

# BACKSPIN

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

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# PPUI

## Issue Highlights:

- 2018 National Strokeplay Previews
- European Success for Ireland
- Glenville P&P Club

A Chara,

You are welcome to this our second edition of Backspin for 2018 where we pay particular focus to the National Gents Strokeplay Championships in Glenville this weekend. There is a preview of all three grades over the weekend as well as a look back at previous events at the Dublin course by John Manning.

This is the first time we have played a major national event in Glenville since the Irish Open in 2014 and we reflect here on some memorable moments in the game that have taken place throughout the decades. Irish Team Captain John Ross Crangle has also written a reflection on the pretty stunning European Championship success in Urduna in the Basque Country three weeks ago one where the Irish team were fairly comprehensive in winning an Honour the country last held in 2007.

The success is one that is ultimately bittersweet with the passing of our former President and Patron Eamonn Birchall on the Friday of the event. The Shandon club member was an institution in our game stretching right back to the foundation of the PPUI in 1960 and it is hard to do **(continued on last page)**



2018 European Team Champions Ireland. Pictured are the Irish team of Michael Murphy (Manager) , Tommy Hanley (Bruff), Bryan Delaney (Bishopstown), Eamonn Gibney (Castletown), John Ross Crangle (Loughlinstown), James Cleary (Hillview) and John Cahill (Fermoy). You can read JR's account of the victory on page 5.

# 2018 Gents National Strokeplay Inter/Jnr Preview

**By Jason O'Connor**

188 players take part this weekend in the National Gents Strokeplay Championships in Glenville in Dublin with the bulk of the action on Saturday comprising 108 players in the Junior and Intermediate grades. Communications & Press Officer Jason O'Connor takes a look at the Intermediate and Junior Grades in this preview.

## *Junior*

36 Players will compete in the first 'Shotgun Start' time of 8.30am on Saturday with the Top Nine going forward afterwards for the Final 18 playoff. Four players from the host club feature in this grade namely William Curry, Philip Maher, Christopher Nolan and Keith Potter having some interesting playing partners. Three County Junior Strokeplay winners are also in action on Saturday morning including Lucan's Stephen Needham (Dublin Winner), Laytown's Ste-

phen Behan (Meath) and Larkspur Park's Sean O'Neill (Tipperary).

Dean Revins from Kilbeggan enters as the Leinster Junior Strokeplay Champion from last month in Bagenalstown however with some multiple competitors from the Listowel and Mellows clubs pretty noteworthy. Nicky Barry, John Carey and Cathal Dennehy take part from the Kerry club with Richard Burke, Darragh Conroy and James Fleming the Galway club's representatives. Raymond Fay from Granard represents the Longford club as Tramore's Ciaran Kehoe is the sole Waterford player in the grade.

Rocklodge's Ross Hurley was Runner-Up in the Cork Junior Strokeplay last month as it is a field that could be a very tight one especially with a 'Shotgun Start' in play. Local knowledge



PPUI Development & Marketing Officer, Stephen Enneguess pictured with the 2018 National Secondary Schools Winners from St. Frances College, Rochestown

will also be an advantage but it can bring its own pressures. William Curry finds himself out with the County Strokeplay Champions of Tipperary and Meath in his three ball with Christopher Nolan playing alongside both Joe Mulvihill of Charleville and Mark Roche of Bishopstown.

Keith Potter plays with Bruff's Michael McGuane and Mellows' Burke as Maher plays alongside Gowran's Dean Delaney and Leinster Strokeplay Champion Revins in his three-ball. Plenty of opportunity for others to force their way into contention but with the intense heat and humidity of the last month, it might well be that the players that cope best with those obstacles will be the ones to force their way into the playoff later on Saturday.

### *Intermediate*

72 competitors once again this year with play split across the two 'Shotgun Starts' with 18

players completing the line-up in the first 'Shotgun Start' time of 8.30am and the remaining 54 playing at 12pm. In the list of 18 names for the morning session, Inniskeen's Michael Vaughan features most prominently. Runner-Up in this event in 2016 in Tullamore, Vaughan won the Leinster Intermediate Strokeplay in Bagenalstown to go with a Regional Strokeplay win in Louth/Down/Monaghan the previous week.

The third placed finisher in the Munster event in Bagenalstown, Tipperary Hills' Brian O'Flynn also features in this morning group as does Dublin Intermediate Strokeplay winner Gareth Walsh of CPM with Glenville's own David Horan having finished second to Walsh in the county this year. Portmarnock's Thomas Brady also taking part in the grade means that the 1-2-3 in the Dublin Intermediate Strokeplay are all competing this weekend. Custume's Willie Pendergast was third in the Westmeath Intermediate Strokeplay meanwhile as Cunnigar's Stephen



**PPUI Officers David Reddin and Breda Brophy pictured with the 2018 Leinster Mixed Foursomes winners Catherine & Ian Dillon from St. Bridget's**

O'Donovan was a Munster Junior Strokeplay winner two years ago. Horan is the only Glenville player in the Intermediate ranks on Saturday as the afternoon players contain three County Strokeplay winners amongst their ranks.

