

P03 Getting British golf back in the swing

P05 Putting colour and style on the greens

P12 Top tips on how to improve your game



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## Overview



Image: Getty

Rickie Fowler of the US shakes hands with Europe's Rory McIlroy during the 2014 Ryder Cup: golf has been hitting the headlines, but needs to attract new audiences

# GETTING GOLF BACK INTO THE SWING

Golf as enjoyed by the well-heeled is in good shape, but overall public participation has faded. **Edwin Smith** looks at ways of correcting the dip in popularity

In the summer of 1996, a prodigiously talented 20-year-old by the name of Tiger Woods turned pro and, at a stroke, promised to usher in a new era that would democratise his sport and take it to a younger, wider audience in the process. The stage was set for a glorious revolution.

But now, 18 years later, golf – not unlike Tiger – finds itself at something of a crossroads. Whereas the man has suffered poor form, injury and reputational setbacks, the game is losing players in its traditional heartlands and is still struggling to shake off the stuffy, old-fashioned image that has managed to cling to it, thanks to a well-meaning, but stubborn, old guard.

Fortunately, the state of play in established golf nations, such as the UK and the United States, doesn't tell the full story. While participation in golf has dropped by 15 per cent in England between 2006 and 2013, and by around 20 per cent in the States in the last decade, trends in some other parts of the world are beginning to travel in the opposite direction.

In China "golf is still enjoyed by, statistically, 0 per cent of the population", says Dan Washburn, author of *The Forbidden Game: Golf and the Chinese Dream*. But, he adds, the world's newest super power is home

to an increasing number of golfers. And even a tiny slice of a 1.4-billion population, "can still amount to a decent-sized number".

As a result, "there are people who look at China as the next frontier and some in the golf industry are hinging their hopes on China as far as the future of the game is concerned".

Between 2005 and 2010, the number of golf courses in China tripled (to 600) – a dramatic growth spurt by any standards, but particularly in light of legislation that makes it technically illegal to build new courses. It is, Mr Washburn says, a symptom of the country's complicated relationship with a pastime that Chairman Mao banned, labelling it a "sport for millionaires".

Even so, China looks set to play an increasingly important role in golf's future on a global scale.

That theory was lent added weight by the recent £135-million acquisition of Wentworth by the Beijing-based Reignwood Group. But then, the top end of the market is in comparatively rude health. The locations, equipment and experiences on offer to golfers with a little money to spend continue to improve all over the world. In time, though, the effect of a sustained slowdown in the number of new players coming to the game could be felt further up the food chain.

The ruling body of golf throughout the world, except in the United States and Mexico, the Royal & Ancient's recent – and long-overdue – vote to admit female members is a step in the right direction, as is the effort that clothing companies have made to try to modernise players' wardrobes. But there are still significant barriers to entry for would-be golfers.

### TIME, COST AND IMAGE

According to Richard Flint, development manager at England Golf, the three main ones are "time, cost and perception". Mr Flint says that the inclusion of golf in the 2016 Olympics, for the first time since 1904, is "a very positive thing", but he is more interested in what individual clubs can do to attract and retain players.

There is benefit to be had from offering different types of memberships, inventive pricing models and encouraging people to play a less time-consuming round of six holes

Although player numbers have declined across all demographics in England each year for the last ten years, he says that England Golf figures show 21 per cent of clubs managed to increase their membership numbers last year.

"The two big things that [these clubs] focused on were friendliness and flexibility," says Mr Flint. So customer-service training is important, but there is also benefit to be had from offering different types of memberships, inventive pricing models and encouraging people to

play a less time-consuming round of six holes, rather than the traditional nine or eighteen.

He also mentions the TaylorMade initiative, Hack Golf, which sees beginners aim for holes that measure 15 inches in diameter, as opposed to the regulation 4¼ inches. Mark King, chief executive of the equipment manufacturer, says this is "meant to take away the intimidation factor" and make the sport more accessible.

And more creative solutions are beginning to be put on the table. Bubba Watson, one of the most colourful characters on the PGA Tour, partnered with his clothing sponsor Oakley to design a golf buggy-cum-hovercraft. A video of Watson driving the vehicle over bunkers and through water hazards has more than 8.5 million hits on

YouTube. The idea generated positive publicity for a public course in Ohio, which ordered two of the craft.

Of course, hovercraft golf buggies are not the answer for every local golf club, but the idea does exemplify the kind of thinking that could improve golf's image, attract more players and secure the long-term future of a magical game. **R**





## Business

DOWN TO  
BUSINESS  
WITH GOLF

Whether networking on the links, sponsoring a player or even a tournament, golf is a great game for marketing, writes  
**Dan Matthews**



German champion golfer Martin Kaymer works with SAP on developing golf technology

**E**ver since the game was invented half a millennium ago, golf has enjoyed a fruitful partnership with commerce. The structure of the game, designed for between two and four people to play together, and its unhurried pace makes it the perfect environment for a bit of informal “biz dev”.

Over the years, golf’s relationship with business has matured, becoming more entrenched and creative as seasons pass. Along with Formula 1, it is pound-for-pound one of the most monied sports in the world. Tournament winners are instant millionaires and the richest young golfers, like the richest young racing drivers, can reasonably anticipate dollar-billionairehood by the time they retire.

Despite a drop in form, failure to win a major tournament since 2008 and the loss of several valuable endorsements, Tiger Woods is estimated by *Forbes* to have made \$61.2 million last year. He is sixth on its list of top-paid sports people in 2014 and, despite a costly divorce, is said to have retained about \$600 million of his estate. *Business Insid-*

*er* calculates that he has made \$1.3 billion during his career so far.

But golf fans offer riches too; brands targeting ABC1 audiences could scarcely find a better channel to connect with them. According to Chris Burton, vice president of global sponsorships at SAP, the sport has the highest proportion of fans classed as business decision-makers sprinkled among its 80 million disciples.

The most direct way brands connect is to sponsor a big tournament, but this “massive outlay, massive return” model suits only a few advertisers – the sort that can stump up for a two-minute TV infomercial right before the Super Bowl – so clever marketers have devised a spectrum of ways to piggyback golf’s mighty appeal.

## PAIRING UP WITH PLAYERS

Player sponsorships and amateur tournaments are two ways brands have achieved penetration. But they have also concentrated hard on sweating these “assets”. Rather than just pinning a logo on a polo shirt, sponsorships drive

morale, connect with partners and chime seamlessly with other, more direct, marketing channels such as social media.

“Our vision for golf is to create a credible and unique story that demonstrates the power of SAP technology and how it can transform the way golf is consumed from player performance, on course analysis and ultimately fan engagement,” says Mr Burton, whose employer sponsors German golf champion Martin Kaymer.

SAP tracks and manages sponsorship return on investment based on leads, opportunities and deals closed, but it also works with Kaymer on developing its technology to enhance the sport for players and viewers globally.

It’s a similar story for accounting giant EY, which sponsors 2014 Ryder Cup captain Paul McGinley. As part of the sponsorship package, McGinley met with senior executives at EY and client businesses to explore leadership and team-building principles. His journey was captured in six films and posted across social media.

“Sponsorship should never be about tickets and advertising. If it was, we could do that and not worry about being a sponsor,” says Steve Wilkinson, managing partner, markets at EY. “We chose the Ryder Cup to convey our work in building a better working world. Part of that is about delivering exceptional service to our clients and it’s achieved by getting diverse talent to work together.”

