

BACKSPIN

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

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PPUI

Issue Highlights:

- Ladies and Gents Reviews of the Year
- In Conversation With Our Number One Players
- Tributes to Kitty Bell and James Corcoran
- The Provincial Councils - Ten Years On...

WELCOME TO THE END OF YEAR ISSUE!

A Chara,

You are most welcome again to this our fourth and final edition of the Backspin E-Zine. This edition will be a more reflective look at the events of 2014 but we have suffered some sad and tragic losses within the Pitch & Putt Community in recent weeks particularly in the passing of PPUI Patron Mrs Catherine Bell and Westmeath Chairman James Corcoran.

Both their involvement in Pitch & Putt were vastly different, Mrs Bell's legacy stretching right back to the foundation of our great game in the 1940's while James was a more recent, but passionate convert to the sport. What was similar about the two of them was the huge reaction both their respective passings created amongst the Pitch & Putt Community. **(continued on last page)**



John Walsh and Ger Ward are back on top! Two stalwarts of the game have ascended to the top of the pile and will finish the year with the Number One ranking secured once again. This is not a new experience for either player nor were their respective National titles earlier this year, John in the Matchplay at Parteen and Ger in the Strokeplay at Fermoy. Both players discuss the year just gone with Backspin and look ahead to 2015. Report Pages 7 & 8.

GENTS REVIEW OF THE YEAR

By Paul O'Brien

All Ireland Matchplay Championships – Parteen

John Walsh emerged victorious in the Gents and winning this title 12 years on from his previous victory at Hillview was indeed a magnificent achievement. When you consider he had to beat players like Liam O'Donovan, Mick Hogan, Kieran Earls, Derek Courtney, Chris Scannell and Damien Fleming, it is fair to say that he fully deserved his triumph. Beating four previous All Ireland Champions along the way just proves how well Walsh played over the weekend and this win now gives him a total of three All Ireland Titles, his last coming in 2002. Walsh to be fair has been knocking on the door quite a bit since 2002 to land another All Ireland and he got his due reward on Monday afternoon. His opponent Damien Fleming would admit he was far from his best but Walsh was relentless in his quest for another Matchplay Title and like ever great player should do he never took his foot off the pedal in the match and despite a mini fightback from Damien, Walsh hit a superb pitch to the tricky 15th to close the game out on a scoreline of 5&3. John will look forward to trying to retain the title in Lakeside next year, a course John has played very well in the past and one thing is for certain Lakeside will test every player who is lucky enough to qualify.

Provincial Gents Nett Strokeplay – Douglas, Cloghogue & Inniskeen

The concept of this competition was met with huge disapproval but you can't deny giving credit where credit is due to anyone who wins any type of competition. Players still had the option of entering and to those who did enter I would say well done and in particular it was a Tipperary success filled weekend in Munster where you had James Ryan winning the Seniors, Martin Feeney (Douglas) winning the Intermediate and Jamie Malone winning the Juniors. In Cloghogue we had the raw and emerging talent of Shane Redmond winning the Senior and in Inniskeen we had Aaron Daly (Longmeadows) taking the Intermediate and Anthony Burke (Granard) taking the Junior title.

All Ireland Graded Strokeplay Championships – Stackallen

Alan Bennis (Parteen) proved his true worth over the duration play on the Saturday to win the Junior title where he finished on a total score of -11 to win by 3 shots from Declan Mulpeter (Ryston) who finished in Runner Up on -8 and he was two clear of Barry Dyas (McBride). It was a fantastic contest whereby you had 10 players playing the playoff and there was nine shots separating the leaders. Alan Bennis proved that the front nine holes was ultimately where he won the competition when he shot and opening -4 in the final 18 but Declan Mulpeter mounted a late challenge when he shot a closing -4 for his final 9 holes to try and haul back the Limerick man. Barry Dyas played steady throughout the final 18 and as those in front of him floundered as they dropped shots on the devilish back nine, Dyas continued to climb up the leaderboard where he eventually would take third spot. As alluded to earlier, it was a fantastic championship for our Juniors, the atmosphere was electric, they excelled as the pressure cooker continued to rise in temperature and I am sure many will be eager to continue to learn their trade and look forward to playing Cunnigar next year.

What a Championship the Intermediate was! It had it all one could say, birdies at a premium, we had a nine hole play-off, then we had sudden death, you couldn't script what unfolded on the hallowed turf of Stackallen. Eventually we had a winner in the name of Owen Farrell (St Bridgets) who managed to overcome the Kingdom and Deerpark's Creagh Courtney with Michael Vaughan (Inniskeen) taking 3rd spot on the Back 18 from Richard Jordan (Raffeen Creek). The playoff between the two young guns was magical; we had a hole in one from Owen while Courtney showed massive resolve to fight back with birdies at 8 and 9 to force sudden death. Owen chipped in on the signature 10th hole to claim his maiden victory. As I said, this championship was enthralling and I expect to hear a lot more of these two players as the years unfold.

