

R&A

Developing Golf.

Sharing best practice for the benefit of the sport

ISSUE
five



From
concept
to reality

Behind the scenes of the first-ever G4D Open

“ We try to inspire them to pursue their dreams and to help them become better leaders on and off the golf course ”

– Rob Ohno, ANNIKA Foundation President and CEO

ISSUE
five

R&A Group Services Limited
Company No. SC247048
Beach House
Golf Place
St Andrews
Fife KY16 9JA

www.randa.org
Email: media@randa.org



Published by 18Players, part of Sports Publications Ltd. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, but the publishers cannot accept responsibility for omissions and errors. All material in this publication is strictly copyright and all rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. The views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of Sports Publications Ltd.



Contents.

04. The ANNIKA Foundation

Annika Sörenstam's foundation aims to develop and have a positive impact on the next generation of young women and girls through golf

08. The story of the inaugural G4D Open

We speak to the administrators whose vision and hard work created an event for the world's most talented golfers with disabilities

14. Case Study: Argentina

Argentina Golf has put plenty of hard work into its High Performance programme which is now seeing success with its amateur golfers

Annual Review 2022

Our annual review for affiliates is now available to read – [click here](#)

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



“Our aim is to develop and empower the next generation of women through golf”

The ANNIKA Foundation is having a positive impact on the lives of young women around the world. President and CEO Rob Ohno discusses the foundation's work and how it is making a difference.



Annika Sörenstam with participants at a 'share my passion' clinic

op and eneration blf"

ung women and girls across the et up by Annika Sörenstam



Action from the ANNIKA
Invitational Europe 2023



Rob Ohno wanted to make a difference, so when the opportunity arose to join the ANNIKA

Foundation, he jumped at the chance. In his role as the foundation's president and CEO, the Harvard graduate is helping to change the lives of young women and girls through the medium of golf – but the impact goes far beyond the course.

What is the mission of the Foundation?

Our aim is to develop and empower the next generation of women around the world through the game of golf. We try to provide them with unique opportunities, we try to inspire them to pursue their dreams and we try to help them become better leaders on and off the golf course. Our mantra is 'more than golf' and it shines through in everything we do.

How do you set about achieving those aims?

The foundation offers various schemes, including grassroots clinics called 'share my passion' clinics. These are for girls six to 12 years old. For the next age range – around 13 to 18 – we host junior invitational events around the world, spanning five different continents. We also put on the top-tier collegiate event for women, where we invite the top 12 teams to play in an invitational event each year up in Minnesota at a course that Annika and Arnold Palmer designed together. The winner of that event gets to play at Annika's LPGA Tour event as a nice perk. The winners from some of our junior events also get similar perks. In addition, we have something called the ANNIKA Award presented by Stifel, which is an award that is given to the best female collegiate golfer each year. This award not only honours the best collegiate player, but it inspires others to be the best they can be. Rose Zhang won the award in 2022 and 2023. She is an amazing player and person who has made a huge splash on the LPGA Tour since turning pro in June after her sophomore year at Stanford.

Are there any new initiatives you are working on?

We just launched a new post-collegiate initiative on the Annika Development programme, where we're supporting some young women to pursue their dreams of playing pro golf. We're giving them access to this beautiful new private club in South Carolina, housing, financial support and then some mentorship sessions from Annika.

“I think golf mimics life way more than other sports with the ups and downs, and it's not a smooth progression forward and upward”

Furthermore, we have just announced that we're partnering with the Women's All Pro Tour, which is kind of a professional development tour, and it's going to be called the Annika Women's All Pro Tour starting in 2024. It's really the pathway to get on to the Epson Tour or the LPGA Tour.

Is the increase in the number of young women and girls playing golf reflective of a wider trend in sport?

There is a growing interest in women's sports, with women's golf definitely a part of that boom. I think there's just a resurgence of interest and we've made a lot of progress getting more girls involved in the game.

