

R&A

Developing Golf.

Sharing best practice for the benefit of the sport

ISSUE
two



All smiles in Asia-Pacific

We look at championships and initiatives across this fast-growing region

“ We’ve got a lot of good players coming out of Asia, both in the men’s and women’s ranks. ”
– Dominic Wall

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Contents.

04. Golf is thriving across the Asia-Pacific region

Dominic Wall on an exciting season of elite championships

10. GB&I participation grows in 2022

New data reveals that the popularity of golf is on the up

12. Case Study: Getting more children into golf

How New Zealand's Futures programme has helped to boost the country's junior golfers by 93 per cent

About Developing Golf magazine

Developing Golf magazine is a key element of the golf development alliance we wish to create with affiliates globally to share best practice. This alliance also includes a new R&A Portal, increased funding support and consulting with affiliates on the ground across the year to develop the strongest activation plans, supported by R&A-created global assets.

Phil Anderton, Chief Development Officer – The R&A



“Helping to develop the game in Asia-Pacific is our main aim”.

Dominic Wall, Director Asia-Pacific for The R&A, discusses the success of the recent Asia-Pacific championships and the continuing rise of the game in terms of participation.



Thailand's Eila Galitsky won the fifth Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific championship in Singapore in March



Australia's... the 14th... Pacific A... in The...



and grow specific is

s of the region's elite amateur participation levels and accessibility

's Harrison Crowe won
th edition of the Asia-
mateur Championship
ailand in October 2022



Dominic Wall is known as the expert on golf in Asia. He joined The R&A in 2008 after spells with Golf Australia and then running his own golf consultancy business. He oversaw the opening of an office in Hong Kong and then a subsequent move to Singapore.

"The R&A wanted someone to look after Asia-Pacific with the requirement to be based in Asia," he explained. "The role has continued to develop and morph into a whole lot of different areas, which is very exciting to what's happening around the region."

What is the purpose of your job and the department you lead?

It's to help grow and develop the sport in the Asia-Pacific region. It's also to help guide, direct and assist our affiliates around the region by providing advice on a lot of different areas, specifically in golf development, sustainable golf and Rules. We also work closely with the respective teams based in St Andrews to provide relevant expertise and support for our affiliates.

We also have an extensive Rules development programme and there are two major amateur championships we run in the region – the Asia-Pacific Amateur and the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific championship.

We oversee or co-ordinate the qualifying for The Open at four different events – the Australian Open, Korean Open, Mizuno Open and the new World City Championship in Hong Kong. We help and assist the championships department at The R&A in that regard to make sure that there is a platform for the best players around the region to get into The Open.

We have a sustainable agronomy service headed up by Chris Gray. This area involves developing sustainability initiatives by working with the industry around the region to try and assist and grow golf in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way. And we have a service that we provide, on a commercial platform, to different clubs offering advice and assistance. It's quite a diverse role in a lot of different areas. Helping to develop and grow the game is our main aim.

Why is it good to be based in Singapore?

We were in Hong Kong for a long time and that gave us an opportunity to concentrate on northern Asia – China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan. For a number of reasons, we felt it was good to move the office to Singapore. It is an important hub for golf. The Asian Tour and DP

“Golf in Asia-Pacific is growing and developing and is in a pretty healthy place at the moment. Particularly coming out of Covid-19, a lot of the golf courses are full and the popularity of the sport has increased over that period.”

World Tour were based in Singapore, as are IMG and Sportfive, two of the big sports management companies. A number of the bigger events that are held in Asia, like the HSBC Women's World Championship and the Singapore Open, are staged in Singapore.

It gave us the opportunity to concentrate more on south-east Asia, on countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines, where we can help make a significant difference in golf development terms. Being able to be quite close to them and provide direct assistance has been beneficial.

How would you assess the current state of the game in the Asia-Pacific region?

It's growing and developing and it's in a pretty healthy place at the moment. Particularly coming out of Covid-19, a lot of the golf courses are full and the popularity of the sport has increased over that period. We've got a lot of good players coming out of Asia, both in the men's and women's ranks. The depth and quality of the players is very good.

Our region goes from the Middle East all the way through the Pacific Islands and incorporates countries such as Australia and New Zealand that are very healthy as well. Generally, the sport is very strong but there are still challenges and issues to overcome.

Access to golf courses and affordability, particularly within courses in Asia, can be challenging in some areas, because the sport is perceived as expensive. A lot of the times the perceptions don't actually meet the reality. But access is one area. Making the sport more affordable is another area.