Liam O'Donovan, what a man, what a player and what an absolute gentleman to boot. They say resolve, grit, determination, luck, massive ability and pure will to win makes a champion. All these words sum up Liam O'Donovan (Bruff). 9 times out of 10 a championship is decided by a putt but Liam proved that weekend that all facets of your game is of the utmost importance in the pursuit of winning. His play can be fearless but when in the zone there is not many better who can handle the pressure like the genial Bruff man. In ESB twelve years ago he held a beautiful 9 foot putt for his maiden win but in Stackallen he faced a far different obstacle. People knew that going big of Stackallen's 18th is no place for anyone but to go massively big was like climbing Everest to get up and down for par. O'Donovan has been known to be a brilliant chipper of a ball, has very soft hands with that club in his hand and what he produced on the final hole when it mattered most was simply incredible. To chip within one foot of the hole from that position deserved to win any tournament and those who witnessed it realised that they really did see something very special when it mattered most. It really was special.

Provincial Inter County – Tipp Hills & Collinstown

Cork once again won in Senior Men but Tipperary Ladies conquered the Ladies section in what can only be good for the game going forward in fairness. Dublin Ladies won in Leinster and massive

credit to Westmeath who dealt the pressures of playing on home turf to win the Gents section, a great success story of 2014.

Inter & Junior Provincial Inter County – St. Stephen's & Athgarvan

Kerry won the Intermediate Gents, Cork won the Junior while Cork won the Intermediate Ladies and Tipperary won the Junior Ladies. A remarkable day in St Stephens and in fairness it will be remembered for the battle of the young ladies of Una Brosnan and Gemma McCarthy who clearly showed their true potential on this great day. In Athgarvan we had Westmeath Inters once again win, and the Wexford men take the Junior Title.

National Inter Counties – Tullamore

Clare and Cork were victorious in what was a magical championship which was aided immensely by the host club who left no stone unturned to ensure perfection was established over the weekend. Cork were worth their win, I still think of what might have been for the Dubs but sport is cruel at the best of times and perhaps this will galvanise them to make them stronger in the years ahead, only time will tell. Clare, the Banner men were unsung heroes for many years and got their due reward and their stalwarts of the game can be exceptionally proud of their efforts as can all the teams who participated in the Second Division. This



Owen Farrell (St. Bridget's) and Alan Bennis (Parteen) - The respective Intermediate and Junior winners at Stackallen

game is about unity and it was great to see so many teams competing over the weekend, long may this continue. I have stated recently of the time delays at the Inter Counties and I think with a bit of tweaking this can be decreased considerably in the future with the right approach taken.

International Events

We once again held an Irish Open, this time in Glenville. Mother nature was not too kind that weekend but I believe this did not deter the visiting players and the Irish contingent from serving up a feast of Pitch & Putt. Eamon Gibney and Marian Byrne came out victorious and this was very important as it clearly outlined that we have the best players this game has to offer. We had many players who went overseas this year and shone like a beacon and played with distinction. Liam O'Donovan won the Galician Open and once again Liam along with Pacelli Darcy won the International Pairs in Catalonia, the latter adding to his O/55 title at the Galician Open. We should not forget the exploits of the likes of Kieran Earls, Alan Hanlon, John Walsh, Chris Scannell, Ray Murphy and Damien Fleming who also lead the Irish charge in many International tournaments this year. Also not

forgetting the many Irish players who participate in these events, they are great tournaments and I would advise anyone willing to participate in such events to go and play, it will be an experience you will not forget. We also had an International Challenge where a new concept was introduced for this challenge and whilst our lads were beaten in Catalonia, I think the idea was a good one and should be looked at again in the future.

The playing season is now over and it is nearly convention time but the game was hit very hard on December 1st when the news came flooding in that Westmeath Chairman James Corcoran had suddenly passed on to his eternal reward. I only met James a few times but every time I spoke to him I left thinking, this fella is more into pitch and putt than I am. I don't say that often but the vision he had for the game in his relatively short time involved left me speechless at times, he was a visionary and a man I admired as he was certainly a Do'er. His vision for the Inter & Junior Inter County Challenge in 2013 was the launch pad for this years Provincial Inter County. He may be gone but he will not be forgotten by all of those who had the pleasure of knowing him.



Kerry - Inaugural Munster Intermediate Inter-County Champions. Creagh Courtney, St John Kelliher, Jason O'Brien, Aidan O'Connor, Gavin Carroll and James Dignan, with a score of 473, finished 11 shots ahead of Cork in second.

