

R&A

Developing Golf.

Sharing best practice for the benefit of the sport

ISSUE
three



The R&A
International Golf
Conference



Golf's golden opportunity

A global audience are inspired at the
International Golf Conference in St Andrews

“ I think if we look in the next five years we'll see that there are more women leading those top 200 golf organisations.”
– Jackie Davidson

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

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



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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





The R&A International Golf Conference 2023.

Held over three days in St Andrews, The R&A welcomed industry professionals from around the world to consider topics ranging from the positioning and the promotion of golf to the ways the sport is played

Golf industry professionals from around the world gathered in Scotland last month at The R&A's International Golf Conference.

Titled 'Golf's Golden Opportunity', over 200 delegates from more than 100 affiliates watched and listened to – fittingly – 18 different discussions from experts both within the world of golf and beyond on how they are driving positive change.

"We called this conference Golf's Golden Opportunity and it is a massive opportunity for all of us if we accelerate the momentum that we have behind us and we deliver against the fundamental growth principles all successful sports organisations have," said Phil Anderton, Chief Development Officer at The R&A.

The delegates who assembled in St Andrews were able to learn from other sports and businesses about how they are creating transformation. The aims of the event was to stimulate debate, learn, challenge and create new friends.

Setting the scene for the week at the opening session, titled 'Golf: where are we now and where could we go?', Martin Slumbers, CEO of The R&A, said, "Golf is changing more comprehensively than many people give it credit for.

"The ability to collaborate more effectively among The R&A's affiliated bodies and partners will be central to maximising this golden opportunity." ●

DAY ONE

The Positioning of Golf

Speakers included:

Richard Thompson, Chair of the ECB

Sir Tim Smit, Executive Chair & Co-founder of the Eden Project

Caroline Huyskes, President of the NGF & President Elect of the EGA

Laurence Applebaum, CEO of Golf Canada

Key themes

- Targeting consumers with the right message segmentation and positioning
- Healthy golf
- Sustainable golf - time for action

DAY TWO

The Promotion of Golf

Speakers included:

Barney Francis, Global Head of Production, IMG

Mark Bennett, VP Google Partnerships

Hana-Rae Seifert – General Manager

Partnerships & Legal, Golf New Zealand

Wasim Haq – Senior Non-Executive Director, England Golf

Key themes

- Storytelling – bringing the brand of golf to life
- Beginners – building the base
- Golf: open for all
- Digital and data – futureproofing our sport
- Events – building and broadening appeal

DAY THREE

The Product of Golf

Speakers included:

Steve Jolliffe, Founder of TopGolf and Puttshack

Ben Sharp, CEO of TopTracer

Jan Nielsen, MD of Rocco Forte Hotels

Yuko Tashiro, Chair of Accordia Golf, Japan

Dame Katherine Grainger, Chair of UK Sport

Ross Hallett, Senior VP of IMG

Key themes

- New formats – how to capitalise on innovation
- Enhancing the club experience – making good great
- Rules governance and sustainable agronomy – ensuring integrity in golf
- Performance matters – talent pathways and elite golf



What the experts said

“A key thing for golf is to work out what are your metrics: is it TikTok watchers, is it club membership, is it people just talking about golf, is it people doing night-time golf or going to the range? That engagement is the critical thing to measure and to understand – and technology is fantastic at that.”

Mark Bennett, VP Google Partnerships

“Significant decreases in anxiety. Significant decrease in depression. And dementia. And Parkinson’s Disease. I’m a doctor, a general practitioner. And golf makes a difference to our patients.”

Professor Andrew Murray, Medical and Scientific Adviser, The R&A

“Most of the ambassadors we have are women: we want women to attract more women because we know they will drive the game forward and we need a family game.”

Miguel Franco De Sousa, President of the Portuguese Golf Federation

“We’ve really got to work hard as an industry to get the message across that golf is not just about people playing on an 18-hole golf course.”

Rob Maxfield, Chief Executive of The PGA

“The focus on modern trends, technology and opportunities shows that The R&A are moving with the times, without losing sight of traditional values and forms of play.”

Grant Hepburn, CEO of GolfRSA

What the delegates said

“The conference was an outstanding experience. The opportunity to listen, learn and collaborate with global thought leaders in golf and spend time with golf federations from around the world was simply tremendous.”

Laurence Applebaum, Chief Executive of Golf Canada

“Golf’s Golden Opportunity is a real story for all of us.”