Air Energi, a global workforce provider for the oil and gas industry, has sponsored British golfer Jamie Donaldson, also part of the Ryder Cup team, since 2010 to help promote its brand globally. Graeme Lewis, its group commercial director, says sponsorship gives it “a bit of personality that piques the interest of clients and job candidates alike”.

## BEYOND SPONSORSHIP

For those looking beyond sponsorship, there is no finer template than the William Hunt Trilby Tour, according to Glen Halsey, general manager of Kings Hill Golf Club in West Malling, Kent. The tournament is for amateur players, but offers high cash stakes under professional conditions.

Adding to the tension (and the money), games are screened on Sky Sports and draw large television audiences, principally due to the dark thrill of seeing mid-handicap golfers sweating under championship pressures.

For the tournament’s inventor, William Hunt, the benefits are just about endless. The golf clothing and equipment company retains control of the tournament and charges 1,000 players entrance fees of £265 each. Simple maths there. Sponsorships add to the value of the event and venues pay for essential costs, such as staffing and hosting.

A professional tailor by trade, Mr Hunt provides apparel for the golfers, including the trilby hats they all wear to play, as part of the fee and mines valuable data from the 10,000 applicants the competition receives each year. This makes it very profitable indeed.

Kings Hill Golf Club itself has a corporate partnership with Jaguar Land Rover. As part of the deal, display cars are parked at the club and the site is used as a showroom for new models, directly marketing the vehicles to their ideal customers.

“It is a good brand for us and we are a good brand for them. The partnership has been fruitful for JLR and we are making good use of the brand association,” says Mr Halsey.

But what of the classic corporate golf event? Four hours of hooking and slicing with business partners followed by networking, partying and, occasionally, the same thing again the next day? Will Hewitt, director of golf, spa and leisure at Celtic Manor, Newport, Wales, says the appeal remains strong, although the recession has changed its format in some cases.

“People place a premium on their time out of the office and focus a little more on return for their time invested. Many days have reduced in size to ensure a better ratio and more attention lavished on those who attend,” he says.

“We have experienced great success with shorter fun experiences, such as adventure mini golf, group tuition at our golf academy, snag golf and our golf simulator, which can make a great bolt-on to meetings and events, and appeal to beginners.” ■



Fashion

# PUTTING COLOUR AND STYLE ON THE GREENS

Golfers are getting a makeover as major sports brands introduce a new fashion look. **Robin Barwick** reports

**I**t can be hard to take golf fashion seriously when the sport's most revered item of clothing is a blazer that looks as if it has been stitched together from the green baize from a snooker table.

That is not to decry the craftsmanship of Hamilton Tailoring Company of Cincinnati, the company that has produced the green jackets for Augusta National Golf Club since the 1970s. Only Augusta members and winners of the US Masters – the first major of each golf season, held in April at the Georgia club – are presented with the single-breasted, woolen green jacket, embellished with three brass buttons. But it is just that its emerald-green colour – Pantone 342 – is hardly next year's black.

To Masters devotees, however, which includes the vast majority of people with any interest in golf at all, the splendour of that green jacket never dulls. This is the problem with golf, a sport of ancient history and royal traditions, that while it tries to look forward and modernise, it is still perceived by some as being stuck in the past.

“One of the best things about golf is this fusion of fashionable trends and popular culture, with iconic components that hark right back to the beginning of golf,” argues Bob Philion, president and chief executive of Cobra Puma Golf, one of the companies that is leading golf fashion in the 21st century. “That heritage adds to the options for us as a golfing brand. It's great that golf has those iconic elements.”

Global sports giant Puma entered

the golf market in 2006 and the company's success is indicative of sports giants moving in on the “auld” game. Labels such as Puma, adidas and Nike have become increasingly dominant in dressing golfers both on tour and in the Sunday Stableford over the past 20 years. Golf's diamond patterns and tartan trim – so often ridiculed – have been succeeded by influences from other sports, featuring blocks of bright colour, technical fabrics, slim-fitting cuts and slim-looking stripes.

But while golf apparel has caught up in styling and performance, the sport's participation numbers are falling behind. Sports Marketing Surveys Inc. has reported that the number of people playing golf in the UK has dropped to below 3.5 million for the first time in 15 years, to 3.36 million this year.

## CHAOS IS OPPORTUNITY

“We view what is happening in the industry right now as a tremendous opportunity for us,” says Cindy Davis, president of Nike Golf. “We have a view at Nike that when there is chaos, typically there is also opportunity. We think there is the opportunity for leadership to change within the industry, if you bring the right innovation and deliver it to the consumer in an interesting way.”

Nike Golf dresses current world number one Rory McIlroy from head to toe, as it has done with Tiger Woods since the former world number one turned professional in 1996. Nike also dresses leading golfing women, such as American Michelle Wie and Denmark's Suzann Pettersen, while Puma's bright colours are modelled by US stars Rickie Fowler and Lexi Thompson.

Nearly 20 years ago, it was a marketing masterstroke of Nike and Woods for the 14-time major winner to only wear red shirts for the final rounds of tournaments, and Puma has refreshed this concept through its own poster boy Fowler, who reserves bright orange for final rounds. A little unkindly, Irish commentator David Feherty has described Fowler as “a parking cone with hair”.

Designers and a new breed of golf professional are reviving the game's previously stuffy relationship with fashion



TRENDYGOLF, Photography: Steve Read. www.stevereadphoto.com



Image: Getty



Image: Getty

“You should hear what he says off-air. They are even funnier,” admits Fowler, who wears orange in recognition of Oklahoma State University, where he played golf for two years before turning professional, and where all sports teams proudly wear orange.

The thing about Fowler is that he doesn't look like a golfer. This 25 year old from southern California looks as if he should be surfing in Malibu or skateboarding in Santa Cruz, yet he strides on to golf courses with outfits that are closely fitted, brightly coloured and carefully co-ordinated, from his wide-brim caps to the spikes on the soles of his shoes.

“From day one we saw that golf has a high ‘shake-up’ factor because it is a traditional sport and at times it can get quite stale,” says Puma's Mr Philion. “With the right guy – and Rickie Fowler is certainly one of them – you can cut through the clutter pretty quick and make a difference.”

“Rickie embodies everything we

are about. It starts with world-class performance, and then Rickie has a style and swagger that is certainly unique – it separates him from the pack. Rickie is a perfect match for what we want to be within the sport. Tour players become the faces of brands and we are thrilled that Rickie has become the face of Puma Golf.”

The colour Fowler brings to tournaments is on both sides of the ropes, as his fans dress in orange wherever he goes, and some kids take their mimicry so far as to wear stick-on moustaches.

“I see room for optimism,” Mr Philion concludes. “If you look at the past 20 years, golf is still in a good place, even if it is going through a correction right now. There is an enormous group of consumers who are interested in the game and it is up to us as an industry to engage with them, and to make the game more fun and more hip, and to adapt to a modern lifestyle.”



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## Commercial Feature

# Tee off for a world tour you will never forget

Join an exclusive golfing world tour and play some of the finest courses on Earth in total luxury

**Golf is a global game. As the British Empire spread around the world, taking with it the Scottish invention, the sun never set on golf. Wherever the British settled, from Africa to India and Hong Kong to Australia, golf thrived.**

But in the past few decades the global game has taken on truly epic proportions. The challenge to build world-class courses, complemented by luxurious accommodation in the most remote and beautiful places on Earth, has elevated the game's prestige and established a new reason to travel – to play the best courses in the world.