LADIES REVIEW OF THE YEAR

By Linda Thomson

National Matchplay - Parteen

Our first National outing saw the Ladies descend on the town on Parteen in Limerick for the National Matchplay Championships. A course nestled outside Limerick on the Clare border, this course would be a new challenge for most participants. Some mouth-watering matches took place on the Saturday – to name a few, these could set up who was the potential finalists. Two St.Bridgets Ladies were in battle together namely Margaret Keogh & Tara Dillon. Breda Lonergan was going in search for the title on a course she would know a little better than her fellow competitors, starting off against Siobhan Keely. Margaret Hogan against Maree O'Toole was another to catch the eye as well as the outstanding battle between the youngest players, Una Brosnan and Martha O'Brien.

With Tara, Margaret, Marian, Ger, Chrissie, and Breda and Martha to name a few heading into the second day, more intriguing possibilities awaited us. Ger Ward and Tara Dillon were first to do battle, the winner of this match was I think in everyone's thoughts, through to the final! Chrissie at the other end of the table had a comfortable win over Sharon Bowes, and Marion a 6&5 win over Dubliner Siobhan McDonnell and Sheelagh Elmes also winning comfortably. The semi-finals were all great matches, with Tara overcoming Margaret Hogan 5&4 and Breda defeating Chrissie Byrne in an incredible tight match. Monday lunchtime saw Tara and Breda do battle. Tara found herself in the final, like two years previous against Margaret Hogan in Collinstown, were, it took 40 holes to declare a champion, namely Margaret. History was of course not going to repeat itself, or was it?

Breda and Tara were neck and neck all the way, and again, extra holes were needed for Breda to end her 27 year wait for a National singles title!

National Strokeplay - Fermoy

The next National event was the National Strokeplay, and it was off to Fermoy in Cork for the Ladies. A course that would be more familiar to our

Ladies, all was needed was sunshine for the weekend. It's disappointing that the numbers are going down year on year, but that's not something to delve on as we should put more time and effort into the ladies that do enter and play year on year. The juniors opened proceedings on the Saturday morning, and with heaving rain delaying their play and delaying the play for the Inters, this did not dampen the spirits of our ladies. After a long day and some excellent scoring in the Inter and Junior grades, we have some new winners in the form of Sarah O'Neill (Collins) in the Juniors, where she led the competition from start to finish. The Inter title went to Mary Donnelly from Ryston, in a battle she had with the young Claycastle player – Una Brosnan.

Sunday, and with a softer Fermoy, the senior championship got underway. Due to all the rain the day before, the Seniors knew it would be a game of putting to shoot low scores, and low scores is what was filtering through from the get go. Going into the final 10 very little separated the Top 10. After 54 holes, again we could not separate the final 2 players and Tara Dillon finds herself in a playoff situation with Ger Ward, who she beat back in June in Parteen on her way to the finals. Very little separated the ladies and it was after 10 holes Ger emerged victorious over Tara, who you would have to feel for, but she will come back fighting. Ger landed her 16th title and back to the No 1 spot.

Provincial Strokeplay - Ballinlough and Lucan

The Provincial Strokeplays took place even with the small entries. This year the format was changed. The graded competitions were now being played of handicaps, and the Nett scores being counted. Lucan played host in Leinster, and Ballinlough in the Munster. Home player Philo Condron took the honours in the Seniors, Mary Donnelly from Ryston in the Inters and another home player, Fiona Langon in the Juniors. It was Mary Murray from Rocklodge who won the Senior title, Una Brosnan, Claycastle in the Inters and Geraldine Hanrahan from the home course taking the honours in the

the Seniors, Mary Donnelly from Ryston in the Inters and another home player, Fiona Langan in the Juniors. It was Mary Murray from Rocklodge who won the Senior title, Una Brosnan, Claycastle in the Inters and Geraldine Hanrahan from the home course taking the honours in the Juniors. With the format being reverted to the old way in 2015, let's hope the numbers can be pushed up for both Matchplay and Strokeplay.

Inter-County Competitions

The Inter-Counties were next up and this year Collinstown played host to the Leinster IC. After a tense finish in the singles Dublin emerged victorious over Kildare.

All eyes turned to Tullamore some three weeks later. With the new format, the competition takes place over two days for the second year. Kildare were leading by a narrow margin from Dublin and Offaly on the Saturday and in the Singles it got very tight with only a few holes to go. However Kildare held on and emerged victorious over Dublin, with Offaly putting in a fine performance to finish third

This year we've seen for the first time graded Intermediate & Junior Inter-County competitions. Like all things new, a push on this competition in the ladies to enter could make it an every bit as enjoyable as the main event itself. Even though we had a small entry from the ladies, the competition did take place in McDonagh and the Ladies of Kildare took top honours. As an Inter-County player myself, I cannot speak highly enough in encouraging ladies to enter this event, it's an excellent opportunity to play for your county and bring the best out in your game.