Bagenalstown's Darren McNally was the Leinster Strokeplay Runner-Up on home turf as he also won the Carlow/Kilkenny/Wexford Regional Strokeplay with Limerick Intermediate winner John Farrell of Bruff, Erry's Leonard O'Meara (Offaly winner) and Lough Owel's Declan Hogan (Westmeath winner) also in action on Saturday. Prize-winners from the County/Regional Strokeplays in action in the afternoon include Tipperary Runner-Up Michael Kirby of Larkspur Park, Kerry Runner-Up Tralee's Eamon Sheehy, and St Patricks John Tyrell (C/K/W Runner-Up).

Lucan's Ted Flynn was a National Mixed Foursomes winner last year on home turf as he is one of five players from the Dublin club taking part including Christy Kane in the morning, Tom McMorrow, Gerry Ward and David Lee all playing in the afternoon at Glenville. Kyle Kennedy was last year's Junior Runner-up in Hillview and he returns this year in the higher grade with Riverdale's Sean Minogue, Raffeen Creek's Weeshie Murphy and Loughlinstown's Trevor Ward other players to keep an eye on this weekend.

The 12 spots will be fiercely contested for the playoff. The morning players will have the advantage of setting the pace and seeing what comes in during the afternoon but it will be a test of nerve and concentration in trying to get into the shake-up towards the end for a large field.



PPUI Munster/Connacht competition coordinator Mark Keohane pictured in Lakeside with 2018 Munster Gents Strokeplay winners Kieran Earls (Parteen) who won the Senior Grade and Dylan Seymour (Fermoy) who was victorious in the Junior Grade.

# 2018 European Team Championships

By John Ross Crangle

Reflecting on the Irish team's emphatic European Championship success in Urduna last month, team captain John Ross Crangle reflects on a successful trip to the Basque Country for the Irish.

On Wednesday June 20th the journey began. That journey was to reclaim the European Team Championship Trophy that Ireland had not held since 2007. A squad of six came through the trial process and our wildcards assembled with no experience of the European Championships but one brimming with experience in almost every other competition in the game. In fact, out of the County Championships a week previous, the team had three County Champions and two runners-up, a team in form we certainly were.

The atmosphere in the airport was great within the whole entourage with Team Manager Michael Murphy, Anne & Joan handing out the official timesheets and having our plane tickets ready as we arrived in the terminal one by one. We were

also in the company of the PPUI President Mervyn Cooney along with PPUI Patron Billy Lynch, our unofficial water boy Weeshie Murphy and the NEC's Mark Keohane. We jetted off soon after to the scenic Urduna, in the Basque Country and just outside the city of Bilbao.

We arrived at our destination in Urduna just after 7pm the lads showing great hunger for the title wanted to leave the hotel straight away and get a round on the course which was a huge encouragement to see and boost for me personally. We arrived at the course to find a nice clubhouse with changing facilities, a great seating & viewing area overlooking the very Irish style first six holes. We immediately got the itch to get going and the confidence grew even stronger seeing the course in all its glory.

We were introduced to what we were told was the local greenkeeper, expecting a fluent accent we were a bit shocked when a softly spoken Scot-



Pictured at a sunny Collins P&P Club alongside PPUI President Mervyn Cooney are the Junior, Senior and Inter grade winners, Phil Downey (Collins), Ger Ward (Portmarnock) and Mairead Manning (St. Stephen's)



## PPUI Youth Officer Helen McMorrow is pictured with the prize winners from the Munster u-16 Matchplay Championship hosted by Deerpark

tish voice came back at us, it wasn't groundskeeper Willie, but he was greens-keeper Willie! An absolute gentleman and an integral part of the whole Urduna experience. After a few words with him about the vital holes in the mats that he would drill for us thankfully we went on our merry way to the first tee.

We decided, between us all, on a few partnerships that may have raised a few eyebrows with people probably expecting a Leinster duo of Eamon Gibney & myself, with Cork men Bryan Delaney & John Cahill together and Tommy Hanley & James Cleary our final pairing. However sometimes the obvious partnerships are not always the best! With that in mind, we would fire out John & Eamon early, Bryan & Tommy in second and an anchor pairing of James & myself. We played singles that evening though with Bryan taking the fivers with a superb seven under par but the scoring throughout the group was brilliant and once again an encouraging boost for the rest of the week. On Wednesday evening after arriving back in the hotel a few bumped into our good

friends from Great Britain consisting of the ever present Deebles, John, Jamie and Steve along with their newest prodigy Jordan and Snodhurst's Harry Murrell and Adam Richards. Quite simply a great bunch of lads, a few drinks were had with them and a challenge match was set!

On the Thursday the official practice day, we played a game around the course as pairings and quickly grew to like the layout, but we also could see the dangers that were lurking around the slopiest of greens and the potentially tough areas the pins could be placed. Then came the challenge of our British counterparts, luckily for us we came through unscathed and saved the stick from them for the rest of the weekend! Thursday evening saw the opening ceremony take place in our hotel with all the teams and players in attendance for the unveiling of the new European Cup and what an unveiling it was, a superb cup which would rival football's Champions League Trophy in shape and size. The draw for the singles and the photos were taken and we were set for action the following morning.