These courses with extraordinary pedigrees are, however, not geographically conveniently located. They stretch from above the Arctic Circle to Patagonia; they are on remote islands or in the middle of deserts and at the base of mountain ranges.

So in the great British tradition of exploration, London-based Club Inc. has designed an exclusive World Tour by private jet, partnered with Gama Aviation, for 36 savvy and passionate golfers to travel in complete luxury and comfort to ten of the planet's most exceptional course locations, visiting five continents in the process.

"Through our work with many of the world's finest clubs and resorts, and our industry partners, we know there is a great desire to travel to the most remote and unusual courses the globe has to offer. The question that arises the most is not how to finance the journeys, but how to find the time. With The Club Inc. World Tour we have made travelling the world and playing fantastic golf in complete luxury as convenient as possible," says Niall Flanagan, managing director of Club Inc.

"When travelling long-haul across many time zones, jet lag on most commercial flights is always an issue, even in first class. With partner Gama Aviation, the 36 passengers on the World Tour will arrive at each destination as refreshed and relaxed as possible as the specially configured Boeing 757 is designed to provide the ultimate in in-flight relaxation and entertainment."

All the stops on the Tour have been carefully selected and vetted not only for the quality of the courses, but the total ambience of the destination. The scheduled 25-day itinerary that begins in England next

October 2015 stops in Italy, UAE, South Korea, Australia (Tasmania), Hawaii, Mexico, Bermuda and France, before returning to London.

The lucky 36 participants will be treated to playing courses recognised among the best in the world, staying in legendary accommodation, delighting in the freshest regional cuisine, experiencing iconic cultural opportunities, and a shared camaraderie and passion for the game.


### THE MID OCEAN CLUB, BERMUDA

As the World Tour begins its final leg back to the UK across the Atlantic, it stops off at The Mid Ocean Club on the small, picturesque island nation of Bermuda – another memorable highlight, for both the golf and the island's laid-back lifestyle.

Referred to as the father of modern American golf architecture, Charles Blair MacDonald, whose mentors in the game included Old Tom Morris, when he was a student at St Andrews University, said of his visionary creation in Bermuda: "Again I can assure my golfing friends, a more fascinating, more picturesque course than the Mid Ocean, when completed, will not be found in a pilgrimage around the world. There is nothing commonplace about it."

Indeed, since its inception in 1921, the course and club have played host to the world's most influential politicians, wealthiest globetrotters, well-known international celebrities and professional athletes.

An avid golfer, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower chose the setting for two important summits with British Prime Ministers Sir Winston Churchill and Harold MacMillan in 1953 and 1957 respectively. And the prestigious PGA of America Grand Slam of Golf took place here in 2007 and 2008.

 **With The Club Inc. World Tour we have made playing fantastic golf in complete luxury as convenient as possible**



Participants will stay at the iconic Rosewood Tucker's Point®, offering the best of British-style hospitality with a relaxed island feel.

Mid Ocean is only the start of the challenging golf found in Bermuda. This year's Grand Slam, featuring world number one Rory McIlroy, Bubba Watson, Martin Kaymer and Jim Furyk, will take place from October 14 to 15 at the Port Royal Golf Club. Other courses on the island include Tucker's Point, Riddell's Bay, Belmont Hills, Turtle Hill and Ocean View.

Bermuda enjoyed an economic boom during the Prohibition era in the United States. In fact, it has been said that the initiative for building Mid Ocean, a world-class golf venue, was for the wealthy businessmen in north-east America to escape the harsh liquor laws. As in the past, visitors to this island nation are met with world-renown hospitality in both

outstanding cuisine and libations. Be sure and try the refreshing national cocktail, the Dark 'n Stormy, made with local Gosling's rum (Bermuda's oldest commercial enterprise), ginger beer and a splash of lime.

With its pink-sand beaches, Bermuda-length shorts and knee socks as business attire, pastel-coloured, colonial-inspired architecture, motor scooters and a passion for enjoying the good life, Bermuda's tourist industry is thriving.

"With our temperate year-round climate, Bermuda is a true sportsman's paradise," says Bill Hanbury, chief executive of the Bermuda Tourism Authority. "In addition to world-class golf, we offer the finest venues for all manner of water and land sports. Combined with the quantity and variety of welcoming accommodation options, the inclusion of Bermuda on The Club Inc. World Tour will only en-

hance our image as 'the place' the world comes to stay and play."

From the opening night five-star reception in London to the closing night fete in Paris, participants will be treated to an extraordinary once-in-a-lifetime experience, one that can never be duplicated. However, the memories and friendships, forged through the love and lure of the worldwide game, will linger for a lifetime.

**The Club Inc. World Tour, partnered with Gama Aviation, will take place from October 1 to 25, 2015. For more information or to reserve a place on this extraordinary once-in-a-lifetime experience, contact [Ryan@clubincorporated.com](mailto:Ryan@clubincorporated.com) or telephone +44 (0) 1483 503 492**





## Interview

# EXCLUSIVE BEAUTY IS GOLFERS' PARADISE



It boasts Europe's longest hole, a winery, historic chapel and castle, as well as executive accommodation. **Edwin Smith** travelled to Castiglion del Bosco near Siena in Tuscany to meet Massimo Ferragamo (pictured) who owns this exclusive new golf course

**W**hen Massimo Ferragamo went to America for the first time, his mother insisted that they travel by boat – just as his late father had done in 1915. Salvatore Ferragamo went to the States with only a few dollars in his pocket, unable to speak English. But, by the late-1920s, he had begun to sell to the department stores Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue, establishing the foundations of his eponymous shoe company and one of Italy's most famous fashion exports.

Fast forward to 2014, and the business is publicly traded, with recorded revenue of €659 million last year and has 620 standalone stores spread across the globe. Salvatore's youngest son, now 57, is chairman of Ferragamo USA.

"I thank her to this day," says

Massimo, reflecting on his mother's decision. "It gives you perspective." Today, however, the New York resident is enjoying a perspective of a different kind as we take in the view from the clubhouse of the spectacular golf course at his 5,000-acre Tuscan estate, Castiglion del Bosco.

But unlike Italians and handmade shoes, Tuscany and golf are not a famous combination. For one thing, the dry summers don't easily lend themselves to the demands of course maintenance. On top of that, the region's unmistakable landscape is not to be dug up and rearranged lightly, especially not on an estate that has Unesco World Heritage status.

In fact, Massimo says, when he bought the property in 2003, a golf course hadn't featured in his plans, but then he had never intended to

acquire an estate of this size. "When I first saw it, it conquered me. I was bowled over, even though it was totally rundown. It had all the ingredients and so we embarked on getting it back into shape," he says.

Massimo has had some lessons and hit a few balls, but even now isn't a particularly zealous golfer. It was the wise counsel of some friends that convinced him to bring the game to his Tuscan retreat – another piece of advice that he is glad he took.


It was "the biggest decision" that he faced in restoring and redeveloping the estate, but at the same time a deliberate effort was made to "hide" the course, to prevent it from dominating the property. Instead, as you drive up the winding gravel road for the first time, you mere-

ly catch glimpses of fairways and greens. There's little to suggest that an immaculate Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course, complete with the longest hole in Europe – the 685-yard 13th – is lurking beyond the trademark Tuscan cypress trees.