As the season comes to a close, we have players in all grades, who for the first time have their names engraved in a piece of history, players putting their name back on, be it missing for a year or 27! We turn to the 2015 season and with Nationals in Lakeside, Ringcommons and Douglas, we can only look forward to seeing what new names add their names to history, or players looking to regain titles! We need to have a push in the Ladies game and get our ladies out supporting the competitions so we can continue to have the drama that generally follows.....



Breda Lonergan in action during her Matchplay triumph at Parteen

JOHN WALSH: BACK ON TOP

By Jason O'Connor

As we profile our No 1 players for 2014 respective journeys to the top of the rankings in the past year, Communications & Press Officer Jason O'Connor speaks firstly to Collins' John Walsh on a welcome return to form that saw him finally overcome a hoodoo in a National Singles Championship.

In trying to assume an honour he last held at the end of 2011, John Walsh needed to make the Final of the Cork Matchplay Championships in the middle of September. Trailing Ray Murphy by three points in the overall rankings, victory over Kieran Dunscombe in the semi-final brought him five points and the honour of being the PPUI's No 1 ranked Gents player for 2014. It's a scenario he was fully aware in advance of the Cork Matchplay. "I knew I had to get to the Final if I wanted to finish the year at No 1. The Cork Matchplay is never an easy competition in its own right and this was extra pressure. I'm disappointed I wasn't able to finish it off in the Final but Mossey Carey played very well in the Final," the Collins clubman said.

Overall it was a strong year for Walsh in the four majors he competed in with two winning titles and two runners-up finishes to boot. The National Matchplay in Parteen saw him end a 12 year wait for a National Singles title and it's one that brought immense relief as well as great delight. "When you go that long in waiting to win you wonder will it come again but thankfully all went right in Parteen. Derek Courtney in the quarter-final was definitely the toughest game of the weekend and I think Parteen did well in getting the course ready for the weekend," he said. The margin of his victory over Liam O'Donovan in the First Round was perhaps what people will remember most about Walsh's success that weekend but as fate would have it the Limerick man made amends in dramatic fashion in denying Walsh the double in Stackallen at the National Strokeplay. "Certainly I do have regrets about a few bogeys that day but it was such an open finish with the way the last nine holes went that it really could have gone anyway. Liam showed great nerve with that chip at the last and deserved to win because of it," he said.

Walsh was victorious at the Cork Strokeplay in Rosscarbery in early July to follow on nicely from his success in Parteen a month earlier but he found himself in the midst of another dramatic finale in September as he was the anchor player for Cork in the National Inter-County in Tullamore as Dublin made a dramatic late bid to deny the Rebel County their

retention of the aptly named Anchor Cup. "When we got to the last, I was told we were a shot down and needed a birdie for a playoff at best. I was relieved with where my tee-shot had ended but I felt for John Crangle when I saw his tee-shot because I had done exactly the same thing myself the previous day. To find out afterwards that we had actually won because of it was an incredible feeling especially considering we had nearly thrown it away from a comfortable position. You have to give Dublin credit for the way they came back at us though," he said.

Three weeks later at the same venue saw Walsh and his Collins/Fermoy team-mates lose out to St. Anne's in the Final of the Scratch Gents Inter-Club Competition while on the continent, Walsh and Collins club-mate Chris Scannell just missed out on the International Pairs title in early October when they were defeated by the Limerick duo of O'Donovan and Pacelli Darcy. Overall Walsh can be proud though and he attributes a change of ball as being a big part of his successes in 2014. "I switched from a Pro V1 to a Nike Platinum, which is the ball I was using when I lost the National Strokeplay playoff to Eddie Carey back in 2010 and it definitely worked wonders for me this year," he admits. As well as his County and National successes, Walsh added four Scratch Cups to his collection which has easily topped the century figure at this point!

His win on home turf in May was the most special of these. "I went to an extra three holes with Eoin Walsh and Kieran Dunscombe and then had to go on to sudden death to finally win it out so it was certainly one that was hard earned," Walsh said. He believes the introduction of the graded inter-counties at Provincial level was one of the most positive decisions of 2014 but looking towards 2015, the prospect of adding the European Strokeplay title to the world crown that he won back in 2013 is an enticing prospect for the Cork player. "I am looking forward to going to Orvelte for it but the Dutch courses are never easy and certainly it will be a hard one to win. Overall though I feel that there are a lot of good young players coming through and the standard is getting higher and higher each year"

Domestically he is assured of being on the first tee-box in the first match of the 2015 National Matchplay in Lakeside (he's also assured of his place in the Strokeplay in Cunnigar) but what else the New Year will bring Walsh in his already glittering career is anyone's guess.

IN CONVERSATION WITH GER WARD

By Linda Thomson

Linda Thomson speaks to Portmarnock's Ger Ward on her return to the No 1 spot in the Ladies rankings.