It used to be that 17% of juniors were girls and that was 20 years ago, now it's 36%. I'm not saying it's all because of us, but I know we've contributed to that growth. Annika and her husband Mike felt like the foundation really could do more to affect more young women around the world.

Annika achieved incredible things in her career – how important is it to her to help others?

Annika's interest is so sincere and genuine. She wants to help the next generation and I'll have to say that some of the women that we serve know all about Annika's accomplishments, but she retired back in 2008, so some of the girls may not know about everything that Annika has done. But their parents or their friends may tell them, 'Oh, my gosh, Annika is the greatest of all time'. When they meet her and when they go to her clinic or they listen to her speak and interact, I think in some ways they're blown away because

Annika's so down to earth and she's so willing to share advice and information to help these young women get better.

The feedback we get a lot of times is 'Wow, I'm blown away by how nice and courteous and friendly Annika was to me and just how open she was to sharing tips and advice and life perspective to help me as a golfer and a person'.

Is golf uniquely placed to help young women and girls?

I think golf mimics life way more than other sports with the ups and downs, and it's not a smooth progression forward and upward. Things can change really fast in golf and so the perseverance that it builds, the patience it requires, it's even understanding things like when you work hard at something, success doesn't necessarily happen overnight.

A lot of times in golf, you can put in the time and the effort, and you don't necessarily see the results right away, but you might see it a few months later or six months later or even a year later. But just how do you come back from disappointment when things aren't working out? Yes, we want these women to do well when they come and play our tournaments, but honestly, that's not the most important thing to Annika. She wants them to learn something that can help them the next time they go play in a tournament or the next week or the next month and so in her mind it's just a constant learning process.

I think in golf, you never stop learning. Even for Annika, the greatest player of all time. Just talking with her, she's constantly trying to learn and she's constantly trying to challenge herself, she's constantly trying to get better; there's never a point where you can say, 'Oh yeah, got it figured out'.

Do you have a favourite example of how the foundation's work has impacted one individual?

We had a woman that was blown away with the experience and interaction with Annika and meeting young women from around the world. This is a sophomore in high school, she said, 'I don't have a bank account, but here's a \$100 bill', and she says, 'It's not a lot of money, but I believe in what you're doing and as I get older and make more money, I'm going to give more'.

That's unbelievable when you're impacting young women and they understand what you're trying to do and they also want to give back. It's been super inspiring to be a part of it so far. ●



Above: A 'share my passion' clinic at the PNC Championship 2022

More than Golf

"Annika was the person I wanted to be when I grew up – in third grade, I did an entire school project on Annika and her life. I also loved the 'more than golf' aspect of her events – the clinics with Annika, the gala dinners and social events. It was a much more well-rounded experience than other tournaments. And although I had some up and down results, finishing tied fifth in my senior year of high school was a definite highlight."

- Abbey Carlson, 2016 Hilton Grand Vacations ANNIKA Invitational presented by Rolex Participant Vanderbilt Golf Alum

Key facts: The ANNIKA Foundation

\$8m

Amount given back to junior golf since inception

6k

Young women and girls impacted by initiatives

275+

ANNIKA Foundation alumni who have gone on to play on the LPGA or Epson Tours

850+

ANNIKA Foundation alumni who have played Division 1 college golf

About Annika

An all-time great of the game, Annika made a habit of winning during her illustrious career, racking up more than 100 professional victories, including 10 major triumphs. Her Hall-of-Fame career transformed the landscape of women's golf and she is still making an impact on it now. She set up the ANNIKA Foundation in 2007 to create opportunities for young women and girls to follow in her footsteps.

The story behind The G4D Open.

EDGA's Tony Bennett and The R&A's Kevin Barker explain how this inaugural championship for golfers with a disability was years in the planning – and how proud they are to see it happen



**Tony Bennett**

Head of Disability and Inclusion – IGF,
President of EDGA and PGA Master
Professional

**Kevin Barker**

Director – Golf Development at The
R&A

Many of the world's most talented golfers with disabilities competed in the first-ever G4D Open at Woburn, in England, earlier this year.