Alternative formats to golf are developing in this part of the world. In Korea, for example, there are 7,000 screen golf facilities, as opposed to 500 golf courses. So golf is played in a different way in a different format, which is something that's exciting for the sport in the region. It's growing in different areas. While it might be hard to get onto a golf course in Korea, it's not hard to play golf because there are alternatives. There are several flights a day to Da Nang in Vietnam. A lot of golfers are playing some of the excellent golf courses being developed in Vietnam.

The sport is growing, it's developing and now we have regional development personnel: Neal Graham looks after the Middle East and India, Nick Shan is looking after south-east Asia and Jin-Woo Kim, who is our Rules expert, is assisting with Korea. Having people on the ground being able to provide direct assistance in terms of strategic planning and development of the sport is a real benefit.

Our role is very much hands on. It's working with the affiliates, communicating with them and making sure that we hear what they need and are able to provide it to them.

Tell us about your recent championships.

The Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship started in 2009. We've now had 14 playing editions. It was created initially by the Masters Tournament and ourselves to help create champions within the region. Then we partnered up with the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation, which is the regional body. Between the three organisations, we see this as providing a platform and a pathway for the best players within the region to showcase their skills. That's been very successful from day one. We now have a tremendous platform in terms of television and popularity. It really shows players that you can play in a world-class event. We don't spare any measures in terms of what we present and provide for the players. It's a fantastic week. We run a professional golf tournament for amateurs – they get treated like professionals and they showcase their skills on some of the greatest courses in the region. This year, for example, we're at Royal Melbourne. We provide a great opportunity for those players to come to this event.

It's not just the best countries that participate – it's players from all around the region. There are 42 countries that participate. You just have to look at the depth of the players who are now making the cut. So that's been successful.

The R&A started the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific championship in 2018. We got the event off



Above: Hideki Matsuyama is a former winner of the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship, since going on to win the Masters Tournament

the ground and we now partner with the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation. It's been enormously successful. Our first championship was at Sentosa and the winner was Atthaya Thitikul, who has gone on to be world number one. Yuka Saso was runner-up, she has since gone on to win the US Women's Open. Patty Tavatanakit has gone on to win what used to be the ANA Inspiration, now the Chevron Championship. Mone Inami from Japan was the silver medalist at the Olympics. The depth of players coming out of that championship in such a short time has been tremendous. We initially started with just two majors – now three of the majors provide an invitation for the winner – the AIG Women's Open, the Chevron Championship and the Evian Championship. We did something slightly different with the Women's Amateur to the Men's Amateur. We said that any player that participated had to have a world amateur ranking. In the men's version, if a nation doesn't have a player in the ranking, we still allow them to send one player to help develop and grow the game and showcase golf back in their home country. In the women's side, we felt it was important

that we send a message to the countries in the region that we're prepared to put this event on, we're going to pay for your players' expenses, wherever they are around the world, we'll fly them into the championship and accommodate them and give them an opportunity to go to the majors. But you need to have a ranking. A number of the developing countries are now putting more effort into women's golf to get their players to a higher level so they have a ranking. They're not only providing more events at home, but they're also providing an opportunity for their players to go outside their countries to play. That was highlighted this year with Lebanon and Qatar as two brand-new countries that now have players in the World Amateur Golf Ranking® (WAGR®) who were able to participate at Singapore Island. With the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship – and we hope to do this with the Women's Amateur too – we run what we call the AAC Academy. We started two years ago with 14

players from seven countries spending a week with some of the best coaches and sports scientists in the world. We did equipment fitting and testing and a whole range of activities. That was enormously successful with a number going on to play very well in the Asia-Pacific Amateur. In 2022, we expanded to two academies, one in the Middle East and one in Thailand. This year, we're expanding to three with Royal Melbourne, our venue this year, for the South Pacific Island countries which have never had any exposure to this sort of thing. We'll have 36 players go through our academies this year. It's not only a one-week training academy – we have a number of ongoing activities that we do online, providing technical assistance and advice.

What are you most proud of over the last 15 years in this job?

Getting the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific championship off the ground. It's a big exercise. We have four hours of live television every day. This year, we broadcast 600 live hours of coverage around the world. That's had a big impact on golf within the region. Just look at what some of the players have gone on and done from that platform. I'm particularly proud of that, because I've put a lot of effort and time personally and within the office to get that off the ground. We're not quite at the break-even point in terms of sponsorship but we're not far away. We've got some significant sponsors, Rolex, Samsung, Hana Financial Group and Nippon Kabaya Ohayo Holdings, just to name four major ones. The interest that it's generated has been significant. We're confident we're going to get to a very healthy spot in the next year or two in terms of where we sit within the budget and provide a greater experience. ●



Asia-Pacific region

2009

The first playing of the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship

2018

The R&A launch the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific championship

Case study: India

An example of how Dominic and his Asia-Pacific team typically work with affiliates.