Yuji Okubo, Senior Manager, Foreign Affairs of Japan Golf Association

“The conference provided wonderful insights into how and why our sport is thriving today - and what we can do to capitalise on the growth momentum that golf currently enjoys.”

James Sutherland, Chief Executive Officer of Golf Australia



The R&A
International Golf
Conference



“The women have visibly in confidence, self-assure ability to project themsel

As The R&A's Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme app Jackie Davidson, Director – Women in Golf, assesses the impact and lo



changed diversity and moves forward”.

approaches its fifth anniversary,
looks forward to the future



The Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme began in early 2019. One of its main purposes was to reinforce The R&A's own Women in Golf Charter. The Charter aims to increase women and girls' participation and membership in golf, attract more families to enjoy golf as a leisure activity and encourage more opportunities for women to work and volunteer in the golf industry.

The programme is headed up by Jackie Davidson, who has spent much of her career working in sport governance. She is a previous CEO of Scottish Cycling and is currently a non-executive Director at Scottish Swimming.

Take us back to the start. How did the Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme come about?

It was partly because our CEO, Martin Slumbers, wanted to see more women coming through into leadership positions – or at least coming through to interview. There weren't enough women on the shortlists, particularly around senior positions.

We talked about different options – like an internship where we fast tracked – but we decided that we needed to do more to help support women because we could support a lot more women and more quickly that way.

It was also our way of demonstrating The R&A's commitments to our own Charter and ensuring that we are supporting more women to have careers in golf or volunteering in the sport.

We want to make sure that golf is diverse and inclusive. We want to see more women leading in different organisations throughout golf.

That's really how we mapped out the programme – what were the outcomes we were trying to achieve and then we determined how we were going to go about doing that. We created a brief and then we were lucky enough to recruit Leadership Generation to deliver it for us. When I look across my own career, I was quite lucky to come into sports that were pretty inclusive. Cycling was an older sport, but the disciplines of mountain biking and BMX changed the whole audience. I realised golf wasn't quite the same, and that some of the professional skills, self-confidence and self-esteem of women knowing what their brand is and what values they hold, were lacking.

It became quite obvious that there was a challenge in golf around the perception of women within various organisations. Whether that was unconscious or conscious, it's hard to determine. It probably varied.



How has the programme helped women working and volunteering in golf?

We were very keen to ensure that it was about the personal development of the individual. It isn't a course. It is a journey of transformational change. The women who've come through the programme have visibly changed in their confidence, in their self-assuredness, in their ability to project themselves forward. Their strength of character has shone through. Over-archingly, they are more equipped to face the challenges. I'm not saying we have been solely responsible for their career progression but we have certainly contributed.

Their networks have grown because of the individuals they meet and we also connect them to mentors, so they meet people outside the industry, women who are senior business

leaders in different walks of life. They have become a real tribe – a community. We see that on their WhatsApp groups – they're always posting celebrating the success of the women within the group. Somebody might be presenting and then somebody says "great presentation". Continuously backing each other is really important.

The other important part to it is that we involve the line managers and over 90% of them are men. It's supported by those men in understanding some of the challenges and being a bit more aware, not only making them a better line manager to the individual, but making them a better line manager overall.

The purpose of having a line manager involved is because there's no point in taking someone through that journey and then having no support back at base.

Across the programme, there are ways of the cohorts internally interacting with each other and for the line managers and the mentors to interact.

How did the Foundation Programme come about?

When we recruited for cohort three, there were a huge amount of women from a more junior level. That was when we decided to develop it. We use women from the main programme to coach on the Foundation – it's that network again. Now we've got this big network of participants from both programmes, some of whom coach on other programmes. We've got mentors, we've got facilitators and we're just rolling out a 'train the trainers' scheme as well.

It's suddenly exponentially growing. We can get to more women more quickly at a junior level

How to get involved in future programmes

We are recruiting now for both programmes. The next full programme starts in October and the next Foundation Programme starts in November. That will be our seventh Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme and our seventh and eighth cohorts for the Foundation Programme. One of the project groups is responsible for organising a gathering of all the women who have gone through the programme to come to St Andrews for two days, for education, inspiration and networking. It's called Rise and Aspire. That will be phenomenal to see. It will be a nice way to celebrate because by then it'll be almost five years since we started the first programme.