The event was staged in partnership with the DP World Tour and its inaugural playing was contested by 80 players across nine sport classes over Woburn's Duchess Course in May.

EDGA, formerly the European Disabled Golf Association, was involved in the development of the championship and will continue to support in an advisory role.

Brendan Lawlor edged out Kipp Popert in a close contest for an historic win.

We spoke to two of the protagonists in making this event happen – Tony Bennett, Head of Disability and Inclusion – IGF, President of EDGA and a PGA Master Professional, and Kevin Barker, Director - Golf Development at The R&A.

How did The G4D Open come about?

Tony Bennett: Ten years ago, there was no such thing as G4D. Some people called it golf for the disabled, or disabled golf, or adaptive golf, or accessible golf, or all-abilities golf. Where EDGA made a change was that we started to bring people together rather than push them apart. We recognised very clearly that everything should sit with the appropriate bodies. So there was a British Disabled Open, run by an independent group of people. There was a world championship, run by an independent group of people. That never seemed right to me.

Juan Postigo Arce

It always felt like you should be putting the championships where they should be, the development actions where they should be, the coaching where it should be and the rankings where they should be. If there was ever an Open Championship for golfers with disability, it should be run by The R&A, not an independent body.

I think it was a wonderful championship. It now sits alongside the other championship assets that The R&A have. In my opinion, it was the most inclusive of tournaments that we could potentially do at this stage.

Kevin Barker: I've been trying to get a championship for golfers with a disability up and running for some time. So this is something that had been dear to me for years and that I have pushed to achieve.

We eventually got permission to go ahead last October and then it was full steam ahead to get it up and running this year, which was quite a tight timescale for my amateur championship colleagues who did a great job in organising it all.

I was heavily involved because I have a keen interest in it and a reasonable knowledge of what golf for the disabled is like. Together with EDGA, we also held a symposium bringing together national federations from around the world to discuss important topics relating to the growth and development of golf for the disabled.

While it's about the players playing in the championship, we wanted to deliver a great competition and experience for those players but it was also important to use the event to promote golf for the disabled more generally. This was a great opportunity to do that.

What were The R&A able to bring to this project?

KB: We've got a long history of putting on championships and we stage them really well. But we also have the name – we're The R&A and we're the governing authority. It was great to work in partnership with the DP World Tour given their work in this area after The G4D Tour was launched last year. EDGA were also involved in the development of the championship and continue to support in an advisory role. Yes, there are other disabled events going on around the world, conducted by national federations or other organisations. But we wanted a championship for the best players in the world, an inclusive event, under the banner of the DP World Tour and The R&A, one of the main golfing bodies in the world with a global

“How can we use this championship to promote golf for the disabled more generally? This was a great opportunity and that was my goal”
- Kevin Barker

authority with 163 affiliates around the world. We wanted to demonstrate that we were doing this, that we think it's important and to set an example, using our platform and our name, to really promote golf for the disabled.

TB: The R&A did a great job. I can't give enough praise to Kevin Barker, who did an absolutely sterling job of being an advocate inside The R&A of being a champion of golf for the disabled. And there were others, like Steve Otto and Ian Scott, and Grant Moir, from the Rules side.

There has been a systemic change within the thinking of the major golf organisations: about how you approach people with disability, and the offer that you provide to them. It's not about providing a second-rate offer, it's about providing full and quality participation within the sport that everybody else can get as well.

Sometimes I worry that we think people with disability need a handout. The origin of the word 'handicap' comes from the idea that you put your cap out for help, it's seen as a charitable thing. This is about respecting people for who they are and making sure that whatever disability, limitation or impairment that they have, we can afford them full and quality participation.

Where did the name G4D come from?