This is because Massimo doesn't want Castiglion del Bosco to be a golf resort *per se*, but instead has set out to create a place where golf is one element of the whole experience, sitting alongside a winery, and the hospitality offered by the twenty suites and three rooms in the restored "borgo", as well as ten villas dotted around the estate.

The borgo – the closest English translation would be "hamlet" – also has a 14th-century chapel, complete with a recently restored Pietro Lorenzetti fresco, and sits in



 The course is woven – rather than cut – into the Tuscan hillside and it is utterly pristine





the shadow of the ruined 12th-century castle that gives the estate its name. This, coupled with the strict rules that come with being a World Heritage site – old buildings can be restored, but no new ones can be built – means that coming here is not unlike entering a time-warp.

Having Italian friends who always dress like attendees of Milan Fashion Week, I had been expecting to feel under-dressed, especially at dinner in the smarter of the two restaurants. There are white linen table cloths and the head waiter tells me that he hopes its modern interpretation of traditional Tuscan dishes will soon earn a Michelin star. But here, and throughout the estate, there is a distinct lack of stuffiness. This could be American influence – around 40 per cent of guests come from the United States – but the place also manages to feel authentically Italian.

DESIGNER LUXURY

The interiors of the suites and villas have been designed by Florentine designer Teresa Burgisser in consultation with Massimo's wife Chiara. There is an emphasis on luxury, which you would expect when prices range from €510 a night for a room in low season, up to €7,800 a night for one of the secluded private villas in high season. The aesthetic isn't ostentatious. Think marble, stone, linen, homely soft furnishing, with highlights in brass and wine-coloured leather, quite different from the idea of "luxury" that pervades the gilded seven-star hotels of, say, Dubai.

On a tour of the vineyards given by Sabine, a charming polyglottal Dane, it is explained that, as one of 250 wineries in the Montalcino appellation, Castiglion de Bosco is permitted to produce Brunello, the gold-tinged red made from the Sangiovese grape. However, being in the right place is only the start. Brunello must also have an alcohol content of at least 12.5 per cent and be kept in a cellar for a minimum of five years. Within that time, the wine must spend at least two years in the barrel and four months in the bottle. Brunello accounts for about 120,000 of the 220,000 bottles these fertile slopes produce each year and so there is room in the refurbished cellars for a lighter rosso, a punchy Prima Pietra, and a syrupy vin santo Occhio di Pernice.

Tastings and tours are pitched at oenophiles with any level of wine knowledge, but the truly committed can pay €8,000 in order to join the Millecento Wine Club and take ownership of one of 200 temperature and humidity-controlled lockers in a specially created cellar, along with €2,500-worth of wine and a range of member benefits. The subterranean room is the setting for occasional events and tastings. If the need should arise, it could also double as the lair of a particularly

tasteful Bond villain. The idea is that wine club members can keep their favourite wines in perfect condition on site and then have a bottle or two brought up to their villa or suite when they please.

Elsewhere on the estate, there are also cooking classes, a peaceful spa, an infinity pool with dramatic views of the Val d'Orcia valley, as well as hiking and biking trails, and a fitness boot camp that takes place in the surrounding woods.

But those who do eventually manage to fit in a round of golf can expect to be rewarded for their efforts. The course is woven – rather than cut – into the Tuscan hillside and it is utterly pristine. The only traces of divots or pitch marks that I see during my round are ones that I make myself, although this has the downside of inspiring pangs of guilt.

What's more, apart from a small army of green-keepers, the course is almost deserted. So there is no stress when it comes to booking a tee time and the chance of getting stuck behind the group in front is vanishingly small. This is partly because Castiglion del Bosco claims to be the only private golf course in the whole of Italy.


Elsewhere in the country, membership of one golf club allows players to pay and play at any other course. But to play here, you either have to be a guest or a member and, as things stand, there are only 100 of those.

Golf  
Fitness  
.....  
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The club is admitting more people, and improving its locker room and dining facilities, but will cap the total number of members at 350. This, coupled with the fees – €45,000 to join and annual dues of €3,500 – serves to maintain an air of exclusivity. "But it is not done for any snobbish reason," says Massimo. "If we opened it up for everyone, our visitors would have to queue up. So we wanted to keep the exclusiveness and the beauty of the place."

In keeping with the rest of the estate, there is a relaxed atmosphere, largely thanks to the pair of affable 20-something Scots who man the clubhouse. When I finish my round, I get chatting to one of them about the people who play here. Obviously, he says, everyone has money, but it is often the very wealthiest people who are the most down to earth and laid back.

A surprising observation maybe. But it does at least make sense that those people would feel at home here – a corner of Tuscany carefully tailored to a particular, relaxed version of La Dolce Vita. 





Fitness



# FIT FOR PURPOSE

What can amateur golfers learn from top professionals to improve their physical and mental fitness without spending hours in the gym, hiring a psychologist or employing a sports nutritionist? **Nick Bayly** finds out

**W**hen Rory McIlroy wanted to transform himself from a professional golfer into a professional athlete, he turned to a physical conditioning scientist for help. At the end of 2010, the then 21 year old employed the services of Steve McGregor, a British-born fitness coach who was working with Premier League football champions Manchester City.

McGregor's first move was to wire up McIlroy to a set of electrical sensors to measure muscle activation during his swing. The data revealed a golfer with a strong right side (the muscles used in the backswing), but a weaker left side (the downswing). This imbalance was limiting the speed at which McIlroy could strike the ball at impact.

Using this information, McGregor put together a 90-minute daily workout programme that included arm and leg repetitions, bench presses, dumbbell presses, wide-grip pull-ups, hanging leg raises, and split squats that would add both power and poise. These exercises, combined with sprinting and swimming, developed all the major muscle groups used in McIlroy's swing, and within just six months transformed the young man from Northern Ireland from an 11-stone weakling into 12 stones of ripped muscle capable of launching the ball 350 yards with effortless ease.

As McGregor says: "Rory's club-

head speed increased significantly with the regime and he was able hit the ball harder without losing his balance. He looks more stable through impact and he's getting more yardage with less effort."

The on-going fitness programme continues to reap benefits, with the world number one having gained 6lb of muscle this summer alone, as he powered his way to two more major titles.

But while McIlroy spends upwards of six hours a week in the gym, a number of scientific studies have shown that just five minutes of golf-specific exercises, five times a week, for five weeks, can improve driving distances by up to 25 per cent and reduce scores by up to four shots. All of which means that even amateur golfers can get effective results providing they are willing to put in the effort, if not the time.

#### MIND OVER MATTER

For professionals at the very top of the game, golf is a sport played between the ears. Blessed with textbook swings, who can cope best under pressure often determines who wins and loses on Sunday afternoon.

Sports psychologist Dr Brian Hemmings, who has worked with many leading tour pros, including Ross Fisher, Danny Willet and Chris Wood, and who wrote the book *Mental Toughness for Golf*, says: "Whether you're playing to

## GOLFER'S MENU

If you've got an important match coming up, here's what you should be eating and drinking in order to maintain the perfect balance of energy and alertness...

### BREAKFAST

Glass of water, plus muesli or porridge with fresh or dried fruit and low-fat yoghurt; or banana milkshake; or poached eggs on toast, with a glass of fruit juice.

### MID-MORNING

Apple, fruit bar or a toasted bagel.