In my own mind on Friday morning, I thought one of us would go close to breaking the individual scoring record with the way the course was set up and the length of the shots. An early flourish of birdies around the course I had seen from fellow Irish players I knew we were motoring and a top seed spot was almost assured, and it was now a race to be No.1 between our lads. Eamon battled back as expected after a poor start to get to two under, I was just plodding along and happily finished three under after an indifferent round matching John's three under. The other three guys though took a stranglehold with rounds of five under for Bryan who was lying just a shot behind the duo of Tommy and James, a great start for the team and a -23 team total and a six-shot lead over the Catalans.

As the second round gathered pace the course definitely firmed up and got that little bit trickier with Eamon and Bryan struggling to put together under par rounds but we were actually pulling away from our nearest rivals as they also struggled in the toughening conditions and heat. I added a solid if unspectacular four under, along with James who would take the runner up spot in the individual event with John adding a brilliant six under to take 3rd spot with a young Catalan who you will hear about later in this piece. None of them could match the wondrous play of Tommy Hanley though; he was so magnificent when someone said he had a putt for -13 I actually thought it was for his round and not the 36-hole score! An amazing feat by the Limerick man and his name is now in the record books for at least four more years but a great team performance overall and a message sent out that we were back to take that trophy home.

As the seedings worked out, we were drawn to

play the hosts, The Basque Country, looking at the scoring of the individual games we were well odds on to win. Sometimes though it very easy to see singles scores and say that player will beat him but Matchplay is whole different animal. In Strokeplay events abroad, I have found that players can have very good rounds bar one or two bad holes and it leaves the impression that the player is not that good. In Matchplay though and especially international Matchplay, these guys up their games playing us, some get intimidated but there are a great many who embrace the challenge and give us a good game. The Basques were exactly that, they were good games, make no mistake, we played well and won well 9-0. Friday's job was done and an important lie in was earned.

When we arrived back at the hotel though, our happiness was soon brought to sadness as we heard the very sad news of the passing of former PPUI President Eamon Birchall. A kind and gentle man who was an integral part of the game both in Ireland and abroad. If we ever needed anymore motivation to win, this was it.

On Saturday when we arrived at the course after our specially flown in chef and supporters helped us out to a local fry up! The Tipp lads done a great job. We were due to play the French in our final group stage game, they earlier that morning had beaten the Basque's by 6.5-2.5, we knew a couple of the French players were tough competitors and once again we prepared the team expecting a tough match. We started off brilliantly with our bottom two pairings winning comfortably but our first pairing of John & Eamon struggled to get over the line and were pegged back to a halved match. Some thoughts were to split the pairing up but with everyone

playing well there was no need whatsoever for the panic, we swept through the singles taking all six and comfortably made the final Championship Group.

Our opponents though were maybe a surprise, as Andorra took out the Great Britain team on a countback. We know all too well what the Andorrans can do, as they shocked us once before at a World Cup, but we were determined to make sure that did not happen again. We had a huge advantage too as the Andorrans would be playing their fifth & sixth rounds of the day compared to only our third & fourth games. They battled extremely hard throughout the doubles with Eamon & John winning 3&2 with another close game in behind as Tommy & Bryan took their match 2&1. James & myself were playing solid in the final match but the Andorrans were made of stern stuff and continually birdied from places a par would be a good score, it was typical Matchplay and a great pitch to the final hole seen them deservedly grab a half point against us to the delight of the Andorran crowd.

We were in no mood to give them encouragement though as the tables can turn quite quickly and we were lead off brilliantly with Eamon finding his feet and handing out a stunning 9&7 win, John and myself followed with wins and we were one game away from the title. The other three guys also won their matches to keep a 100% team singles record going. Once again, we had done the hard work and earned another lie in with the final game against Catalonia due to begin at 12pm. We looked on early morning from the hotel as the Catalans took a handsome lead into the singles. When we arrived though we were a little surprised to see the Andorrans had given the Catalans a real fight in the game and halved the singles matches with them. It was

encouraging to say the least and we were nothing but positive going into the final match.

One thing I tried to drill into our team was that the Catalans have a great record in these games, they always seem to struggle through matches with teams until they meet us, when they see an Irish jersey they raise their game by at least 10%. This was a whole new game; this was the one, all or nothing. From the first tee we were sent on our way with John & Eamon putting in a superb performance against Eric Puig & Emili Sanmartin winning by a comfortable 4&3 margin and setting the team off to a great start. In behind though it wasn't looking as pretty as the second game that looked all but over with five to go was now going up the 18th! Hanley & Delaney held their nerves as they took a vital win against David Riera & Josep Iglesias.