TB: It was nothing more than just making it easy: G4D is golf for the disabled. We all use different terminology. Through my research, I felt as though the right terminology was individual with disability because it's a very individualised experience that that person has. There were a lot of discussions about what do you call this particular championship. We did a focus group around what it should be called: limitless open, unlimited open, X open, the disabled open, the Open Championship



The group and individual winners



Tony Lloyd

for golfers with disability. Let's just say what it says on the tin. It's The G4D Open.

What would your message be to federations around the world who would like to get involved?

KB: This was about setting an example to the national federations. We think this is important. We can do it. We obviously put a lot of effort into our championships and the scale is not necessarily something that we expect national federations to replicate. We just want them to get into this space and know that EDGA have the expertise, knowledge, resource and assets to work with our affiliates on our behalf. This is an area that's important. We're empowering EDGA to go out on our behalf to work with federations all around the world to really kick on in that space. We want federations to reach out to us or reach out to EDGA.

What might hold them back?

TB: I seem to spend a lot of my time saying to

people, look, this isn't complicated, this is really pretty easy, you've just got to make a little provision for some of the players that are playing. My PhD is in disability sports and disability golf. One of the things that we talk about in that is universal design. In a simple way, let's just call it thoughtful design. So if you had somebody coming into your office or house who was blind, you would make sure there were no trip obstacles. It's not having to design anything specific. It's just being thoughtful.

It's a bit scary when it's the unknown. Is everybody going to turn up in wheelchairs? No, you're probably going to get five or six or ten people that turn up in wheelchairs. The other people are very mobile, they can get around the golf course. They might need a buggy. What about players with intellectual disabilities?

You've just got to make sure that you keep the environment nice and calm and do a few of the basic things.

About this year's championship

The G4D Open was held in partnership between The R&A and DP World Tour, supported by EDGA. Brendan Lawlor edged out Kipp Popert in a close contest for an historic win. The two leading players in the World Ranking for Golfers with Disability (WR4GD) could hardly be separated with world number two Lawlor claiming victory by two shots. The Irishman, 26, finished on a gross score of three-over-par. World number one Popert, 24, was born with a form of Cerebral Palsy called Spastic Diplegia. The championship featured nine sport classes across multiple impairment groups, with players from 17 countries represented.

R&A

DP WORLD
TOUR

EDGA



Kim Moore



Erika
Malmberg

Perceptions of disability

TB: The temptation can be to sensationalise but the last thing that these players want is sensationalised content. They don't want to be inspirational, even though they are inspirational.

So many people say 'well, it's humbling to watch these players play'. They don't want you to be humble, they just want you to accept.

A strong statement made within the disabled community is that disabled people are not put on the earth to make able-bodied people feel better about themselves. It's a pretty strong statement. If we treat them with the respect that they are due and not put them on a pedestal and treat them as an inspiration, that's not what it's about. What it's about is that these people get on with their life and do their thing.

KB: Channel 4's paralympic TV coverage in the UK and promotional campaign about 'superhumans' was brilliant. But for people with a disability, it was controversial. Because for them, all that campaign was saying was if you are superhuman, if you can do these remarkable things, then you're 'normal'. But a lot of people with disabilities struggle in day-to-day life. You try and get out to the shops or get into your car and do the things that you take for granted. That's the reality for people with a disability.

It's a fine balance between telling stories which are in many cases inspirational and not going over that line because we don't want to over-egg. We want everyone out there to think that golf is for them irrespective of their sex, age, gender, playing ability, disability or otherwise. It's a difficult balance to find.



Philip Meadows

What about people with visual impairment? Make sure there are no trip obstacles. Really, really simple stuff.

KB: Don't be scared. At the end of the day, a golfer with a disability is a golfer.

Yes, there are some nuances in terms of what you might have to do, for example source a lot more carts for participants than would normally be the case. You'll have to look at the clubhouse, the golf course and how accessible it is depending on the people who are playing. But it's a golf competition. You have starters, you have recorders, you have a golf course, you have referees. It's the same as you do for any other golf event, just with some twists on it. So don't be nervous. Don't be scared.