### LUNCH

Sandwich (tuna, chicken, smoked salmon or lean ham), cereal bar and a diluted isotonic/hypotonic drink.

### MID-ROUND SNACK

Dried apricots, raisins, banana, nuts and seeds, and water.

### DINNER

Lean grilled steak, fish or steamed chicken, with boiled potatoes and steamed vegetables.

win a major or the monthly medal, the pressures are, in many ways, the same. Winning the club championship could be one player's lifetime ambition, while for others only a green jacket will do.

"One of the simplest ways to control tension is to learn how to breathe. It sounds very simple, as breathing is an automatic response, but it's amazing how many golfers hold their breath where they're playing shots, which leads to a significant build-up of tension."

To practise measured breathing, Dr Hemmings tells golfers to inhale through the nose to the count of four and exhale through the mouth to the count of seven. "Once mastered, it's a very effective way of overcoming stress during pressure situations – and your fellow golfers won't notice you're doing it," he adds.

Dr Hemmings also encourages golfers to focus on processes as opposed to outcomes. "Rather than worrying about 'what if I miss', I tell my players to focus on the mechanics of the stroke. You'll often hear professionals referring to 'playing in the present' or 'the now' and this stops them from dwelling on the past, or fast-forwarding to future outcomes. The only thing in their control is the here and now," he says.

**Just five minutes of golf-specific exercises, five times a week, for five weeks, can improve driving distances by up to 25 per cent and reduce scores by up to four shots**

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

You have a tee time at 9am in the club matchplay and you want to win. So you wake up an hour beforehand, rush out of the house, grab a coffee and a bacon roll in the clubhouse, hit a few practice putts, and then head to the first tee in expectation of certain victory. Only you end up losing – and here's why.

"A lot of people don't make the link between performance and nutrition," says Jane Griffin, consultant nutritionist to England Golf, which looks after England's representative teams. "If you really want to play your best golf, then it is essential to understand that what you put in your body is going to affect your performance."

Women and Golf  
.....  
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"Professional golfers have to plan their meal times around their tee times, as eating a heavy meal a few minutes before they play will make them feel sluggish, while skipping breakfast altogether may result in a dramatic loss of energy."

"While amateurs are often able to choose their tee times, they should come to the course with their own food and drink, rather than grabbing what's available at the club. Take a few sips of water or a low-sugar energy drink on every hole and snack on slow-release energy foods, such as bananas, nuts or blueberries. Little and often is the mantra to maintain energy and concentration levels, so forget the idea of three big meals a day and think about having maybe four or five smaller meals." ■



Commercial Feature

# The summer of Rory McIlroy

Nike Golf report a positive start to their 2015 fiscal year, driven by a new commercial strategy and the exploits of an athlete with the world at his feet

**In a largely forgettable summer for the British sports fan, one man stood head and shoulders above the rest. Rory McIlroy began his golden run of form at the BMW PGA Championship in May, the European Tour's flagship event.**

Nike – the brand that supplies the 25 year old with his equipment and has done since the start of 2013 – invited McIlroy to open their Performance Fitting Centre at Archerfield Links in Scotland at the start of July. There, in front of media and a selection of handpicked guests, he talked of continuing that good run of form from Wentworth into the summer. Many talk the talk, but few have the stride pattern to back it up. McIlroy took the baton and ran. As hard and as fast as he could towards glory.

A maiden Open Championship title at Hoylake two weeks after the event at Archerfield was followed by a World Golf Championship victory in Akron, Ohio.

And, in one of the most dramatic final days in the history of the US PGA Championship, McIlroy fought hard to claim

his second major of the summer. Three tournament wins in as many starts and the media coverage confirmed that he was the darling of the British sporting summer. A man born for the biggest stage was delivering the goods when it mattered most.

Fit, strong and hungry for more success, McIlroy is the very embodiment of the modern athletic golfer, the modern golf athlete.

When Nike signed him to much fanfare back in January last year, there were whispers from detractors who said the equipment change would hold him back. Those detractors are few and far between now, and his performances have given the golf industry a welcome shot in the arm.

Recent reports suggest the sport is in terminal decline, not helped by the oversupply of clubs in the retail market. Nike Golf believe their new commercial strategy will change that and benefit the consumer, while elevating their brand in a fiercely competitive industry.

"Rory's stellar recent performances are testament to the ability of the athlete," says Angus Moir, general manager of Nike Golf Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA).

"He has commented many times on his Nike Golf equipment, including the RZN Black golf ball, which has given him a tremendous platform to start his assault on every tournament he enters.

"That also validates the hard work of our product and sports marketing teams, who strive tirelessly to create great clubs, balls, footwear and apparel for not only the likes of Rory McIlroy and our other tour staff, but also the recreational golfer who wants to improve as much as he or she can." Daniel Schenk, marketing director for Nike Golf EMEA, adds: "The effect of Rory's summer performances cannot be underestimated. The energy he brings to the game is incredible, and the emotional connection fans have with him and the way he plays the game make him an obvious favourite.



Above: Nike Golf unveiled the new Vapor irons franchise at Liberty National Golf Course in New York in August

"We believe the golf industry is changing and we will be at the forefront of this change because the consumer journey needs to get better. And it will."


All very well, but what does that actually mean?

"Instead of promotions, we will work with these retailers to enhance the consumer experience, ultimately driving improved sell-through. And finally the way our product is displayed at retail will be easier for the golfer to navigate, find what he or she's looking for, and be inspired by our equipment and apparel collections."

Nike is a company whose history is based on innovation – from running shoes to football boots and from golf clubs to golf balls. But there's always better; there's no finish line at Nike.

