

BACKSPIN

Official E-Zine of the Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland

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PPUI

Issue Highlights:

- 2018 Hall of Fame
- Irish in Chile!!!
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- PPUI Greenkeepers

A Chara,

You are very welcome to this the first edition of Backspin for 2018.

It's been hard to think about going out for a round with the recent cold weather making some of our courses more postcard material than playing venues but hopefully now as we enter April we can start to think about the playing front. We said goodbye to Noel Collins at our recent Convention after four years as Youth Officer and we would now like to wish Helen McMorrow all the best in the role in taking over from Noel who we once again thank for his time on the NEC.

In this edition we look back on some items from the recent Convention in Templemore most notably the induction of Christy Gibney of Trim into the Hall of Fame as we also learn *(continued on last page)*



PPUI President Mervyn Cooney with 2018 Hall of Fame recipient Christopher Gibney (Trim P&P Club). Continue reading for John Manning's profile of this years HOF winner.

2018 Hall of Fame Winner — Christopher Gibney

by John Manning

2014 Hall of Fame inductee John Manning profiles this year's inductee in Trim's Christopher Gibney

Vice-Chairman of the Meath County Board for three years back in the eighties, Christopher Gibney describes how it feels to be the latest inductee into the PPUI Hall of Fame. “Great, it’s a marvellous honour. I never expected anything like this.”

Christopher’s son Mark sums up his own reaction and that of the rest of the family. “We are all very proud of his achievement. My three brothers and I travelled to Templemore to be there with him to receive the award. Unfortunately, my mum couldn’t travel. All four sons played Pitch & Putt for many years and we all know how much work and time is put in every

week by him with the club, so it was great to be there. The congratulations and support from the wider family has been huge. He’s a very popular man. Facebook was ‘hopping’ that evening after the presentation when we put the pictures up!”

The wider Trim membership are thrilled that one of their number has become the second representative of a Co. Meath club to scoop the coveted Hall of Fame honour. “Yes, everyone in the club is delighted. A special word of thanks to the members of the club who travelled down to Templemore also to be there for the presentation.” Mark, an Inter-County winner with Meath at Navan in 1998, confirms that Christopher Gibney has been part of the fabric of Trim Pitch and Putt for more than half a century. “Dad has been a part of the club for 57 years. He first joined Trim Pitch and Putt Club in 1961. While he is



2018 Hall of Fame Recipient, Christopher Gibney (Trim P&P Club) pictured at the 2018 AGM in Templemore, Co. Tipperary with his 4 sons.

the Club Secretary since 1994, he has held every position within the club during his time in the club.”

There were some significant playing achievements along the way as well. “He won a Meath Strokeplay as a Junior many years ago (unfortunately, the exact year is not in the memory at the minute!),” laughs Mark, “and a Club Captain’s Prize in or around 1970. (He was always able to bring home a few Turkeys every Christmas when they were being played for too!”

Christopher describes the chequered location history of Trim Pitch and Putt club. “The first course was in Drinadaly, from approx. 1950 – 1972. There were two courses at Scurlockstown from 1972 – 1981. The course around the castle commenced work in 1980 and play of-

ficially started there in 1981. We vacated that course in 1994 for the work to commence for the movie, Braveheart. We then moved to a temporary course not far from our current location while the existing course was being negotiated with the local council and then for work to commence. In 1997, we started playing on our current course. As we now own the land we are confident this is the last move....”

We wondered if they were any Braveheart or Mel Gibson stories? “No unfortunately not. We were well and truly gone before he set foot to make his film. Although he is famous, he isn’t the most popular individual in the Trim Pitch & Putt Club community!” Of the origin of Christopher’s nickname Ferdie, the mystery remains. “No great story I’m afraid. I was called it as a child and the name stuck. I asked my mother



Mark Millar, Cement P&P Club, pictured with Fernando Morgado Trophy won by Team Europe and the Chile Open Trophy. A great weekend for Mark as he co-captained Team Europe to victory against South America and won the inaugural Chile Open.

many times if there was any other explanation and there was none.”

“Being involved in the club for so long is one and being able to be keep the club going during some really low times would be another,” is Christopher’s rejoinder when asked to evaluate his greatest accomplishments in Pitch and Putt. “We had times when membership was extremely low, and we struggled to fill a committee so there was a lot of work to be done on and off the course.” Christopher and his colleagues willingly implemented P.P.U.I. initiatives, resulting in several Club Development Awards for Trim.