The players love it and you'll get a huge amount back as an organisation. You'll feel really proud about it. It's a good thing to do. And we're all in there trying to get more people into golf. We're all trying to change the perception of golf to show that it is truly inclusive.

I think it is a really good way to demonstrate that. Yes, you could argue it is about the elite golfers with disabilities but don't forget that what we want to do is get more golfers with disabilities into the game. So this is a shop window to make sure we have the right processes and framework in place to allow people to sample the game, to compete if they wish to, to just participate in the game.

It's not all about the elite – it's about that journey from sampling to participation to competition to that elite level. But this is a great shop window. So don't be nervous. ●'

“This is about respecting people for who they are and making sure that whatever disability, limitation or impairment that they have, we can allow them still to have full and quality participation”

- Tony Bennett

Bennett: The significance of the new Rule 25

“Previously, The R&A and USGA brought in the modifications of the Rules for players with a disability. This was a little handbook that sat on the outside of the main rulebook. So you got the main rulebook and then these modifications. Every organisation could choose to ignore the modifications if they so wished. It covered things like people with canes and crutches, people that have got visual impairments, people with mobility issues. For example, we can't have somebody line us up but a visually impaired player can. So effectively, a disabled player would have to call the golf club beforehand and say 'can you apply Rule 25'?

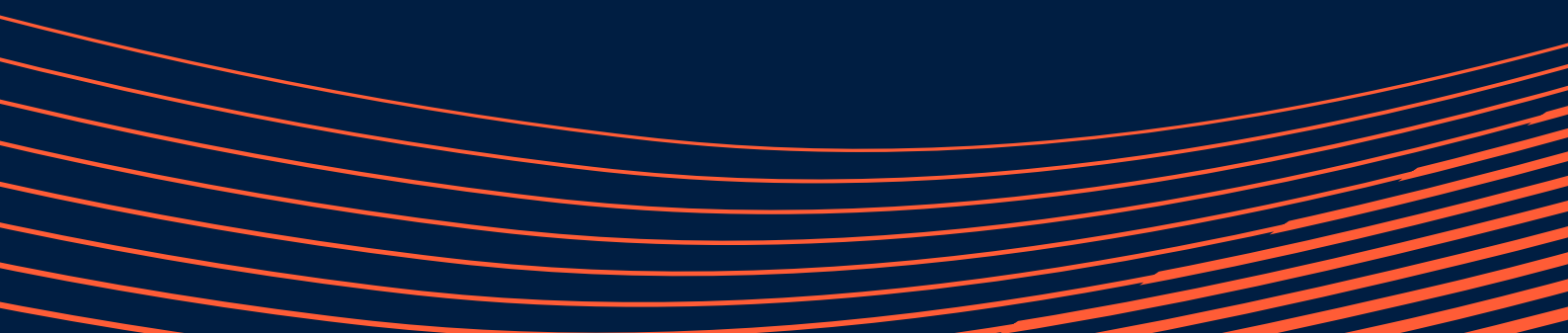
“What happened over the last few years is that we said this is something that clubs and organisers cannot opt out of. The best way to do that was to get it inside the rules. That was effectively what happened from the beginning of 2022. Rule 25 is what was previously the modifications to the rules – but now is inside the rulebook.

“Now, a tournament organiser would have to opt out. And that would show your discriminatory actions. Now it's absolutely clear that this is a rule of golf. I think it's a massive statement. We couldn't do it. It had to be done with The R&A and the USGA.”



Helping high-performance players reach their goals.

The work that Argentina Golf has put into its High Performance programme has seen amateur golf in the country enjoying a spell of success







Miguel Leeson is the Executive Director and CEO of Argentina Golf, which has recently seen two of its high-performance golfers winning amateur championships.

The Argentine Golf Association has recently reaped the rewards from its High Performance programme, with Valentina Rossi becoming Women's Amateur Latin America (WALA) champion 2022 and Mateo Fernandez de Oliveira winning the Latin America Amateur Championship (LAAC) 2023.