**Leinster Gents Strokeplay Junior and Inter Winners Dean Revins (Kilbeggan) and Michael Vaughan (Inniskeen)**



Once again James & myself found ourselves in a top-quality match against the former World Champion Fernando Cano & the future star Alex Albinana Jnr. Experience and fearlessness, a great double act and they certainly played that way, Alex showed his quality with a stunning pitch to the first followed by a breath-taking chip in on the second, Fernando showing his quality with super putting. By the time we were on the 15th we were two down and looking in trouble. A birdie on the 15th though was crucial; it not only gave us the tee box but the momentum. Halves on 16 were followed by a dramatic 17, James hit a lovely chip that caught the edge of the hole that would have taken us down the 18th all square, the Catalans though had a chance to stay ahead going to the last but young Alex missed the chance scraping the edge of the hole.

The 18th was also a tense affair with both pitches just making the green. James got a nicer hop forward but still a distance away. Alex hit a solid putt once again, but it was just under the hole and rolled just over 2½ feet away. I hit mine, but it broke a lot more than I thought but it finished just about within two feet. Normally I would be one to say pick the balls up and take the half but something I had noticed throughout the game had seen the Catalans drop the ball in dead weight to the hole, they asked but James and myself refused the invitation to half. I'll admit I felt some sadness when Fernando missed his putt, but we were there to win, and James duly cleaned up the putt to take a significant 3-0 lead to the singles.

I could see the Catalans were down, but I had to keep our lads in the right frame of mind, we took a breather in the dressing room and fired from the off in the singles with John Cahill leading from the front like a hare (ironic as he has

none) taking a 5&4 win over Emili. It was next onto the best individual on Friday Tommy Hanley to take the honours once again and top a dream Irish debut with a 100% record, holing the winning putt to boot over Eric Puig.

Eamonn Gibney continued his ever-improving weekend with a comfortable win over Fernando Cano, Bryan Delaney also took home a 100% record with a final win over David Riera and I was to take a nice win against a good friend in Josep Iglesias. The final match as it turned out was to have the fiercely competitive James Cleary against the Catalan wonder kid Alex Albinana Jnr. A game full of quality, it epitomised the whole game of Pitch & Putt, a young 12-year-old playing what some would consider a proper Irish seasoned & experienced campaigner over many years, fighting it out tooth and nail right down to the 18th green in the final of a European Championship. James missed his putt but probably the biggest roar of the weekend was when Alex rolled in his putt from just off the back of the green to deservedly take a half point for himself but also the Catalan team. A true star in the making and he will be in Seapoint representing the Catalans against our own youngsters in August, a treat for anyone there to watch.

The celebrations didn't take long to start, Bryan Delaney was keeping us all well refreshed as our matches finished as he handed out the well-earned beers, we were so overjoyed and relaxed that we were so busy talking we didn't even realise the closing ceremony was taking place! A very good speech by FIPPA President Victor Moscatel was shown, as he asked Alex to arrive on the podium with Norway's Anders Juel. Over 60 years between them both yet still competing against each other. It really is a universal game for all ages.

Tommy was the star of the show as he took his individual trophy as all the teams were to be followed up as they placed in the competition, Andorra in third followed by the Catalans in second and finally the moment we all wanted, the European Champions, Ireland. A great spine-tingling moment and one to cherish, I must thank a good friend, Catalonia Manager Xavier Ponsdomenech for his kind words as he presented us with the trophy.

I also want to thank once again the people I mentioned that very day in my speech. FIPPA, Urduna Pitch & Putt, Balon Sports, the PPUI, all our sponsors, PPUI President Mervyn Cooney, all our supporters, Billy, Anne, Joan, Weeshie, Mark, the Tipperary lads more so Sean for our breakfast! James family and all the supportive messages we received at home. Last but not least our team manager Michael Murphy and the rest of my team-mates.

A great bunch of players and a great bunch of gentlemen. It was an absolute pleasure to be named the captain of a star studded and quality team, the honour was truly mine. I also want to thank all the people that turned up at the airport when we arrived home on Monday evening; it truly was a great moment walking through the terminal seeing so many Irish flags flying.

To show how great these guys are and a truly wonderful gesture in my eyes, National Match-play Champion Bryan Delaney showed the true spirit of Pitch & Putt and something that will sit with me forever. He donated not only his jersey, which was signed by all the players but also his winners medal to the Birchall family, a truly class player but more importantly, person.

This was for you Eamonn Birchall.

John-Ross Crangle



PPUI National Competition coordinator, Myles McMorrow is pictured with his Lakeside clubmates Elaine Quinn and Michael Fennell after their 2-stroke victory in the Munster Mixed Foursomes held in Hillview P&P Club, Clonmel.

# 2018 National Gents Strokeplay

## Host Venue Glenville

By John Manning

Ahead of Glenville hosting this weekend's National Gents Strokeplay Championships, John Manning looks back at previous events to take place at the Dublin venue.