If you wish to enquire about the programme, contact Holly Sitch at hollysitch@randa.org

Foundation Programme Key Data

93%

Participants who have seen career progression – promotion; an increase in responsibilities; taking a lead on a project

90%

Participants citing increased levels of confidence as one of the main ways in which the programme has helped

75%

citing increased levels of self-belief

70%

citing increased level of management/ leadership capability

80%

Participants 'very likely' to be seeking career progression in the next five years

“We’ve got mentors, we’ve got facilitators and we’re just rolling out a train-the-trainers scheme as well. It’s suddenly exponentially growing.”



and get them more ready to face the challenges that they might face. We have so many people emailing, wanting to be part of it.

To get access, your organisation must be signatories of the Women in Golf Charter. We've had quite a few women in different organisations who've really championed their company to become part of the change, perhaps with the sole intent of wanting to come on the programme. It's made that company think about what they're doing and just opened their eyes a little bit too. It's becoming the industry standard, the one that people want to get on and be a part of, which is really nice.

We keep the numbers low. If you've got a much bigger group than 16, then you're going to get cliques and we want to keep the groups together. And then they split to do the projects. Similarly, with the Foundation Programme, 24 all start together, but then they split into two groups of 12. So when you're online, it's easier to get interaction across the group.

And the programme is now truly international?

On the full programme, we have had Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Great Britain and Ireland represented. The Foundation Programme has been even more international. We've had Georgia, Oman, South Africa, Uganda – and a real range of companies and organisations that those women have been involved with. From greenkeeping, to The PGA, to retail, to media and marketing and to golf club management.

In the full programme, you've got tournament organisers, content producers, governing body roles, financial professionals, player management and so on.

We've trained our first trainers in New Zealand and Australia. They will be able to deliver the Foundation and we have a partnership licence agreement with Golf Australia and the PGA of Australia and Golf New Zealand to be able to run the Foundation too.

Has this all followed the plan that you had at the start so far?

The ambition always was to make this global. It's one of the programmes I'm certainly most proud of in my career. It genuinely is making a difference.

I do get butterflies in my stomach when I think about the Foundation and training the trainers. That could be game-changing. We're looking to train trainers in Africa and Canada this year.

Just having those women coaching with



“ I think if we look in the next five years we'll see that there are more women leading those top 200 golf organisations. ”

international Foundation Programmes will be phenomenal.

Suddenly we've got this movement of women. We're starting to see some change.

We did a tracking survey and it's phenomenal, not only have they progressed in terms of going up the ladder in their organisations but they are also seeking volunteering experience such as non-executive director roles. They are perhaps getting involved with other sports or local community initiatives.

They are putting themselves forward to present and quite high percentages are gaining promotion.

It was never going to completely change the industry overnight but I think if we look in the next five years we'll see that there are more women leading those top 200 golf organisations. ●



Leadership Development Programme Key Data

83%

Participants who have seen progression in their career since beginning the programme

40%

Percentage of those who cite promotion within the same organisation, highlighting the wider benefit to Charter signatory organisations

81%

Participants citing 'increased network and community of women who support me'

70%

Participants 'very likely' to be seeking progression with their career in the next five years

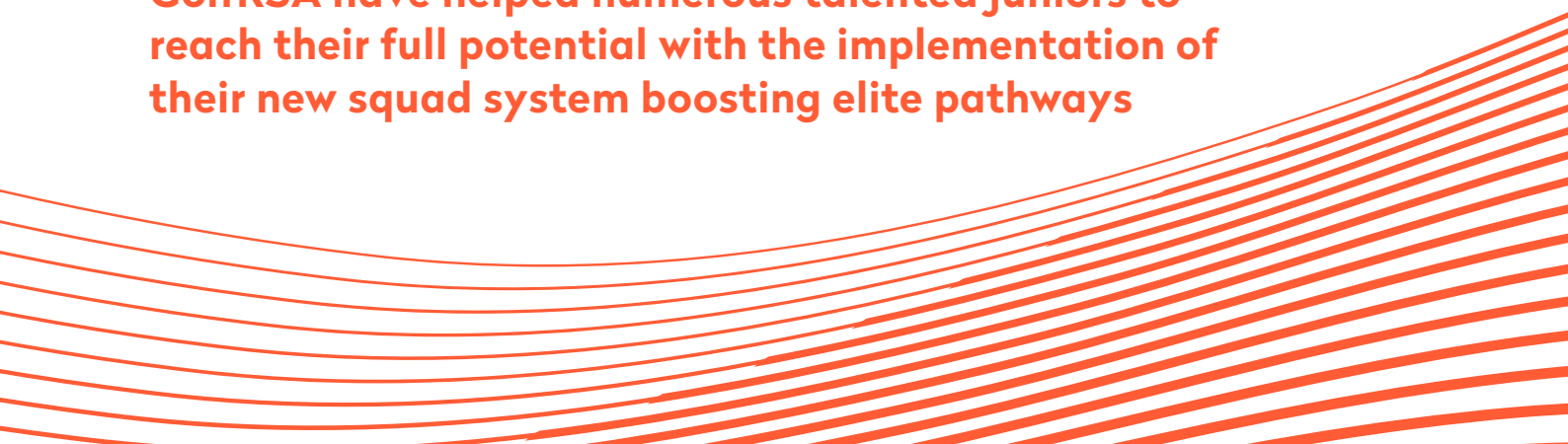




Case
Study

Elite golfer pathways.