And despite some setbacks, those initiatives eventually bore fruit on the latest layout at Cedar Parks on the banks of the River Boyne. “We lost a lot of really good players and mem-

bers when we moved from the course at the castle and I’m delighted to see a resurgence of the game in Trim over the last few years.” Finance and structure have also been to the forefront of Christopher’s mind. “To be part of the Trustees of the club who were able to secure purchasing the land of our current course, so that there will be no more moving courses will be a major highlight for me.”

Describing himself as “Retired, but full-time green fee collector in Trim Pitch and Putt Club,” Christopher was previously involved in other Trim community activities. “I was secretary for Trim Cycling Club in its early years.”

Christopher Gibney is a hugely deserving 32nd winner of the PPUI Hall of Fame award.

MAJOR UPCOMING FIXTURES AND DATES TO REMEMBER

April 13th	Munster Schools Finals @ St. Anne’s Leinster Schools Finals @ Navan
April 27th	National Schools Final @ Fermoy
May 19th	Leinster Mixed Foursomes @ Ringcommons Munster Mixed Foursomes @ Hillview
June 2nd to 4h	National Ladies & Gents Matchplay @ Tullamore
June 16th to 17th	Leinster Ladies Strokeplay @ Gowran Leinster Gents Strokeplay @ Bagenalstown Munster Ladies & Gents Strokeplay @ Lakeside

Seminars

April 28th	PPUI / GCSAI Greenkeeping Seminar @ Ryston
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A Trip to Chile

By John Ross Crangle

Following the recent Irish involvement in Europe's win in the inaugural Fernando Morgado Trophy, National Gents Matchplay Champion John Ross Crangle charts the before, during and after of an eventful trip to South America.

The Journey

As we flew out on Monday evening from Dublin via Madrid to our Chilean destinations, we knew we were going on a potential trip of a lifetime to a continent we may not ever see again. 20 hours later on Tuesday morning we arrived in Santiago Airport, in Chile's capital city. With 10 hours to spare to the next flight, we took a trip to a wonderfully vibrant capital. We encountered the newest Chilean President on his way from the office which was unbeknownst to us at the time.

However we knew it was someone special with the amount of press following him, something we would have to get used too! Our final flight was quick and before we knew it we were in the care of a president of another kind,

Patricio Rubel, the Chilean Pitch & Putt President. On our way to our apartments, we stopped off for our first real taste of Chilean cuisine with a Churrasco burger, if you like avocado, Chile is full of them and so are their burgers. We soon arrived in Puerto Valero around 11pm on Tuesday evening after 33 hours of travel a well-deserved rest was needed.

Seeing the course

The following morning after breakfast we arrived up to the course. Workers were busy erecting additions to the clubhouse while the course was full of groundsmen and we were met by the head greenkeeper Manuel. He explained what had happened in the past couple of months as the greens, unfortunately, took a turn for the worse with a disease ripping throughout the course. The final six holes' greens were relatively unaffected and were superb so it really was an unfortunate time for such a thing to happen but we put that to the back of our minds as we went for our first practice round.



Team Europe captains Manuel Amor (Catalonia) and Mark Millar (Ireland) receive the Fernando Morgado Trophy after an emphatic 24.5 to 9.5 win in Velero P&P Club, Chile.



Ger Ward (Portmarnock) and John Walsh (Collins) pictured at the 2018 AGM in Templemore, Co. Tipperary with their awards for 2017 player of the year.

Very quickly we realised how tough this course was, bunkers dotted around nearly every green, thick grass surrounded the greens which were tough to control our chipping on and sapped the energy out of us as we walked through it on each hole. Such was the heat we went back to the apartments and decided a later practice would suit; as we rested we were joined by our Catalan counterparts along with the lone Slovenian Jozef Krancnik. At the later practice, we were playing a lot better with all of us under par. Our earlier thoughts on the course were shared by our fellow team members as nearly everyone struggled on the demanding layout on their first try. At a team bonding dinner, it was decided between some of us that we would have our own mini Ryder Cup between the Catalans and Irish to spice up the practice on Thursday. Sorry to say the Catalans won but we won't take that result officially!

Day before proceedings began

On Thursday our final two team members Alan Hanlon & Ian Farrelly arrived after traveling

through the Andes on a bus from Buenos Aires drinking the finest of Malbec and eating glorious steaks, they nearly threw them back up when they saw the challenge in front of them. The press gathered for an afternoon of photos and recordings on a scale I have never seen before on a Pitch & Putt course. It was a tremendous success with many interviews given by players along with the local mayor of the Coquimbo region, the Puerto Valero course designer and owner, the FIPPA President Victor Moscatel and a huge influence in the South American region in Francesc Sole. We followed that up with a long journey to do some site seeing within the Andes along the Val de Queye before visiting Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Mistral's home and village. A fascinating but long tour!

Time for the games to begin!