The 1977 National Gents Strokeplay Championships represented Glenville's first foray into PPUI National Championship hosting. Sean Stynes (RGSC) scored 2, 2, 2, 1, 2 for holes 12 to 16 in a first round 43. The bearded Stynes eventually posted 92 and won by five from Michael Collins (Shandon). A brilliant second round 46 gave Hammond Lane's Tommy Butler a 36-hole tally of 100 and a two stroke Intermediate victory over Shandon's Mick Farrington. John Drinan (St. Annes) scored 111 in the tricky windy conditions to take Junior laurels by two shots from Patrick Black (Cement). In the 1984 National Gents Matchplay Championships, Ar-

my man Tony McCormack (Irish Ropes) pipped holder John O'Leary (Dunlop's) by 1 hole in an absorbing final at Glenville.

Glenville was the host venue for the Inter-County championship on a rainy weekend in July 1987. The ladies' championship was played on Saturday July 18th. Dublin (Marian Marks, Geraldine McLernon, Marie Mallin, Maree O'Toole and Sheelagh Elmes) triumphed on 406. Westmeath finished a distant second on 449 made up of the team of Helen Kenny, Rose McCormack, Marie Rooney, Kathleen Bray and Eleanor Gillic. Carlow almost caused a Pitch & Putt sensation the following day. It was the same day as Nick Faldo won his maiden golf major at Muirfield. In the end though, it was a first Gent's Inter-County success for Meath, whose team of Paul Gleeson, Tommy Rusk, Oliver Duane, Da-



PPUI President Mervyn Cooney pictured with prize winners from the 2018 National Matchplay. Ladies Scratch winner Ger Ward (Portmarnock), Ladies Nett winner Elaine Quinn (Lakeside) and Gents winner Bryan Delany (Bishopstown)



**Pictured at the Munster Ladies Strokeplay hosted by Lakeside are Bridget Shelley, Lakeside (Inter Winner), Mary Murray, Rocklodge (Senior Winner), Mark Keohane PPUi Munster/Connacht Competition coordinator and Sive Shelley, Lakeside (Junior Winner)**

vid Morgan and a young Sean Downes fired 397 to beat a gallant Carlow by two. Carlow's line-out read: John Delaney, Ed Ryan, Eamon Culleton, Fiacc O'Rourke and Pat McNelis. It was also the era of the Individual Best Gross (Kildare's Eddie Carey with 94) and Individual Best Nett (a 93 by Ed Ryan of Carlow) in the Inter-County championship.

Glenville hosted the 1994 National Matchplay Championships on the occasion of the first twinning of the Gent's and Ladies championships. Local hero Derek Courtney, who was playing out of Shandon at the time, defeated Cathal Dunne (St Bridgets) in the Gent's final while Portmarnock's Geraldine Ward was a winner over Barbara Farrell (Ierne) in the Ladies decider.

Glenville was the scene of a unique event when the Quadrangular International Tourna-

ment was played in Old Bawn on August 2nd/3rd 1997. Ireland totaled 16 points to finish on top of the Saturday Round Robin ahead of Canada, Australia and England. In Sunday's final, Ireland (captained by Derek Courtney and also represented by John Walsh, Ray Murphy, Ian Donnelly, Graham Temple and Jason Hannon) beat Canada by 9 matches to 0.

The 1998 National Matchplay Championships at Glenville saw Ray Murphy (Templebreedy) win his first national individual championship with a 4&3 victory over Chris Scannell (Collins) in the Gent's final while it was also a maiden national individual title for Marian Byrne (St. Bridget's) - a 1-hole victor in the ladies' final against Geraldine Ward, courtesy of a ten-foot birdie putt on the home green. Glenville's 18th green witnessed emotional scenes on Sunday July 15th 2001 as the club's favourite and most famous lady player, Peggy Campbell

(R.I.P.), finally got her hands on the All-Ireland Strokeplay championship trophy. Peggy dominated of the Lynch and Manning Ltd. sponsored event as her fantastic total of 134 shots for 54 holes eclipsed the previous record low aggregate for the Championship by an incredible nine shots. Peggy led by six after 36 holes on 20 under par and her final round of 46 left a top-class field trailing in her wake.

Peggy won by thirteen from the fast finishing Ann Hall (Royal Meath). Ann was home in 22 with three birdies in the last five holes for a 15 under par total of 147. Having lost the National Matchplay final a month earlier, Ann claimed the Runners-Up spot in both national championships for 2001. Another local player Stella Sheridan shot a 49 final round to finish third on 14 under, just ahead of Marian Byrne (St. Bridget's) on -13. A blistering last round of 51 saw Mairead O'Toole (Poulaphouca) improve from seventh place after 36 holes to win the Intermediate Championship with a 166 aggregate. Mairead won by five over 36-hole leader Anne Kelly (Collinstown). Anne clinched second by a single shot from Skyrne's Kathleen Geraghty.