The programme helps elite amateur players to fulfil their potential through a focus on academic and technical development.

Miguel Leeson talks to us about the importance of junior and high-performance players, the Association's successes, its long-standing relationship with The R&A and its plans for the future.

How has The R&A helped Argentina Golf?

We've had a pretty long relationship with The R&A and, in the old days, the biggest help we got was imitating their structure, the way they work and how they go about things, being more professional and the rules.

Then The R&A started the programme of developing golf and giving support to some championships regionally. And in education, they got involved in getting very important people coming to give lectures and conferences and helping financially with costs. And the same in education for coaching, they got involved and started giving financial support and getting the proper people to come. And that was very important.

Now we present our development projects and

if they get approved, we get some funding. Two projects we've worked quite a bit on is Ladies 9, which is a project of nine-hole tournaments for women and agronomic internships and education.

For juniors, the Latin America Amateur Championship (LAAC) is great to give opportunities to the high-performance kids. That kind of opportunity, giving that kind of competition and that kind of support, is super important.

Valentina Rossi was WALA champion in 2022 and Mateo Fernandez de Oliveira won the LAAC in 2023 – what part did the high performance programme play in their success?

I would say those are products of a lot of our work, together with the parents and together with their clubs. Mateo was with us when he was 13 years old. He got selected for the programme that was talking about the Youth Olympic Games that were played in Buenos Aires in 2018. And Valentina is maybe the same, she's been with us since she was 12 years old.

It's not automatic, we started the LAAC in 2015 and we had lots of expectations. We had players that could have won it, but we didn't win for about four or five years. And suddenly, they come in pairs, as has happened this year.

Mateo and Valentina are a product of, obviously other things, but also the planification we've done working for them since they were 12 or 13 years old. They went to college – that's what we try and get the kids to do, saying it's the best way to get there eventually. The kids are part of our work, and we get involved with these high performance kids from a very young age.