Friday morning brought out the best in the locals and the Better Ball format really suited them and on another day they would have been leading after the early format but instead, the Europe team ground out a couple of late victories to draw the match up at 3-3. This may have been

the shock that was needed for the Europe team as they all clicked into gear for the Foursomes session. A comprehensive 5-1 win with a superb front-running performance in the singles by Alan Hanlon and great double's partnerships of Irish Co-Captain Mark Millar & Jordi Serra, JR Crangle & Pilar Montero, David Sole & Catalan Co-Captain Manuel Amor and a final point from Eamon Gibney & Ian Farrelly. The afternoon session saw the European team sitting pretty that evening with a 4pt lead of 8-4.

Day Two

Saturday was the beginning of the Chilean Open; this coincided with the Fernando Morgado Trophy by having Fourballs on the course. Each group contained a player from both sides contesting the trophy along with two players competing in the Chilean Open. It was a long and arduous round that took up to 3 hours in the blistering heat with a crosswind that none of us had encountered before so the scoring was tough.

Mark Millar somehow got around the course in level par to take the First Round lead with Ian Farrelly one shot behind and myself a further shot behind. Eamon Gibney and David Sole were also still in the mix a further shot behind while Chilean Cristobal Andrade was best of the locals on +4. Make no mistake about it, this course really bit hard and those scores were well earned! Europe also took a huge stranglehold of the Fernando Morgado Trophy with an 8-3 singles victory leaving them needing only two points from the Sunday Singles to take the inaugural title.

The Final Day of Play

Sunday was another scorching day, with the temperature reaching 30 degrees early on in the final round before dropping to a lowly mid-20's! The rounds were once again long and with a few new pin placements the course still proving to be a very difficult challenge to all. One man though stood above the rest as current National Strokeplay Champion and Co-Captain of the European team Mark Millar added another superb round of level par to take a somewhat comfortable victory.

Eamon Gibney finished with the only sub-par round of the weekend to take second place two strokes behind the winner. Jr Crangle clung on for third spot with Ian Farrelly completing a 1-2-3-4 for the Irish players while also nailing the winning point of the Fernando Morgado Trophy for Europe. A comprehensive 24.5 to 9.5 win was the final total. Only four players managed to have a 100% win record in the Matchplay competition with Mark Millar, Eamon Gibney, JR Crangle, and Catalan Manuel Amor achieving the feat.

Conclusion

A win for Europe in the first ever Fernando Morgado Trophy, a win for Irishman Mark Millar and most importantly a win for the game in South America. I have no doubt that the competition will bring support and members to the game in the region. The press coverage was top class with multiple news stories and even the papers in our hotel having reports on the weekend's play.

If this is followed through properly, I have no doubt the game can be a success in South America just like it has been in Catalonia since the late 90's which has seen the game and grow in their region.

Yesterdays of Pitch and Putt - John Dennis' 36

By John Manning

There have been so many technological advancements since in the past 20 years. Google was only incorporated as a company in September 1998. There was no such thing as social media in the 1990s. The iPod lay in the future. We still spent Irish Punts rather than the Euro back then.

The science of the Pitch & Putt club and of the golf ball has moved on apace in the last two decades. But the passage of time cannot dim the sheer magnitude of John Dennis' achievement around the CYMC/LC course in Fairview on 14th March 1998. Golfing great Annika Sorenstam mentioned on many occasions her desire to shoot the perfect round saying, "I believe I can hit 18 greens, and birdie every hole, that's in the back of my mind. I want to putt better, chip better. That day when I hit 18 greens and one putt, I'll know I'm a complete player."

John Dennis didn't birdie every hole on that memorable Saturday 20 years ago, but helped by an amazing four holes in one, he toured CYMC/LC in eighteen under par 36!

Playing in a Club Sweepstake competition, the then 18-year-old North Strand Scratch player birdied the first two, parred the third and then played the next six holes in ten shots, 1, 2, 2, 1, 3, 1, for an incredible opening nine of 17. Further birdies followed on 10, 12, 14 and 16 before the teenager made his fourth ace of the round at the downhill 17th. He coolly slotted another birdie putt on the 18th to be home in 19 for a stunning aggregate of 36, which, it practically goes without saying then constituted a new course record for the short but tricky Fairview layout.

John's recollection of the 36 is still very clear. When we spoke to him on the China anniversary of his wonderful accomplishment, he said, "Yes, I can remember every hole of that round even after 20 years, being two over par (29) on the front 9 in the First Round I played that day and NR'd it. Then going out in the second round and everything just happened!"