India is a live example – Neal Graham and I were there recently. Our key meeting was with the Indian Golf Union. We've re-engaged with them to look at what their priorities are and how we can best assist them. They can use us as a bit of a knowledge bank in terms of what needs to happen and how it needs to happen. We'll come up with a plan with them, I'm sure, within the next six months that will really help develop and grow the sport in India and take it to another level.

42

Countries that participate in the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship

7k

Screen golf facilities in Korea

600

Live hours of coverage around the world of the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific championship

“ Alternatives to golf are developing in this part of the world. In Korea, for example, there are 7,000 screen golf facilities, as opposed to 500 golf courses. So golf is played in a different way in a different format.”



We talked about their priorities moving forward and the key area they wanted us to look at was high performance. They want to try to set up a programme that's going to help develop some of their leading players. They feel that having a very good programme on the ground is not only going to drive the players that are in that programme, but also help the whole sport in terms of being a focal point for development and providing role models.

We have already provided them with some ideas and assistance. We're now looking at their four key strategic areas and we'll sit down with them over the next few months and develop a strategic plan. Having Neal Graham on the ground in Dubai, which is a three-and-a-half-

hour flight to Delhi, gives us the opportunity for him to spend time there.

We met with the Council of the Indian Golf Union, its President, its Vice President, its Director General, its Treasurer and other key people from around the country.

We can get a feel for what its issues and challenges are and then incorporate that into potential models that have worked and been successful in other countries so we can bring our expertise and advice in terms of guiding the organisation in the right direction.

The challenges are to come up with a good strategic plan and to sign up to The R&A's Women in Golf Charter – and then we can provide some direct funding to assist their work in those areas. ●

GB&I participation grows in 2022.

There were over 50 per cent more on-course adult golfers in 2022 compared to 2019's pre-pandemic levels



Data Source

Sporting Insights:
GB&I Participation
Report 2022

5.6m

Adults who played a full-length course (9 or 18 holes) in GB&I last year – the second-highest since monitoring began 30 years ago

20%

Percentage of female golfers – compared to 15% in 2019

7.4m

People in GB&I playing on-course or alternative formats

83%

Percentage of the adult population who are non-golfers

15%

Percentage of non-golfers interested in playing golf in the future



The news that golf participation in Great Britain and Ireland and across Europe grew last year is good for everyone involved

in the sport, from golf courses and driving ranges to equipment manufacturers, retailers, golf professionals, turfcare specialists and greenkeepers – and so many others.

While outdated stereotypes about golf may still exist, the recently released participation data shows just how popular golf is and that it is popular with all sorts of people across Great Britain and Ireland. When stacked up against other sports, golf can legitimately call itself one of the nation's favourite pastimes.

We've seen so much hard work in recent years across the industry to try to break down barriers and, at grassroots level, it's working. More women, more younger people and more minorities are playing golf. I hope that these findings highlight that and give those who have in the past disparaged golf the curiosity to take another look. Once they've done that, I have every confidence that they will come to be proud of the sport, its heritage and its future.

JOHN BUSHELL

Managing Director of Sporting Insights

“It shows just how popular golf is with all sorts of people across Great Britain and Ireland.”

Getting more children into golf.

Case Study

Golf New Zealand's Futures programme has seen a 93 per cent growth in junior members since the initiative began in 2018





Dean Murphy is Group Chief Executive at Golf New Zealand, where membership levels, rounds played and participation of females and young people are increasing.

Golf New Zealand have been working with The R&A on their national development programme for ten years, looking to increase the positive profile of golf, grow participation and support golf clubs and facilities.

Focusing on a number of groups that are under-represented in golf, they have seen positive results across the board, but nowhere more than junior golf, where members have nearly doubled in the last five years.

We spoke to Group CEO Dean Murphy about the Futures programme that began before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2018.

What is Golf New Zealand's role?

We've really focused the last ten years on being a game development agent and getting ourselves busy with development programmes. We have also increased the profile and the perception of golf in the country and also run development programmes through our regions, our clubs or through our own direct staff. Whether it be She Loves Golf for women and girls, our All Abilities programme for players with disabilities or our LOVE Golf programme to change perceptions, we run a whole bunch of development programmes and initiatives to try and grow the game.

What impact is the national development programme having in New Zealand?

There's lots of cool and exciting things going on in golf in New Zealand. Right now, we're in this amazing growth phase that we've been in for quite some time.