Linda: "Ger, you are back at No 1 in the rankings, how does it feel?"

Ger: "Surprised! It may have been different had the two Leinsters gone ahead in the original format. But as they had been changed and with Chrissie not entering the Strokeplay, it feels great to have it back again."

L: "You changed your club coming into the 2014 season, we can see it worked, but why the change?"

G: "I changed to more modern technology. I had the same club for 30 years and the grooves were starting to wear, so figured it was time to change, and got something I felt comfortable with."

L: "Any chance of auctioning it off?"

G: "(laughs), maybe!"

L: "What do you think was your own and the stand-out match in the National Matchplay?"

G: "Mine would be the match I had against Tara. She putted very well on the day, and had some chip-ins, and that extra bit of luck needed in Matchplay, but was a battle to the end. The stand-out match overall I thought, was the final. It was great to see the two ladies battle to the very end and was very enjoyable to watch. It just proved that with Matchplay, anything can happen."

L: "What did you think of the standard of play in the National Strokeplay this year?"

G: "It was excellent. By the time I went to tee-off, so many Ladies were putting in solid scores around the course. Fermoy is my type of course and really a home from home for me. I really could not have been on a better course for me. I really enjoy playing it, and with the practice the week before I knew we would be playing the Championship course. The rain on the Saturday helped, as they were holding very well. Once you get the distances right in Fermoy, you can score very low. Tara's putt on the 10th in the playoff was a tricky three footer and it was just pace that it missed. When it did sink in I was delighted that I had won my 16th title in Fermoy."

L: "What are your goals for 2015?"

G: "Keep playing to a high standard and keep challenging for titles. I always see winning as a bonus. My main goal is to win another Inter-County with the Dublin girls, as they all practice so hard for the Leinster and Nationals."

L: "What course are you most looking forward to playing in the Championships next year?"

G: "I am really looking forward to the National Matchplay in Lakeside. It is a lovely track, tricky and it will be a challenge on the weekend for everyone."

L: "Can I have a last word from you for the ladies in 2015?"

G: "I really would love to see more ladies enter and support competitions, as we need as many playing as possible. I would also like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and best of luck for 2015."

PACELLI AND LIAM TRIUMPH IN PAPALUS

By Alan Hanlon

Alan Hanlon reflects on a great triumph for Bruff duo Liam O'Donovan and Pacelli Darcy in early October, at the International Pairs tournament in Catalonia.

What a year it has been for Liam O'Donovan. The Bruff supremo had an outstanding win at the Galician Open in July. He followed that up a few weeks later in Stackallen with his second National Strokeplay title. Last October, he crowned a brilliant year off by winning the International Pairs tournament with his playing partner and good friend Pacelli Darcy at the wonderful Papalus course in Catalunya. The Pairs tournament has become a stable fixture on the International circuit. The difficult yet brilliant Papalus venue is ideally suited for this event.

The competition ran over two days at the Lloret De Mar venue. There were three rounds of Pitch & Putt. Each had a different format. First up was the Scotch Foursomes. Pacelli and Liam were paired with the talented Martha Farres Balleste and Eric Puig Jou. The lads played solidly to finish eight under. The very difficult Foursomes format (every second ball) followed. The Limerick duo got off to a great start and were five under after 10 holes. However, a bogey on the 11th followed by pars to the finish meant that four under par was their total for that round. Still, it was a solid score and it ensured that the Bruff pair were the overnight leaders on twelve under par. Just a single shot behind were two Catalan pairs - the holders Manel Martinez and Miguel Roger, who were alongside Enric Sanz and Josep Martinez. Best of the remaining Irish at this stage were Collins's John Walsh and Chris Scannell who were sitting on nine under.

Sunday saw the final round format of Fourball. Pacelli and Liam were partnered by the holders Manel Martinez and Miguel Roger. Once again, the Bruff pair performed very well over the opening nine holes. Their main challengers now began to take shape in the form of World Champion John Walsh and former National Champion Chris Scannell. The Cork duo were playing one hole ahead of the Bruff pair and closed the lead to one shot on the 15th hole. However, Liam sank a 20 footer on the same hole to restore a two shot lead. Walsh responded with a great birdie on the 17th hole where a very difficult downhill putt reduced the gap once again to one shot. However, O'Donovan responded in due fashion with a monster 25 footer of his own for birdie on that same penultimate hole.

The importance of this putt could not be understated as it meant that a par on 18 would guarantee victory. This was duly accomplished and the Limerick duo closed to win by a shot on -19 from John Walsh and Chris Scannell. Third place went to Enric Sanz and Josep Martinez. Jordi Serra and Dani Gimenez, members Catalonia's European Team championship winning side came next in fourth place. They finished ahead of Irish father and son combination Weeshie and Shane Murphy and the holders Manel Martinez and Miguel Roger (Catalonia) on the tiebreak.