Sarah Lee Carroll (Erry) emerged as junior champion by three with a 54-hole total of 174. Ann Thomas's (Lucan) closing 57 gave her the silver medal on 177. Catherine Ankers gave the home gallery yet more cheer when she jumped up from fifth place after 36 holes to return 184 for third spot. Brother and Sister Ian and Tara Dillon combined with Frank Ryan and Chrissie Byrne for 172 Stableford points cumulatively. That earned the low handicap St. Bridget's quartet a two-shot victory in the 2002 National Mixed Team Event at Glenville. The St. Bridget's total overhauled the clubhouse lead

of 170 points, set by the Glenville C combination of Joan Garrigan, Mary Irvine, John Garrigan and David Garrigan. The very next team in, club colleagues Glenville D, (Syl Collins, Fran Collins, Frank O'Neill, Nancy O'Neill) carded 169 points for third place.

After a memorable Special Olympics World Summer Games – Pitch and Putt - at Glenville in 2003, the Kiltipper Road club was the setting for the 2005 National Inter-County Championships, at which Cork gent's (Kieran Dunscombe 88, Ray Murphy 90, John Walsh 94, Frank O'Donoghue 96, Darren Collins 97) scored the all-time championship record of 64 under par for the old format while Dublin (Geraldine Ward 99, Peggy Campbell 101, Stella Sheridan 101, Sheelagh Elmes 105, Maree O'Toole 111) regained the ladies crown ahead of Kildare, 406 to 420. 2008 saw the return of the National Matchplay Championships to Glenville. Ray Murphy and Tara Dillon were champions, beating John Walsh (Collins) and Chrissie Byrne (St. Bridget's) respectively, in the finals.

The 2009 National Ladies Strokeplay tests were the last national championships to be staged at Glenville. Tracey McGrath completed her Matchplay/Strokeplay double when the Erry, Co. Offaly lady carded 152 to win by two strokes from Lucan's Barbara Furlong. A 54-hole 161 return gave Hillview's Michelle McCarthy an eleven-stroke margin in the Ladies Intermediate over Anne-Marie McCabe (Ferbane). Aoife Carton (Kilbeggan) was an even more convincing victor in ladies' junior. Aoife's three round 167 ended fourteen clear of Siobhan McDonnell (Lucan).

# 2018 Gents National Strokeplay Senior Preview

By Jason O'Connor

ON a busy sporting Sunday in general, 80 seniors will bid for this year's Donnelly Cup over a Glenville track that should offer plenty of excitement over the course of Sunday's scheduled 54 holes. Communications & Press Officer Jason O'Connor assesses the lie of the land ahead of tee-off early in the morning.

FOUR years after an Irish International Open that saw Eamon Gibney emerge to the top level of the game in 2014, a major Strokeplay event returns to Glenville with the promise of more excitement with the high playing standard at present. Mark Millar returns to defend the title he won last year in Hillview after holding off Stephen Shoer in a great duel between the two players at the Clonmel venue. The Cement player has won the Fernando Morgado Trophy in Chile in the meantime as he returns to defend the title a bit closer to home.

Another winner of the Donnelly Cup in Dublin County Board Chairman Anthony Malone of Lucan is his playing partner as Erry's Sean Buckley and Collins' John Looney get us underway on Sunday. Former National Matchplay winner Shane Murphy of Raffeen Creek follows alongside Athgarvan's Cathal Dunne with a fairly interesting first session featuring some players in form at present. Munster Strokeplay winner in Lakeside last month Kieran Earls of Parteen plays alongside Lucan's Patrick Noonan with fellow Limerick player and one of the stars of Ireland's recent European Championship win in Thomas Hanley playing alongside Tralee's Jason O'Regan.

Shooting the best individual Strokeplay score will increase Tommy's confidence ahead of this weekend as two-time winner John Walsh returns this year and tees-off alongside Lakeside's Brian Cahill (a former National Junior Strokeplay win-



2018 Leinster Gents Strokeplay (Senior Grade) winner John Ross Crangle, Loughlinstown, receives his trophy from PPUi Leinster/Ulster competition coordinator David Reddin

ner). Third place finisher in the last two stagings of the event former Irish Open and National Matchplay winner Deerpark's Damien Fleming enters off the back of a Runners-Up finish at the Munster Senior Strokeplay with another Lakeside player Michael Fennell (who was third at the same event after winning the Munster Mixed Foursomes the previous month) his playing partner. 2016 Runner-Up Darren O'Connell is also playing in the first session with Lucan's Chris Gallagher playing alongside him. 2001 winner and Irish team member John Cahill of Fermoy plays with seasoned campaigner Frank Ryan of Athgarvan meanwhile.

Louth Senior Strokeplay winner Sean Goggin plays alongside Meath Senior Strokeplay Runner-Up David Campbell of Trim as former National Matchplay winner Kevin McCarthy of Rocklodge plays alongside Bruff's Martin Keohane. Joseph Joyce is the sole Glenville player in this section as he tees-off with Conor O'Hare of

Cloghogue. The second session starts off with St Annes' David Doyle and Old County's Stephen Murray before Eamon Gibney returns to the scene of his Irish Open win. A Meath Strokeplay success and being a member of the Irish winning team should boost his confidence as Ian Dillon playing alongside him won't be short of it following a Leinster Mixed Foursomes win and going 71 holes in the Kildare Strokeplay before getting the better of Cathal Dunne!