GolfRSA have helped numerous talented juniors to reach their full potential with the implementation of their new squad system boosting elite pathways





Grant Hepburn is CEO of GolfRSA and has coached players on all the major tours around the world



Eden Thompson has recently taken on a new role as R&A Golf Development Manager: Africa after 18 years working at GolfRSA

GolfRSA's high performance programme has provided some of the most talented young golfers in South Africa with the opportunity to develop their skills through support, advice, training and playing opportunities. As part of the National Squad, these promising amateur players represent their country in international competition and are fully prepared for life as a professional golfer.

We spoke to GolfRSA's Grant Hepburn and The R&A's Eden Thompson about the significant success of high-performance and youth development.

How has the high-performance programme helped your young players achieve success?

Grant Hepburn: Our high-performance programme is relatively new in that we didn't have a squad system until seven years ago. What we've always had was a very strong tournament-playing programme, right from club level through to the golf unions or provinces, up into the national federation level. There's plenty of well-run golf tournaments for all levels of juniors going up until open amateur. So that is why, on the world stage, we've always produced good players. But with the advent of the squad, that accelerated our performance on the world stage for a number of reasons. Firstly, we could help the players to get extra coaching expertise and we could have speakers come in and address them from various walks of life. Some would be from business or some would be from other sports. So essentially, you start to create a more holistic plan.

What are the advantages of having a squad at tournaments?

GH: One of the big things that we are able to do for them is send them to the UK for six to eight weeks to play the big tournaments. So, in a relatively short space of time, they would arrive at these tournaments and feel like they're in familiar surroundings, whereas, before the squad, they would go there on their own, their parents would pay for them, they would scrape the money together and they would be a very tiny fish in a very big pond. But when you're going with a group of friends and players and squad members and you've got support, it allows you to address those inadequacies



Golf in South Africa

460

Golf clubs

139k

Golf club members

7

South African men's major champions

3

South African women's major champions

“We've worked extremely hard at creating a very specific culture of mutual respect within the squad.”

and, at the same time, because you're playing in three, four, five or six events, by the time the third or fourth event comes, you feel like you belong.

So it didn't take long for our players to start winning tournaments over there. They would then come back here and play in the local tournaments and some of our local players would, in turn, beat them. They then realised, "well, if Joe can win on the world stage and we can beat Joe, then we must also be good enough". So it breeds success.

We won 27 times on the international stage, we won the World Juniors by nine shots and we've had two Amateur Champions in the last three times we've been to the competition. So those are remarkable results, but it stems off the back of a system that's been very good for a long time.

Why did you make the decision not to appoint a National Squad coach?

GH: We never wanted other coaches to feel like their players would be taken away from them once they became successful and we never wanted a player to be forced to have lessons with someone that they may not be used to or may not want to have lessons with. By doing that, we made it inclusive. If you are a coach that gets a player to National Squad level, you are then part of our set-up because we'll invite you to our camps, we may ask you to take some of the squad on a mini tour and, essentially, we share information. It becomes a non-threatening and sharing environment for our coaches. They also get better because they're sharing your information, the players are never threatened that they will lose their coach or feel that they have to leave their coach, and so it creates an environment of inclusivity. And I think that's been hugely important.

How important is behaviour within the squad?

Eden Thompson: We've worked extremely hard at creating a very specific culture of mutual

respect within the squad. Celebrating other's successes but at the same time never stepping back to allow a squad member success. So, if you can't win, then let's celebrate the success that comes from the rest.

GH: We've made it known that, even if you're number one in our rankings, if we don't believe that you fit the culture and discipline of our squad, you won't be selected. What ends up happening is that the players themselves start to buy into that culture and police each other's behaviour. They pride themselves in the way that they behave.

We get lots of emails and letters from golf clubs, from other federations, from parents that see our squad travelling and playing, it's acknowledged on a world stage that we have this discipline and this approach.