Once again, it proved to be a thoroughly successful event. All the players have remarked on the excellent organisation that went into hosting this Pairs competition. Much credit and a great deal of gratitude goes to Xavi Ponsdomenech and his hardworking team. Congratulations to one and all and congratulations to Liam and Pacelli on a superb victory.

THE PROVINCIAL COUNCILS: TEN YEARS ON

By John Manning

10 years on from their dissolution, John Manning remembers the old Leinster & Munster Councils and some of the prominent figures who were a part of them during their existence.

At one time, there was two National Pitch & Putt associations. Thankfully, sanity prevailed and the two merged to form the PPUI in 1960. That process also led to the establishment of the Munster and Leinster Councils and continuing the GAA theme a Central Council with delegates from the provinces.

Phil Allen organised a milestone function in Cork's Commons Inn on Saturday, September 20th 2003. Principal speaker was then PPUI Office administrator (and now President of the PPUI) Eamonn Birchall. The occasion was a Dinner to mark the 50th anniversary of the Munster Council. That night Eamonn mesmerised the attendance with anecdotes from his 50 year involvement in the sport in which he maintained an excellent rapport with the southern fraternity despite his eastern affiliations.

The first Convention of the Munster Council was held in the Collins Pavilion on November 10th 1953. The clubs present at that first meeting were Altona, Ashgrove, Collins, Highfield, Rocklodge, Tramore and Woodvale. There many outstanding Presidents in the intervening years – such as Pat Dalton, Chris Twohig, Cristóir Ó Mathuna, P.J. O'Riordan, Kieran Costello, Bob Casey, Liam Houlihan, Jack Fitzgerald, Paddy Kelleher, Ernie O'Brien Hogan and Paddy Murphy. Some went on to serve nationally. Others did not.

Another speaker at the function in 2003 was former Munster President Phil O'Sullivan (who held the office in 1967 and 1968). All of the then Munster Officers led by latter day President Roger Barron were in attendance. The following day, Tralee's Teresa Broderick and Jamie Wrenn won the last adult event held under the Munster Council remit with a tally of +14 to take the Munster Mixed Foursomes at Douglas. A couple of weeks afterwards Cashel Community School finally brought the Munster Council curtain down with a two shot win in the provincial secondary schools tournament at Larkspur Park.

The workshops held around the turn of the century to prepare PPUI's first ever Strategic Plan concluded that the governance structure of the sport (modelled on the GAA) was top heavy and expensive. There was a duplication of roles and effort. The 2002-'06 Strategic Plan outlined that the Union would be governed by an

enlarged NEC. The NEC was to be supported by the commitment of volunteers to form Select Committees for the purpose of managing the organisation and for running national, international and provincial competitions. The select Committees were to include the Provincial Championships Committee which was to be responsible for running the provincial championships and competitions. The Munster and Leinster Councils and Central Council were no more.

There have been a number of very industrious Provincial Competitions Co-ordinators since 2004 – the likes of Myles McMorrow, Paddy Browne, Niall Reynolds, Breda Brophy and others but entries in general have plummeted since 2004. The death of the much loved administrator Jim Finglas (R.I.P.) probably didn't help initially. However, the entries dip has been manifest at national level as well. Regional/County Boards were intended to be online before the end of 2005. Support for the annual mid-term forum for County/Regional Boards has been patchy. Central Council had many passionate and eloquent contributors from Munster and Leinster through the years. The likes of Christy Egan, Tom McGough and John McCormack gave articulate voice to the west. The quarterly gathering in the midlands provided a sense check on the Union's progress and allowed for some devolution of power.

The Leinster Council formed in 1954. Clubs such as Glenville, Rush, Ferrard (Clogherhead), Alfa, and the Curragh courses were prominent. In contrast to Munster, Leinster originally did not have a Constitution and had few written rules. John Smith, Dick Abraham Larry Furlong Jimmy Vaughan, Billy Lynch, John Kelly, Alec Myles were some of the charismatic characters that presided over eastern province affairs down the decades. On September 21st 2003, Iris Cunningham and Jim Farrell of Bellewstown carded +14 to win the final provincial Mixed Foursomes run by a Leinster Council. Seapoint hosted the Secondary Schools Tournament a few weeks later. Teams representing St. Joseph's CBS of Drogheda filled the first two places. Fittingly, last President of Leinster (and Seapoint stalwart) Sean Breen presented the prizes.

Many recent converts to Pitch and Putt with no experience of life under a provincial Council. However, some of the more established exponents will hanker back to the days when the familiar blue or green blazer ruled the roost.