World and European Strokeplay holder Liam O'Donovan of Bruff looks for a fourth title this weekend as he plays alongside Bellewstown's Anthony Kavanagh. 2004 winner Darren Collins of St Annes plays with Castleisland's James Dignan as 10 years on from his success in Tullamore, St Annes' Frank Dineen will tee-off alongside Cunnigar's John Carroll. There are two Glenville players in this section of the draw with Julian Kelly playing alongside Derek Ryan of St Patricks and Anthony Mahoney playing with



**2018 Munster Gents Strokeplay Intermediate Grade prize winners. Brian O'Flynn, Tipp Hills (3rd place), Edward Hackett, Collins (Winner) and Gerard Hogan, St. Stephen's (Runner-up).**

Castleisland's Aidan O'Connor. 2009 victor and National Matchplay Champion Bryan Delaney will play alongside fellow Cork player Denis O'Sullivan of Douglas with Cork Strokeplay under Delaney's belt as the pairing of Irish International James Cleary and Ray Murphy will draw some interest.

Murphy won has won two of his many national titles in Glenville with it being 10 years since he beat John Walsh in a National Matchplay Final here. Fourth place finisher in Hillview Paul O'Brien plays with Karl Murphy of Old County as Stephen Shoer plays with Michael Concannon of Cloghogue. Irish team captain John Ross Crangle tees off with Paul Carey of Tullamore

buoyed by a strong performance in the playoff at the Leinsters in Bagenalstown which ultimately led him to victory. National Matchplay Semi-Finalist John McGrath of Deerpark will tee-off in the final two ball meanwhile alongside Erry's Aongus Coughlan as the Top 20 for the playoff will become known once they complete their 36 holes.

So, there you have some of the key figures in the first staging of the National Gents Strokeplay in Dublin since 2012 this weekend. While events in Moscow and Croke Park are tempting also on Sunday, we can assure you there should be some fine drama in determining who the 2018 winner will be come Sunday evening.

## **PPUI Clothing Partner—Balon Sportswear**

The PPUI are delighted to announce that they have agreed a partnership with BALON SPORTSWEAR to become a clothing partner and Balon kindly agreed to sponsor the clothing of the 2018 International squad. As part of this relationship Balon have put together a range of offers specifically for PPUI Affiliated clubs. Balon Sportswear offer a wide range of clothing options for sports clubs and there are offers available specifically for Pitch and Putt clubs. Balon Sportswear have already supplied clothing including ¼ zip tops and polo shirts to PPUI affiliated clubs including Tullamore P&P Club, St. Patrick's P&P Club, Fermoy P&P Club to name a few. The top selling Pitch and Putt Club items include club crest & PPUI logo embroidered on them. Balon have a wide range of design options available and will work with clubs to suit their needs. Club polo shirts are available at €18 for youth sizes and at €21 for adults and ¼ zip tops are available at €23 for youth sizes and at €28 for adult sizes. Combinations of polos, zip tops, pants, wind-cheaters, hoodies & padded vests are detailed in the documents available on the PPUI website. You can contact them through email on [orders@balonsports.com](mailto:orders@balonsports.com) or through Facebook @Balon Sportswear. All items in packs can be bought as single items and clubs/county teams can make their own packs to suit needs The PPUI encourage all clubs to support their partners and in doing so you will receive excellent offers and service.



# Former PPUI President Eamonn Birchall

By John Manning

*The PPUI recently mourned the loss of our former President and Patron Eamonn Birchall, we send our sincere sympathies to all of his family. The following is a tribute written by fellow Shandon member and former PPUI PRO John Manning which was posted originally on our website and re-published for this edition of Backspin.*

A native of St. Mobhi Road in Dublin's Glasnevin (with Kildare connections), Eamonn Birchall joined Shandon Pitch and Putt club as a juvenile in 1955. In 1958, he was elected Shandon delegate to Dublin County Board and also served on Shandon's club committee. Eamonn remained involved in our sport ever since, serving as a very fine administrator in a huge range of capacities. His involvement spanned the entire history of the Union as he was a Leinster Council delegate to the inaugural meeting of the PPUI in 1961.

Eamonn held numerous administrative posts down those decades including Treasurer at county (Dublin), provincial (Leinster) and national level, Vice President and President of Leinster and National and Vice Chairman and Chairman

of Dublin County Board. Following the change in the Constitution which permitted it, Eamonn was the first PPUI President to serve a three-year term (1977-79) of Office (Patrick A. Murphy had earlier served two consecutive two-year terms). Eamonn Birchall returned as P.P.U.I. President in 2013 and was one of five two-time PPUI Presidents (along with Mervyn Cooney, P.A. Murphy, Liam Houlihan and Myles McMorrow). Eamonn was enmeshed with the P.P.U.I. NEC at various times across six decades between the 1960s and 2016.