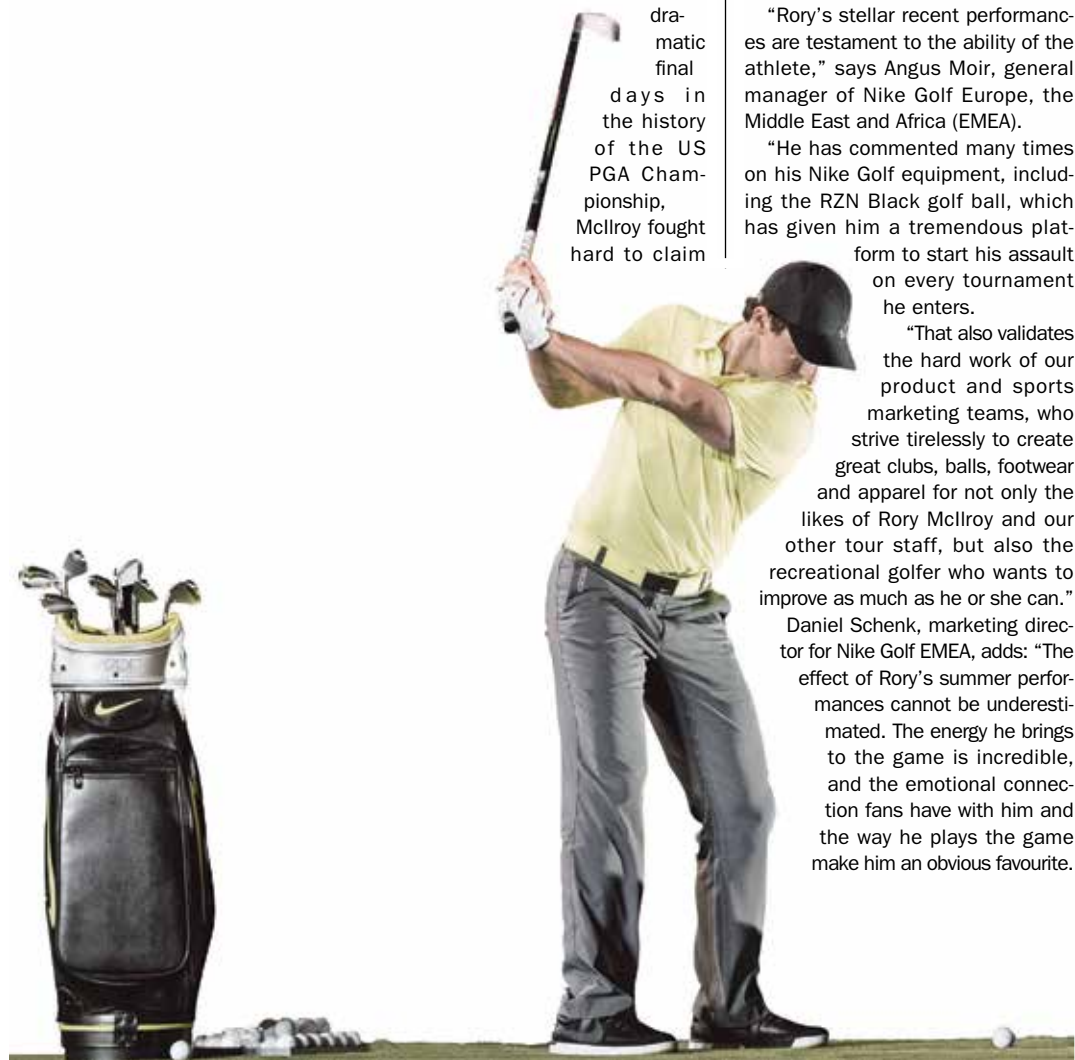
McIlroy buys into this idea of constant progression in the pursuit of excellence. On his way to victory at The Open, he used a prototype 2 iron to good effect and a month later helped to launch the Vapor irons franchise at Liberty National in New York. And just last week, at the Ryder Cup, he put Nike's new Vapor Pro driver into play as Europe took on the US team at Gleneagles, citing an additional ten to fifteen yards distance off the tee.

For Nike Golf, there's always better – and for the end-consumer, who wants to engage with the brand, this rings true too.

 **McIlroy buys into Nike Golf's idea of constant progression in the pursuit of excellence**

"In the past, the retail experience for a golfer going into a green grass store has sometimes been inconsistent, to say the least," says Brian Karl, sales director of Nike Golf EMEA.

"We are elevating our brand – and this is to do with distribution, promotions and how we go to market. We have identified key partners, who understand our mission and want to help us execute things in a better way.







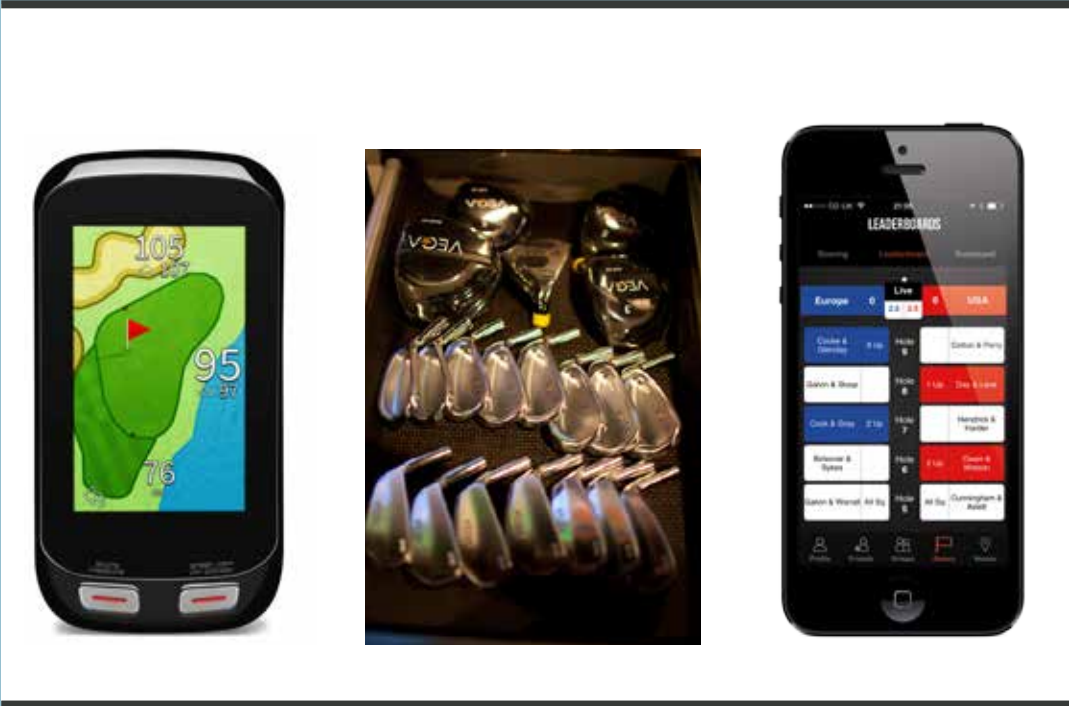
Tips



# TOP TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR GAME



Golf is very similar to Formula 1 motor racing in terms of technological advancements. You buy a gizmo one day and a month later it's outdated. But **Tim Southwell** has discovered five pieces of golf technology that will still be delivering enjoyment and improvements to your game for years to come



## GPS RANGEFINDERS

While a caddie might take care of your clubs, their more important role is telling you how far you've got for your next shot. If you can't afford a caddie, a rangefinder is the closest you can get. Take the Voice Caddie VC300, the first voice-guarded range finder. This small unit clips on to your belt or cap, then a quick swing of your club tells you the distance to the middle of the green, another swish tells you the yardage to the front and a swipe the other way gives you the yardage to the back. It automatically knows the course you're on. It's that simple. Meanwhile, the team at SkyCaddie are taking a more holistic approach to your golf, with data capture being a key part of the process. Whereas most rangefinders get their information from Google Maps, the latest SkyCaddie Touch features more than 34,000 courses in high definition, all individually mapped on foot by a dedicated team for increased accuracy. Each place you hit your shot from is recorded and all this information can be downloaded to start producing your own personal Opta stats for golf. Future developments are set to make detailed in-depth improvements.

Voice Caddie VC300: £109  
SkyCaddie Touch: £329.99

## GOLF DNA

Lewis Hamilton wouldn't be winning races if it wasn't for the engineers at Mercedes fine-tuning his car and it's the same for Rory McIlroy whose Nike technicians fine-tuned his driver and ball combination. After all, you can only play your best golf with clubs perfectly fitted for your needs. For that you need a true custom fitter and club builder. Golf DNA, based in south-west London, is one of a handful of club fitters in the UK leading this charge. Laurence Pawley, master club maker at Golf DNA, says: "It's one thing being fitted for a set of clubs, but you don't know who is putting the clubs together or how accurate those specs might be." Golf DNA work with a small selection of manufacturers, including Callaway, Cobra and Vega, who they believe produce the best equipment at different price points, and will build your set from scratch. Using the latest GC2 HMT launch monitor, Mr Pawley can track not only what your ball is doing, but also exactly how the club is reacting at impact. We're not talking old-fashioned lie boards and impact tape, but modern technology taking your game to the next level.