What is the age range of the squad?

GH: If we have a 13-year-old that shows amazing potential, we'll start including them in some of the camps. We might have a junior camp so the younger player doesn't feel like he's overshadowed by the older players. And gradually, we will start to bring them into a camp where there's older players as well. But we don't have an age limit on it to be honest. I feel that if someone's played their way in, then they should be there.

The guys involved with the squad are running our national tournaments week in and week out, so they see these kids coming through from a young age. So it's early identification, it's then putting them in the squad at an early age, it's making sure they get the best instruction and expertise.

ET: I think the youngest that we've taken to the UK in the open squad system was 15. Our oldest squad member currently is 24.

Can young golfers continue to play with the squad if they move overseas?

GH: In the past, the Federation essentially turned their back on players that left our shores and went to college in America, or elsewhere. But we said, from a squad perspective, it'll be an open-door policy. If you're still playing while in America, you will still be part of our squad, and when we go to Europe, we will offer you the opportunity to join us if it fits your American schedule. So we did that. And in fact, Jovan Rebula, who won the The Amateur for us in the squad, he was, at the time, attending college in America. So that policy reaped rewards. I think it's only right. You've brought these players through, why should you turn your back on them just because they've looked for other opportunities elsewhere. ●

Notable GolfRSA graduates

Garrick Higgo (2017-2019): PGA Tour, DP World Tour and Sunshine Tour winner

Wilco Nienaber (2016-2019): Challenge Tour and Sunshine Tour winner

Jovan Rebula (2016-2021): 2018 The Amateur Champion

Aldrich Potgieter: 2022 The Amateur Champion

Sunshine Tour winners: Tristen Strydom, Herman Loubser, Albert Venter, Deon Germishuys, Dylan Mostert

R&A projects in the pipeline

GolfSixes:

GH: A lot of the models are focusing on children playing six-person teams, alternate shots and a league-type system. So that's one of the aspects we're exploring. We're also looking at maybe doing something with corporate leagues and parent-child combinations. We have identified the club where we would like to start and I think we're pretty close to implementation. The pilot project will be at five or six major clubs in the Johannesburg region and then from there we'll see what works and spread it wider. We've always had strong junior programmes, it's one of the hallmarks of South African golf. And projects like GolfSixes play into that space as well. There's a non-profit organisation here called SA Kids Golf, which does a very good job of running golf for the under-10s and although they don't form part of us, we certainly endorse them.

ET: South Africa, culturally, is a sporting nation. From a young age, you get involved in a variety of sports and golf is no different. There is a drive or an intent to ensure that golf is one of the sporting options that is available for juniors.

The Vuselela project:

GH: Essentially it's a social golf programme where people who don't have golf club membership can sign up to the federation and get a handicap. It's something that we haven't launched yet – we're still trying to get it off the ground in terms of getting a model that we're comfortable with – but it's something we'd like to implement this year.

It is a sensitive issue. Clubs often feel threatened because they feel that people will join the federation, not the club, in order to get a handicap, but that mindset has certainly changed on the world stage and it's starting to change here. We've done quite a lot of homework and consulting with golf clubs, we just need to get it over the line.

When I spoke to the federations that have implemented it, not one of them had an easy ride, but in all of the cases, within about a year, the clubs saw it wasn't really a threat to them. It's a different type of golfer that was signing up – I think only between seven and 11 per cent of people had ever been members of golf clubs before. But, very often, I think they're seeing as much as 30 per cent of those people are converting to full club memberships within a year or two anyway because they want to start playing league golf or they want to play Saturday mornings and you can't do that in most clubs unless you're a member. So the nice thing for us is we can take this information back to our local golf clubs.

ET: When people have finished studying and are established in the workplace, that access to expendable income, potentially, is there, and that's an area of the market that we need to continue to engage with and, in some instances, draw back to the game. I think that's where this programme could be hugely beneficial as it creates a gateway for those to come back into the game and then the clubs have the opportunity to essentially sell what it is they do. It will provide clubs the opportunity to engage with those golfers and if they are a fit for the culture of your club, then hopefully, that will transfer into full membership to clubs. And that's the ideal pathway back into the membership market.

Centralised booking system and database:

GH: Clubs will post whatever tee times they have available at whatever price they like and then club golfers and visitors can go on to book. Currently, the outside entities are taking quite a large cut of the sale of those tee times, so it's about trying to wrestle back control of that space so the clubs benefit from it and we can put the money back into golf from a federation perspective.

R&A



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