Golf in Argentina

340

Golf clubs

58k

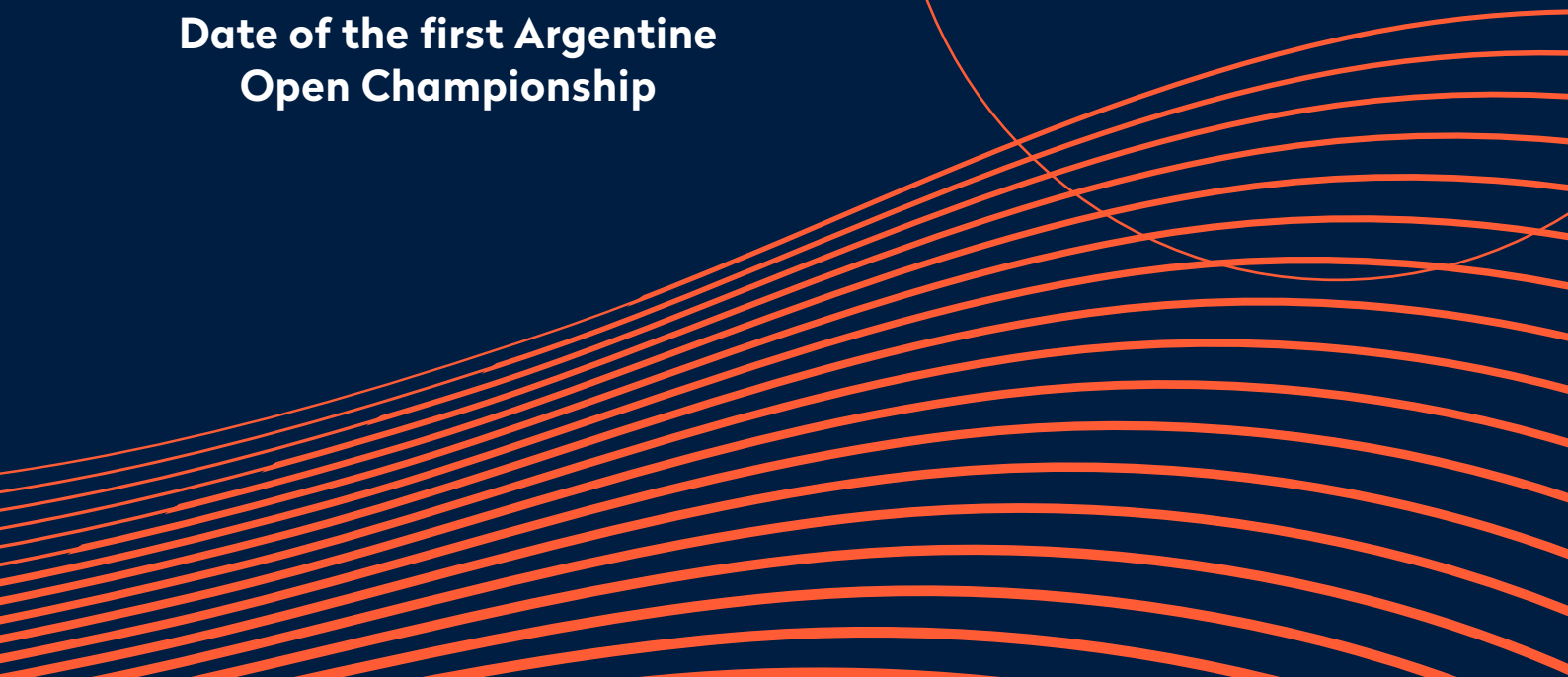
Registered handicaps

1905

Date of the first Argentine
Open Championship



“ Our first objective is to keep getting our best players better, because the high performance is important. It gives you more visibility. ”



What other opportunities are there for junior players in Argentina?

We've got junior rankings, tournaments and different levels. The biggest tournament is what we call our National Junior, which is all different categories. You've got kids that are six, seven years old, playing three holes, four holes. So, you end up with a tournament of two days with 400 players, which is part of something that is more entertainment than competitive.

What do you think is behind the success of golf in Argentina?

I think it's a combination of many things. We have a structure of clubs: we have the Federation – the Argentine Golf Association – and in the country we have nine regional federations that are like the Association but in different parts of the country. I would say history is a great part of it, work and dedication and that sort of thing doesn't hurt. The structure of clubs gives an environment where people have easy access to it. People are very sport-minded here. Football

is above everything, then rugby, field hockey mainly for women, basketball is pretty strong and tennis and then golf. Maybe it's not super popular in that we could have more people playing, and we are always thinking about how to get more people to play, but I think we put a lot of work and effort in.

What are your plans for the future?

We are always picking The R&A's brains. We are looking at the golf and health programme, contacting officials and companies. It's very important for us.

Our first objective is to keep getting our best players better, because the high performance is important. It gives you more visibility. And the other is keeping all this growth we've had. We've grown almost 19% post-pandemic, so now we've got to retain that and try to grow more.

I would say our key points going forward are women; getting more players, whether it's adults or juniors; and golf for the disabled, which we started this year. ●



What is the High Performance programme?

- The High Performance department seeks to promote the development of elite amateur players, in order to provide them with the necessary resources to fully develop their potential
- The golf school has progressively contributed to the development of young golfers and the insertion of Argentine teams at the highest international level
- The programme establishes better communication between parents, players, coaches and managers, with the ultimate goal of optimising the current structure and establishing more ambitious long-term goals
- It aims to focus resources on the academic and technical development of players
- The High Performance centre has the latest technical advances to achieve the greatest possible precision in the analysis of each player's game, highly trained staff and teachers who interact with professionals in the areas of nutrition, psychology and physical preparation
- The department trains teachers from different institutions, visits club schools, grants official certifications and is the promoter of the Association's annual seminar



R&A



Contents 