2½-hour full-bag fitting: £100

## VPAR APP

Wouldn't it be great to know what your opponents elsewhere on the course are scoring and where you stand in the leaderboard. The VPAR golf app now brings live scoring to all golfers. Simply download the app, key in the course, handicap and competition format, and log every player's score after each hole so everyone can see in an instant where they stand. High-tech company VPAR developed the app which has been used for corporate and charity golf days, club championships, and pro and amateur events for the past six years. The application is now used in more than 650 events in ten different countries. Whether it's your club championship or a Texas scramble with your pals, VPAR provides an extra dimension to your golf event. The VPAR app comes loaded with maps of 30,000 courses, and provides the usual GPS information about distances and hazard positions. Players can store information to have a permanent record of their round and can also check up on the playing history of potential future opponents. Offers real-time leaderboards, GPS and course planner, plus performance tracking.

VPAR app: £5.99





STEWART  
GOLF X9  
FOLLOWTROLLEY

Unless you're a tour professional, you probably can't afford a caddie. The next best thing is the Stewart Golf X9 Follow. This trolley literally follows you around the golf course. When you walk off the tee, the X9 Follow follows you at a pre-defined distance. When you stop at your ball, the X9 Follow stops a polite distance behind you. Simply clip the small Bluetooth handset to your belt and you're in business. In addition to the Bluetooth electronics system, there are two antennas that power and control the remote trolley. Mounted on each of the rear motors, the antennas work together to create a neutral zone and an active zone. When the handset – and therefore the player – is inside the neutral zone, the X9 Follow will remain stationary. As the handset enters the active zone, the X9 Follow's electronics system will automatically and independently alter the speed of each rear motor to keep pace. When the golfer and therefore the handset come to a stop, the X9 Follow will continue until the handset is back inside the neutral zone when it will also stop. Research conducted by Stewart suggests that users of the X9 Follow have averaged a three-shot reduction on their rounds since using the trolley.

X9 Follow: £1,499

ABOUTGOLF  
SIMULATORS

Golf simulators have been around for 25 years in one form or another, but frankly they've not been that good. "People used to be happy with seeing a ball flying 300 yards on a screen in front of them," says James Bowker, from AboutGolf Europe, "but it bore no resemblance to a real round of golf." Smashing the ball down the 18th at St Andrews, one of more than 50 world-famous courses available, is no longer the key to a good shot on a simulator. It's all about good technique and timing. The patented 3Trak system takes 2,300 photos a second, tracking the ball from the moment of impact, then quantifying the velocity, launch angles and spin rates. The latest AGCurve model projects on to a curved screen giving a 160-degree, totally immersive view of the course. Pioneering golf simulator Urban Golf, which has three London sites, are at the vanguard of this revolution. "These simulators are so accurate and reflective of an actual round of golf on the course that the team here now bring their own clubs and shoes with them," says James Day, managing director of Urban Golf. "This never happened on the old systems."

Simulators: from £32,000

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Women

# LET'S GET WOMEN BACK INTO GOLF

Women are leaving golf clubs at an alarming rate and, despite some relaxation in membership rules, future growth in the ladies' game looks uncertain, as **Colin Callendar** reports

**T**his month the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews broke with 260 years of tradition when it voted to allow women members for the first time.

It was an enlightened move by the club and it might have important ramifications for women's golf in Britain and Ireland at a time when it is struggling like never before.

One of the first people to applaud the R&A for its decision was Sport and Equalities Minister Helen Grant, who went on to urge other single-sex clubs to do the same.

"I am pleased the members of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews have voted in favour of admitting women members," says Ms Grant. "This is positive news for the sport and I hope we will now see other golf clubs that still have outdated same-sex policies follow suit."

"With golf in the next Olympics, there is a huge opportunity for the sport to grow and this sends out the right inclusive message."



Golf clubs will have to move with the times if they are to halt the exodus and attract new women members

About 300 yards up The Scores from the R&A's iconic clubhouse, Shona Malcolm, chief executive of the Ladies' Golf Union, was equally pleased about the decision, but also realistic enough to realise it would not solve the plethora of problems facing the women's game.

"It [the vote] is good because it will give the outside world a better perception of the game, but it is not a solution for the fundamental problems we face," she says. "That will require much more decisive action on our part and that of the other governing bodies."

#### MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

Ms Malcolm presides over an organisation that continues to lose members on an annual basis. In 2005 its membership stood at 215,000, but it has since dropped to under 150,000 and that number is likely to fall even further as more and more women opt out of club membership.

Male club membership across Britain and Ireland is also dwindling, but not as fast as women's and the situation is such that in all four of the home countries male golf club members now outnumber women members by as much as six to one. The comparable figure in the majority of Continental countries is closer to two to one.

There is no doubt rising subscriptions have been an important factor in the drop in women's club membership and it is ironic the Equality Act 2010 has exacerbated the situa-

tion by forcing clubs to make women pay the same fees as men.

"Cost is certainly a factor, but it is by no means the only one," says Ms Malcolm. "In fact, I would argue it has as much to do with demographic change as anything else."

"In the old days, you used to join a golf club as a girl and then remain a member for life, but that is no longer the case. Times have changed. More women now go to university and embark on full-time careers. Life is faster than it used to be. Time with the family has become much more precious and all that means women are more likely to play on a more *ad hoc* basis, if they play at all."

