following the 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 -

For further information please contact:

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