One particular reminiscence stands out. "I remember the 12th hole, which actually was

PPUI Greenkeepers—Date for Your Diary

The PPUI and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Ireland (GCSAI) will continue their partnership which was launched in early 2017 and saw the first Greenkeeper Seminar held in Lakeside in May 2017.

The final details of the 2018 seminar are in the process of being finalised but the date and venue have been confirmed. The 2018 seminar will take place in **Ryston P&P Club, Newbridge, Co. Kildare on Saturday 28th April.**

We encourage anyone interested to mark the date on their diary and to keep an eye out for the PPUI website and social media to find out more. If you would like to receive information on the seminar when it is announced, please e-mail PPUI Development Manager Paul Hayes at paulh@ppui.ie and your e-mail address will be added to the mailing list.

The details should be announced next week when a full agenda and application form will be released.

changed to 13th with the course change! The one with the bank at the back and a front bunker. I actually ‘boned’ my tee shot up past the 14th tee box that day, and with the pin being on the front right as you looked from the tee box, I’d an impossible chip to get the ball close to the hole. Behind the 14th and 15th tee boxes that were side by side was a big shrub. I chipped the ball sort of under the right side of that shrub that went through the side of it (low) and caught the slope and managed to trickle down the bank and made the fringe! I held about a 12-footer for par on that 13th hole.”

John, who played right handed and putted left handed, enjoyed a glittering juvenile career before that fateful day in 1998. He played on the Dublin team that won the 1992 Inter-County Championship at Fermoy. He was top scorer for Dublin in the 1995 Inter-County championship and finished runner-up at the 1995 Leinster Strokeplay championship in Poulaphouca. John’s

languid style proved extraordinarily effective on occasion as an adult although major championships have eluded him to date.

He did win a Dublin Senior League title with CY in 2001 alongside the likes of Brendan Edwards, Paddy O’Connor and Liam Collins, beating Lucan in the Final at Erin’s Isle. He also qualified for the 2009 National Strokeplay Final Round in Tralee. A member of Ierne more recently, John scored -16 in the 2014 Ierne Scratch Cup to finish third behind current Irish Strokeplay champion Mark Millar (-18).

John placed fourth in the Dublin Strokeplay Championship at Ierne in 2011, shooting 144 to finish alongside Keith Redmond, one shot out of the O’Reilly/Courtney playoff. He was also close in the 2013 Dublin Stroke at Glenville and tied 6th at Lucan in 2014, a year in which many felt he was unlucky not to make Dublin’s Inter-County side.



Team Europe pose for a photo ahead of their Ryder Cup style competition against a South American team. Ireland was represented by co-captain Mark Millar (Cement P&P), JR Crangle (Loughlinstown P&P), Eamonn Gibney (Castletown P&P), Ian Farrelly (Bellewstown) and Alan Hanlon (Collinstown)

BACKSPIN PRODUCTION TEAM

Jason O'Connor, John Manning, JR Crangle and Paul Hayes

(continued from last page) about the connection between a Best Picture winning Oscar and the Meath course! Also we take a look back at a significant event just over 20 years ago in Dublin namely John Dennis' famous 36 around CYMC/LC. John speaks to John Manning guiding through a score most of the best always dream about.

We also learn about the recent trip of an Irish contingent to Chile for the Fernando Morgado Trophy as National Gents Matchplay Champion John Ross Crangle kept a diary of the trip to South America. It charts not only Europe's win in the 'Ryder Cup' style event with South America but also National Senior Gents Strokeplay Champion Mark Millar's victory in the concurring Chilean Open event. Maybe the full significance of this event wasn't fully grasped beforehand but certainly it is one you could say has opened up the potential for further development of our sport beyond the Irish and Atlantic Seas.

Speaking of promotion I wish to personally return to something I mentioned at Convention where I spoke of my wish to see some local events that are getting great coverage on social media more of a profile in local media. While national exposure is more difficult to get for our sport, certainly I find local media is more receptive and willing to give sports like ours coverage when they need to fill up space and airtime. Again I would encourage County and Regional PRO's to work on developing relationships with

their local media organs that can be cultivated into something bigger down the road.

We will aim for another edition maybe in late May/early June where we will have a more expansive edition. We hope to confirm details of the National Matchplay Draws in due course with a new element to the Ladies event this year in the introduction of two separate Scratch and Handicap sections hopefully making it more of an attraction for entry for our Lady players.

Finally on a personal level I would just like to thank the Dublin Facebook Page for asking me to be a part of their recent interview series. I would encourage anyone interested in looking at the whole series to check out the Dublin page where a wide variety of people from both inside and outside the capital are profiled.

Until the next time, happy reading and Happy Easter,

Jason O'Connor

Communications & Press Officer

PPUI

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