We were growing well going into the pandemic, but certainly through the pandemic and out the other side, the growth in energy we're seeing in golf is quite staggering.

The development programme that we've been running across a range of initiatives is really accelerating some of that growth and, in particular, we've been quite focused on the areas that are under-represented. Whether it be young people, women and girls, people with disabilities, people from different backgrounds, the growth we're seeing in golf and the attractiveness of people to want to engage in golf and be introduced to the game is at levels we've not quite seen before.

Every single day, we're setting a new record for the number of golf club members, we've got more rounds of golf being played and we've had double the number of young people join the game.

There's a huge amount of momentum in golf right now and the energy we've got is really awesome. It's really driving a whole lot of positivity around golf and it's wonderful.

Which areas do your different initiatives focus on?

Our Futures programme is our young people programme, and that's about the future of golf, the future of our country, the future of sport – just trying to enrich the lives of young people through golf, help them fall in love with it, so they can have a lifelong association with the game.

Get Into Golf is an adult introductory programme for those not engaged in golf; She Loves Golf for women and girls; Make Time, Play 9 for busy people looking for shorter experiences; and All Abilities, which is the disability programme.

They are the key ones that The R&A are helping and supporting us with, and we've been quite conscious to work with them on those that are under-represented in golf.

Which has been your most successful initiative?

The one we're most proud of, and the one that's had the biggest impact, is our Futures programme for young people. It's nearly doubled the number of young golfers engaged in the game since the programme started in 2018.

From a metrics perspective, it's been off the charts, but we're most proud of it because the most important thing for us is to regenerate the number of golfers and to get young people playing the game.

It hadn't been going that well, but we got this programme developed and spent a long time putting it together. It was quite difficult to land where we landed, but we're really proud of where it finished. It feels like it's only just starting and yet already we've doubled the number of young golfers in New Zealand, so we want to keep doubling every five years – we've committed to having it in place for 15 years.

We want to have a really solid effort about trying to reshape what golf looks like for young people in New Zealand.

The R&A gave us some investment support to help us get it underway and advice to help us



Golf in New Zealand

500k

Number of golfers –
11% of population

390

Traditional golf clubs

137k

Golf club members

100+

Non-traditional
venues – mini golf,
ranges and simulators

17k+

Registered casual
golfers



“ We want to try to re-shape what golf looks like for young people in New Zealand. ”





Changing the perceptions of golf

I think the biggest problem we have in every country, and every golf association struggles with, is just this perception barrier. For those not involved in the game, it's almost like they're allergic to it until they try it or become engaged. Jumping over that perception barrier is really tough.

I'm hoping that the new generation and our new future is positioning golf as a health and

wellbeing sport and lifelong enrichment. This perception barrier we have to get across and we're trying to do a few programmes to help out.

With the Make Time, Play 9 initiative, we'd had this thought for a long time of trying to remove the perception that golf is a sport that takes a long time. All golf is golf, you can play it when and how and for how long you like.

learn from other countries – what they've done, what's worked, what hasn't.

Why has Futures had such a big impact?

The key success was about an approach for young people and helping them play golf their way and focus on their experience. It hasn't been prescriptive around programme delivery and it lets each facility or venue – mini golf or driving range or golf club – engage in a way that's appropriate for them.

Most national programmes for young people are, “do these three sessions”, “go to this school”, “go to this club”, they're very prescriptive on what happens. But this lets young people play their way and have their experience in a way that suits the facility. I think that's helped, because it's let everyone engage but be part of something bigger, which I'd say is a key driver of why it's been so successful.

What plans do Golf New Zealand have for the future?

We're really interested in doubling down on the youth space and the customer journey and the experience of young people and golf. Our future will be more of the same in trying to ensure that every part of the participant pathway is covered with the right kind of programmes in place to help people get introduced to the game.

There are some other things we're trying to dream up around the family unit, how we can engage families to play golf, what that looks like across different golf facilities and how we can use technology.

Our focus is to continue to look at that whole pathway and provide products and experiences that help golfers stick with the sport.

Nine-hole golf has been around for decades, but it's not really in the public consciousness, so this campaign of ours was around nine-hole golf as a legitimate, credible way to play that could fit in around a busy life. That golf can be something that provides that escape and mental health and wellbeing support and can be something you can make time for. The R&A's 9 Hole Challenge at The Open proved its credibility.

GolfNZ programmes

Futures

93%

growth in junior members since 2018

She Loves Golf

5%

increase in women members and rounds played

Make Time, Play 9

10%

increase in nine-hole rounds over last 12 months

“The most important thing for us is to regenerate the number of golfers and to get young people playing the game.”

R&A



Contents 