Eamonn was a Factory Manager in the food processing industry with Batchelor's. After his retirement from Batchelor's, he became Office Administrator with the PPUI in 1990. Every day for seventeen years, he made his way across town from his home on Glenfarne Road on Dublin's North side to the House of Sport and later to Sport HQ to tend to the needs of the PPUI's registered players. This he did with his unparalleled knowledge of the game and his unique brand of humour. He always enjoyed talking to club secretaries and helping to solve any problems they



Former PPUI President Eamon Birchall hands the chain of office over to current PPUI President Mervyn Cooney at the PPUI Annual Convention 2016

might have. Meeting deadlines, getting draws made and circulated and maintaining records were always sources of immense satisfaction to him. He built up a huge camaraderie with the other sport administrators at Sport HQ.

Eamonn was a generous sponsor of championships including the Leinster Juvenile Strokeplay and Dublin Ladies Strokeplay. Hugely interested in Pitch and Putt's future, Eamonn was deeply immersed in all of the PPUI's Strategic Plans. For years, Eamonn Birchall masterminded logistical triumphs during National Convention weekends including some hugely enjoyable Annual Dinners, at which Eamonn would regularly win the raffle! An acknowledged PPUI Rules expert, Eamonn also contributed richly to production of the FIPPA international rulebook.

He was President of his beloved Shandon for many years and rightly honoured as an Honorary Member in recognition of his services to the Phibsboro club. Eamonn was a top-class player. He was a member of Shandon Dublin League winning teams, won many Shandon club championships and contested a number of national championships in the 1960's. Eamonn was one of the first to embrace international Pitch and Putt development and served as Team Manager to some of the Irish teams of the early 1980s (that played England). He and the late Kevin Lambert were instrumental in developing the contact with the English initially. Eamonn journeyed Down Under with the Irish team that played Australia in 1996.

Universally liked throughout the game, he was known to players and administrators throughout the land (and in recent years across Europe), despite the fact that he has never driven a car in his life! An avid student of the sport, Eamon's lack of his own transport never prevented his appearance at championships and functions the length and breadth of the country!

Coach to countless players down the years, responsible for introducing many newcomers to the game, advocate of aspiring administrators, a keen selector and guru to Pitch & Putt teams, his

avuncular style earned the sobriquet "Uncle Eamonn". One remembers his feeling of sheer delight as mentor and selector to the Dublin Juvenile team at Old County in 2005 when Eamonn and his colleagues brought Dublin from finishing last in the 2003 championship to regaining the National Inter-County title (for the first time in twelve years).

Eamonn entered the PPUI Hall of Fame in 1994, honoured for his unparalleled service to our sport. His election as Patron of the Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland at 1998 Convention in Longford was a fitting reward for a then half century involvement in Pitch and Putt. He had an unquenchable zest and enthusiasm for his chosen sport and in the intervening 20 years he continued to be counsellor, confidant and confessor to many.

Ní bheidh a leithéidí arís ann.

We extend deepest condolences to Eamonn's wife Jo and to his extended family.



**Eamonn Birchall PPUI President  
from 1977—79 and from 2013—2015**

# BACKSPIN PRODUCTION TEAM

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

(continued from first page) justice to his achievements in words. John has made a very good effort to capture Eamonn's essence however in a tribute on our website which is re-published for this magazine and can be found under a search in our website's News section entitled 'The Legend'. It was heartening to see so many Pitch & Putt figures at Eamonn's funeral to say farewell to him and JR tells us of a wonderful gesture by the Irish team upon their return from Urduna in paying their respects to Eamonn's family.

We had a successful running of the National Matchplay Championships in Tullamore where we managed to broadcast our Gents Final 'live' on Facebook with Mark Keohane and John Manning doing a great job in bringing it all to you from start to finish. This is an initiative we hope to expand on in future years and I want to thank Mark and Michael Murphy for their help with

filming a number of features throughout the weekend.

We hope for another two editions in 2018 and we encourage anyone with features they would like for considerations for future Backspins to contact me regarding same.

Happy Reading and Best Wishes to everyone involved in this weekend's event in Glenville,

Jason O'Connor

Communications & Press Officer  
PPUI

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## MAJOR UPCOMING FIXTURES AND DATES TO REMEMBER

<b>July 14th &amp; 15th</b>	Gents National Strokeplay @ Glenville
<b>July 21st</b>	Munster u-16 Strokeplay @ Rocklodge Leinster u-16 Strokeplay @ Seapoint
<b>July 28th &amp; 29th</b>	PJ & Catherine Bell Seniors National Strokeplay @ McDonagh
<b>July 28th &amp; 29th</b>	National u-16 Matchplay @ Kilbeggan
<b>Aug 11th</b>	Leinster u-16 Inter County @ Ringcommons Munster u-16 Inter County @ Parteen
<b>Aug 11th &amp; 12th</b>	Leinster Inter County @ Lucan & Ringcommons Munster Inter County @ Parteen
<b>Aug 18th</b>	National u-16 & u-20 Strokeplay @ Fermoy
<b>Aug 19th</b>	National u-16 Inter County
<b>Aug 25th &amp; 26th</b>	Irish Open @ Seapoint