JAMES CORCORAN: A TRIBUTE

By Alan Hanlon

On Friday 28th November 2014 last, Westmeath Pitch & Putt honoured its most successful year in decades when the County Board hosted a celebration night at the Grenville Arms Hotel in Mullingar. It was a wonderful night. As to be expected on nights such as these, presentations were made to the various individuals that had contributed to the Lake County's success in 2014. One of these presentations was to the County Board Chairperson James Corcoran by the members of the Westmeath 2014 Senior Gents squad. It was significant then in that this particular presentation was a surprise. Such was the high regard in which James Corcoran was held. However, unbeknownst to all that night, the significance of that presentation was to extend far and beyond the boundaries of Westmeath. This was to be the last time that James would be seen in a public capacity as Westmeath Chairperson. Four days later, the news had spread like wildfire that James had died suddenly in the early hours of Tuesday morning 2nd December.

The news was greeted with absolute dismay and disbelief by all within the Pitch & Putt World. His loss was deeply felt and most acutely within his beloved Westmeath. This great Pitch & Putt community is still reeling from his departure and it will take some time for that community to find the will and the strength to move on as undoubtedly it will have to do. I don't expect anything that this writer puts down on these few pages will allow you to fully understand the importance of this great man to Westmeath Pitch & Putt. If that is what you want, then I would refer you to the various articles on social media, the messages and the writings of others that have appeared abundantly since that sad morning in early December. All I can do is give you a brief account and possibly, even if it is not meant, a personal account of my encounters with the great man that I knew as James Corcoran.

The best place to start is to look clinically at James's contribution to Pitch & Putt. He was in his fourth year as Westmeath Chairperson. In that time, he galvanised and made the board a more inclusive and relevant body for everyone. He oversaw the rise in Westmeath fortunes both on and off the

playing field. He was ever present at all Westmeath Inter-County events and saw the gradual improvements of the Westmeath Senior Gents' team that culminated in the county's first ever Leinster Senior title this year. One of the important contributions that James made to this area was the introduction of a fixed two year term for the team manager. He saw the need for the manager to have some security in his post and he recognised that the annual re-election of a manager was counter-productive to that. It was a small change but a significant one.

If there is to be a legacy, it is this. 2014 was the first year where we saw official inter-county competition at intermediate and junior levels. This has only come about because of the vision of James Corcoran. He first mooted the idea a number of years ago. Being the man of action that he was, he initiated challenge matches at Intermediate and Junior levels between Offaly and Dublin. This led to a Leinster Inter-County challenge tournament for these grades in his beloved Lough Owel in 2013. Its resounding success has culminated in provincial inter-counties at these grades becoming a part of the PPUi fixture list for this year and the years to come. Notwithstanding the many efforts of dedicated individuals, that is some achievement for the vision of one man. This is all the more remarkable with the fact that James was relatively new to Pitch & Putt having only realistically come to the sport in the last decade.

James was a very warm character, extremely likeable and very witty. In short, he endeared himself easily to all who knew him. He was gregarious in a quiet sort of way. His charm was evident while his ability to stand his ground was never underestimated. At the same time, he listened deeply to whatever anyone had to say and would often instigate actions arising from such discussions. His loyalty to his beloved Westmeath was sacrosanct and evident by the selfless hours he gave to the Westmeath cause. I have seen this first hand where he was present at every Westmeath senior team practice meeting and competition and there were quite a number of these. He was a forward thinking man and in many ways my abiding

memories of him will always revolve around the many hours that he and I debated the present and the future of Pitch & Putt. He often rang me at various times of the day to discuss ideas and proposals. He was acutely aware of my conflictual nature while being very respectful to my opinions. In short, he knew how to handle and to get the best out of me. I reckon that this was his greatest characteristic; he had that innate ability of getting the best out of everyone. That's what made him the leader that he was. He had ambitions. He wanted to go further. Indeed, I was very fortunate to be in his presence the night before he died when he announced his intentions to seek national office.

Alas! That is not to be. As far I am concerned, he is now on a different journey, probably a nicer one. Understandably, I and all who knew him well feel his loss greatly but I hasten to add that my life is all

the better for having known James. There is little more to say. I reckon that the best way we can remember him is to honour his legacy by seeking to improve our wonderful sport at every opportunity. That's what he did in his short time in Pitch & Putt. That's what he wanted and I reckon still wants now.

James will be sadly missed by his partner, Maureen, his children James, Peter and Kelly, sisters, brothers, daughters-in-law, son-in-law, grandchildren, family circle and many, many friends. We extend sincere sympathies to all at this difficult time.

Rest in peace, my good friend.



The Westmeath Senior team who claimed a first Leinster title for the Lake County. A proud moment for James under his Chairmanship. Two weeks later, they would also win the Inaugural Leinster Intermediate Championship.

A NURTURER, A MATRIARCH, AN ADVOCATE...

By John Manning

Following on from his thoughtful recent obituary on the PPUI website, John Manning looks at Mrs Catherine Bell's contribution to the game of Pitch & Putt in a bit more detail.

