

(Sent to Hamilton Advertiser, East Kilbride News, Carluke Gazette, Wishaw Press, Lanarkshire People)

Kames Golf Club puts juniors first

South Lanarkshire's Kames Golf Club has built an impressive record for encouraging juniors. Over 130 youngsters boost its membership but the club has set itself an ambitious target of reaching 200 after signing Scotland's national junior golf strategy, clubgolf.

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, which is supported by South Lanarkshire Leisure, 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.

Recognizing the importance of building on its already substantial junior section, Kames began developing its coaching infrastructure by sending five of its members on the two-day PGA clubgolf Level 1 Training for Volunteers Course this spring.

Next season the club plans to open its doors to children from the local community who have experienced the strategy's introductory game, firstclubgolf, at school. Played with multi-coloured modified clubs, rubberised balls and Velcro targets, and taught as a safe and exciting introduction to the game.

Over 12,000 children across Scotland experienced firstclubgolf in 2005 alone. Around thirty percent of those children decided to progress to the second stage of clubgolf's player development pathway hosted by their local golf clubs.

Introducing clubgolf in the club's catchment area may still be some nine months off but the Kames members are wasting no time in preparing the club for the inevitable rush of youngsters.

Last week the club's Junior Convenor, Harry Ward and his team of newly trained volunteer coaches began developing their teaching skills with 35 of the club's youngest members. Lesson 1 of the clubgolf's Stage 1 syllabus covered the fundamentals putting. From now until October these children will be coached in every aspect of the game.

"We were delighted with the number of children who turned up for the first lesson," said Mr Ward. "Most of these children have never had a golf lesson before but they were extremely attentive and we have had a lot of positive feedback from the children and their parents saying how much they enjoyed it."

"Most of our volunteers have never done any coaching before and some of them were a bit daunted before the session, but the clubgolf training course prepared them very well for what we are trying to achieve."

Next month Kames is laying on a special treat for its juniors and has extended the welcome to youngsters in other South Lanarkshire golf clubs after inviting one of golf's great magicians, Noel Hunt to demonstrate his vast array of trick shots (30 July 2006).

The Noel Hunt Show, which has featured in over 200 major PGA tournaments including three Ryder Cup opening ceremonies and is hailed by many of the world's top players as the No.1 golf show, has thrilled audiences in over 50 countries. The Show will be followed by a golf clinic for the juniors and an Am-Am event.

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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