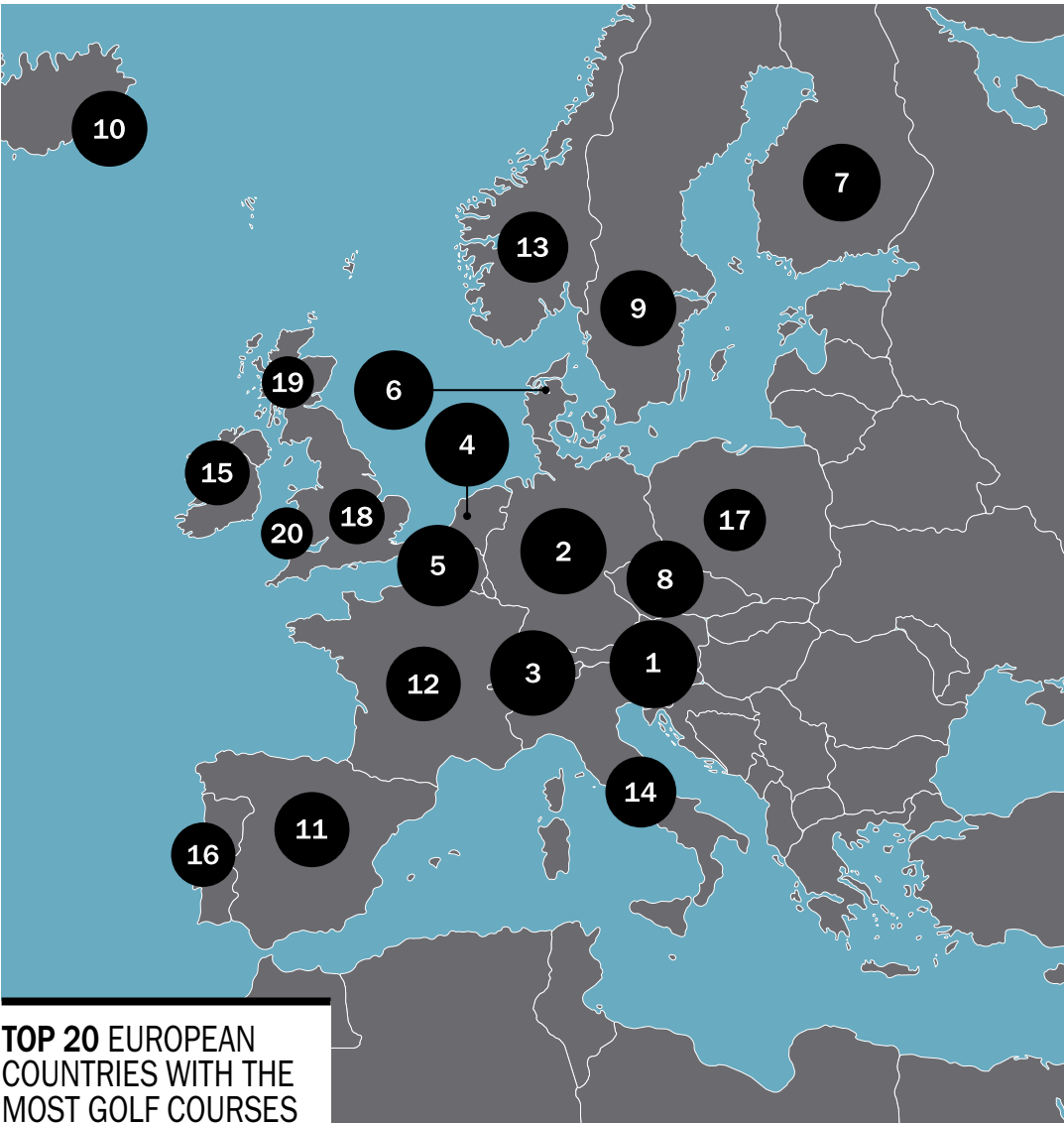
Ms Malcolm believes all the game's governing bodies must work much more closely together if they are to find solutions to this problem. This is a view shared by former Swedish tour player Eva-Lotta Sternmarker, who is now a development officer for the Ladies' European Tour and project director for the biennial Ping Junior Solheim Cup.

#### FAMILY GAME

"There are a lot of people who seem to think that one of the biggest strengths of the women's amateur game in Europe is that it's more of a family game than it is in Britain," she says.

"That is true up to a point in some countries, but it is not the most significant difference as far as I'm concerned. I deal regularly with amateur bodies in both Britain and





TOP 20 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST GOLF COURSES AND PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE PLAYERS

1 35% AUSTRIA

2 34% GERMANY

3 33% SWITZERLAND

4 31% NETHERLANDS

5 30% BELGIUM

6 28% DENMARK

7 27% FINLAND

8 27% CZECH REPUBLIC

9 26% SWEDEN

10 26% ICELAND

11 25% SPAIN

12 25% FRANCE

13 22% NORWAY

14 22% ITALY

15 19% IRELAND

16 18% PORTUGAL

17 17% POLAND

18 13% ENGLAND

19 12% SCOTLAND

20 12% WALES

on the Continent, and I know the European federations find it much easier to sit down and be creative because they don't have anyone else to answer to.

"That's not the case in Britain. It is the home of golf, but it is precisely because the game is hundreds of years old that there are a lot of different governing bodies. I know they all want to work together for the good of the game, but that's not always easy when vested interests are involved."

A degree of amalgamation started when the English Golf Union and the English Ladies' Golf Association merged, but much more of the same

is required if Britain and Ireland is to mirror the European model, and there will also have to be significant changes at grass-roots level if real progress is to be made.

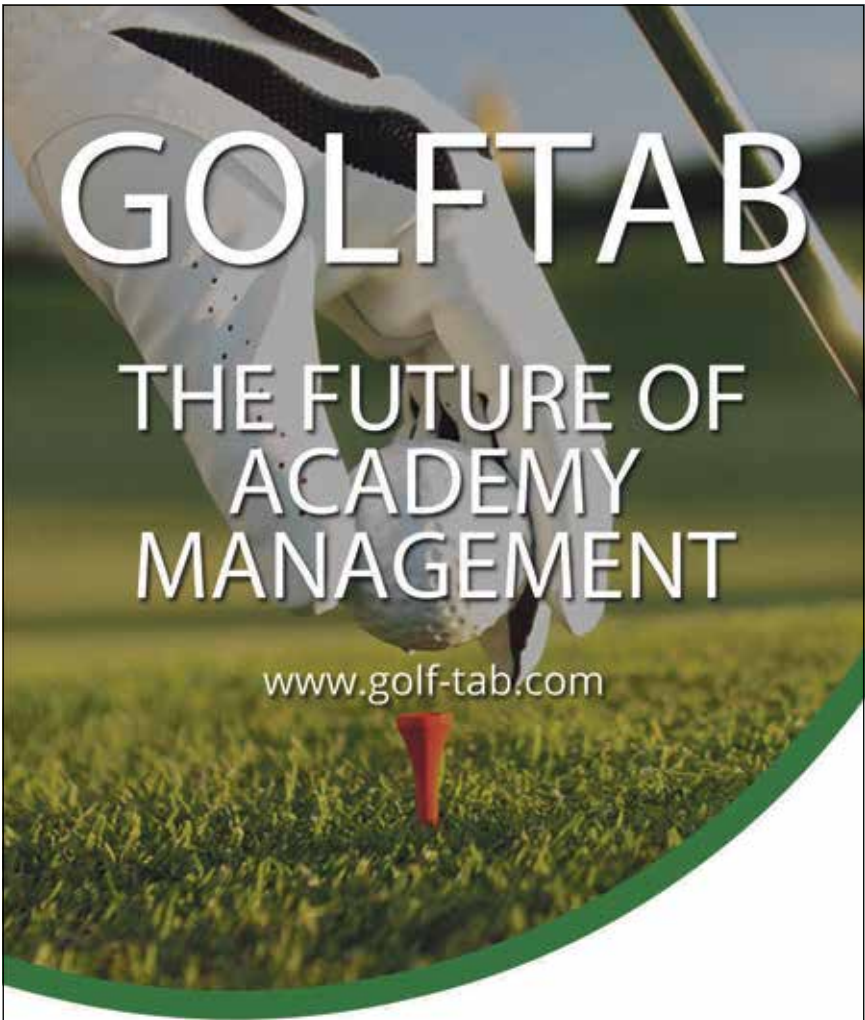
There is a general feeling that golf clubs will have to move with the times if they are to halt the exodus and attract new women members.

"We visit a lot of clubs around the country and it is clear a good deal needs to change if they are going to attract an influx of new lady members," says Niall Flanagan, managing director at Club Inc., a leading advisory service for golf clubs and other organisations within the industry.

"I think the problem is that most

clubs are too set in their ways and those ways do not necessarily appeal to women who do not come from a golfing background. What clubs need to do is to break down the existing rules so that newcomers feel more relaxed and not out of place.

"The fact is ladies have a finite amount of time to relax and enjoy themselves so golf clubs have to compete against other lifestyle venues, such as other sports facilities, health clubs and coffee bars. I'm afraid that is not going to happen the way many golf clubs are run at present."



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