Fifteen times, the winner of a National Senior Championship, played under the auspices of the PPUI, has represented Woodvale, the compact nine hole course on Cork's South Douglas Road. If one includes the pre PPUI days of the 1940s and '50s, the tally ratchets up to an even more impressive 20, for the course built by Pat and Kitty Bell in their own backyard.

Clare Keating (nee Foley) supplied many of those titles. A fine hockey player and top-class swimmer, Clare was a natural athlete who could have mastered any sport. When the Foley family moved from near Rocklodge, where Clare had learned Pitch & Putt, to Woodvale, Catherine (Kitty) Bell was entrusted with the task of "looking after" the teenaged Clare in her first league match – partnering her in the Fourballs. "How did she get on?" Mrs. Bell was asked afterwards. "Get on? I spent my time picking up my ball on green after green! When she wasn't pitching 'gimmes', she had two holes-in-one!" But young Clare learned much from her new club-mate. Mentor beat mentoree in the earlier rounds of the National Ladies Matchplay at Ierne in 1965, the year Kitty Bell lost to Teresa McGuigan in the final.

Another Woodvale champion to be influenced and encouraged by Kitty Bell was Pat O'Brien, a fine player and an even nicer person, who won the 1966 National Strokeplay at Rocklodge. Kitty was a great friend of the late Nita Canty (wife of prominent Cork publican Matt), who won the very first Irish Ladies Matchplay championship in 1946. With

Woodvale a mecca for visiting Pitch and Putt enthusiasts and inquisitive journalists alike, Kitty Bell became a strong promoter of the sport and its traditions. When American John Garrity of Sports Illustrated visited Woodvale in 2004, he was charmed by his gracious hostess and was fascinated to hear that Woodvale's membership was now 30, down from a peak of 50, just after World War II. Mrs. Bell also informed Garrity why Pitch & Putt took off. "The war was on, you couldn't get to real golf," she said. "My husband (the late P.J. Bell) saw the little course in Fountainstown,"—the birthplace of Irish Pitch & Putt, the holiday village on Cork Harbour—"so himself and the lads started Pitch and Putt in Cork City. Then we got married, and he put his eye on the place here. This is my family home."

As Pitch & Putt began to grow internationally, some of the fledgling overseas associations made pilgrimages to Woodvale, where they were royally received by the first lady of Pitch and Putt. They returned, entranced by the close up experience of the origins of our sport. P.J. Bell was part of the Committee that delivered the first set of Pitch & Putt rules in 1946. Kitty Bell remained steadfast to those rules and attended many a meeting and many a Convention over the years to ensure that P.J.'s successors in Pitch & Putt administration maintained the ethos set by the early pioneers.

Kitty and her husband were prominent in helping develop other courses, such as Hillview and Fernhill. Their children, son in law and grandchildren were keen Pitch and Putt exponents.

Mrs. Catherine (Kitty) Bell. Patron of the PPUI. First PPUI Hall of Fame Inductee. A long life. Well lived!

PRODUCTION TEAM FOR THIS ISSUE

Jason O'Connor (Editor), Linda Thomson, Alan Hanlon, John Manning, Paul O'Brien and Pauric Buggy.

(continued from page 1)

It was heartening to see so many people recognise them by either their attendance at their respective funerals and the tributes and offers of sympathy both received on social media. Both are remembered here within this edition by both John Manning and Alan Hanlon.

Elsewhere Alan speaks with Liam O'Donovan and Pacelli Darcy on their recent success at the International Pairs event in Catalonia while John looks back at the old Provincial Councils on the 10th anniversary of their disbandment which occurred this year. Our No 1 ranked players for 2014 (John Walsh & Ger Ward) are both profiled while Paul O'Brien and Linda Thomson offer their own takes on the Gents and Ladies game within the past 12 months. Time constraints prevent a look back at the Juvenile year but there is plenty of coverage in issues two and three this year of the events at U-16 level both provincially and nationally. Every other national and provincial event through the year is also covered in detail in the previous editions this year.

The 2015 Convention of the Union will take place in the Anner Hotel in Thurles on Saturday, February 28th beginning at 11am. Clubs and County/Regional Boards will convene shortly to discuss motions and nominations in the lead up. We encourage all our members to contribute to same and offer constructive and meaningful proposals that will bring our game forward. These are the places where the business of our Union is conducted and only through here can progress and new ideas come forward. Remember that all nominations and motions must reach head office by Monday, February 9th.

The next edition will hopefully be available in March or April next year. It's been a pleasure to get this project off the ground since last June, I thank everyone for their support and feedback of same and I owe a big debt of gratitude to John, Paul, Linda & Alan for contributing throughout the year. This e-zine is an evolving project; next year's editions will hopefully have a different look but will ultimately focus on the one thing that unites us all... our love of the game of Pitch & Putt.

Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Daoibh,

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