

R&A

Developing Golf.

Sharing best practice for the benefit of the sport

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One



Golf is Good

Finland's success in promoting the game's health and wellbeing benefits

“Safeguarding is of paramount importance to The R&A and we are committed to empowering our affiliates to create safe, inclusive environments for all”

– Phil Anderton
Chief Development Officer -
The R&A

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About Developing Golf magazine

Developing Golf magazine is a key element of the golf development alliance we are creating 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



Finland embraces 'Golf is Good' campaign.

Marika Voss of the Finnish Golf Union explains how the 'Golf is Good' initiative made an impact in her country

“Golf has huge potential to make a difference”

The Finnish Golf Union has cemented its long-standing commitment to the health benefits of the sport by embracing The R&A's 'Golf is Good' campaign.

The governing body had long recognised golf's value as a tool to promote health and wellbeing, having commissioned social return on investment analysis to support its efforts.

However, it had not rallied around a single unified campaign until it was introduced to 'Golf is Good' at the Players 1st Conference in October 2023.

After discussions with The R&A team, the union unveiled a nationwide campaign to 250 golf clubs in January 2024, receiving a positive response.



Marika Voss, the union's Head of Communications and Project Leader,

described how support with translating the materials into Finnish and Swedish had paved the way for a smooth implementation.

"The main challenge was the translations – wordplays don't always translate directly between English and Finnish," she said. "However, once we settled on the translations, things started to roll quickly. Our in-house designer adapted the text into visual materials and videos in a cost-effective way.

"For the first time, we were working with animated content, which made adaptation easier. With real-life photos, it's more important that the backgrounds and people look Finnish or at least 'familiar' to our audience. In practice, we didn't need to make significant modifications."

The campaign launched at the Golf Expo in March 2024 and the union ensured widespread coverage across various platforms, including its website, newsletters, social media and magazines. It also launched a seven-week advertising effort at railway stations.

Perceptions of golf's capacity to promote good health

In spring 2024, the Finnish Golf Union conducted a brand study on golf, which serves as one of its benchmarks.

The words golfers most commonly associated with the sport included affordable, health, community and nature. In contrast, a majority of non-golfers linked it with being expensive, difficult and boring.

However, health-related aspects were also present in the word cloud, and they were mentioned as reasons why some people might consider taking up golf. In the same study, non-golfers were shown a video from the 'Golf is Good' campaign and asked how well it matched their perception of golf. More than 60% responded that the video aligned very well or well with their image of the sport, evoking positive or neutral emotions.



To personalise the campaign, it supplemented the 'Golf is Good' materials with player stories, 'Health Thursdays', and expert blogs on golf's health benefits, particularly supporting its Women & Golf initiative

"The reception has been extremely positive," said Marika. "On an individual level, people find the topic engaging, and there's a wealth of supporting facts that can be adapted into various formats – interviews, social media, challenges, golf magazine, brochures, lectures – you name it!"

"Our member clubs have also been actively using the campaign materials and have even asked for more."

It was the only campaign run by the union in 2024, a year in which Finland saw a 1% growth in membership.

A social media campaign that ran from spring

to autumn featured a call to action, leading users to a dedicated beginner golfer website. It garnered 280,000 impressions and over 11,000 clicks.

Asked why the 'Golf is Good' campaign is likely to have struck a chord with existing golfers and new ones, Marika said: "People of all ages care about their wellbeing, and health is a hot topic in the media, especially in discussions around inactivity. Modern devices also allow various ways to track movement, which helps with motivation."

"At the club level, the materials are easy to use, and the theme resonates across different age groups."

The campaign will remain a key focus for the union through the rest of 2025, with a plan to create more content around mental health and wellbeing. The union also hopes to develop a



About 'Golf is Good'

Piloted in Wales in 2022 with the involvement of R&A Global Development Ambassador Gareth Bale, 'Golf is Good' is a participation project using cutting-edge animation to illustrate the health and wellbeing benefits of the sport.

Through the medium of creative storytelling, the campaign emphasises golf's proven ability to improve physical fitness, stimulate mental wellbeing, and encourage social interaction.



“The reception has been extremely positive”

The many health and wellbeing benefits of golf

- On average, golfers live five years longer than non-golfers
- Golf can help prevent and treat 40 major chronic diseases
- Golf can help strength and balance, improve quality of life and provide aerobic exercise
- On a regular 18-hole course, most players will walk between four and five miles, burning up to 2,000 calories
- If you play golf for at least 150 minutes per week you are meeting WHO global exercise guidelines
- Spectators walk between 5-6 miles on average and burn more than 1,000 calories per day

*Findings from [The Golf and Health Project](#)

greater understanding of a person's journey from seeing the ads, to finding an entry point to golf and converting to club engagement.

Another aim is to sign an influential ambassador to lend the campaign a greater profile and reach a more diverse audience, having seen the success Wales Golf had with engaging Gareth Bale.

Marika believes golf has considerable power to be a positive societal influence and is determined for the Finnish Golf Union to play its part.

"No single sport, including golf, can solve the issue of inactivity on its own, but we want to be part of the solution," she said. "In Finland, we are the second-largest sports federation in terms of membership, with 156,000 players. Golf has huge potential to make a difference."

Having seen first-hand the benefits that playing

the sport can bring, Marika encouraged other affiliates to embrace the campaign.

"The best thing about golf is that the physical activity happens almost effortlessly while you play," she said. "I always use my father as an example — he's almost 70 years old. He drives to the grocery store and the gym, but he always walks on his golf round, sometimes even twice a day.

"It's also fascinating how the way you play and the focus on health benefits evolve with age. These days, I especially enjoy the relaxed time with friends and family on the course — without my phone. A few years ago that didn't cross my mind."

She added, "We highly recommend the 'Golf is Good' campaign. For us, the timing was perfect, but this is a topic that never goes out of date." ●



“ We are excited to continue using this innovative approach to engage the next generation of golfers ”

Roblox Active Play initiative engages 47,000 players in Indonesia.



'Just Swing', a new virtual golf experience on Roblox, has proven a resounding success in the south-east Asian country

A new Active Play promotion on the popular gaming platform Roblox has demonstrated how to connect the digital and physical worlds of golf in Indonesia.

The three-week initiative came after the launch of 'Just Swing' in June, followed by a successful activation at the AIG Women's Open in August, where The Gang, a full-service gaming studio building best-in-class branded immersive activations, partnered with The R&A to deliver a virtual golf experience on Roblox designed to reach new, diverse audiences and drive

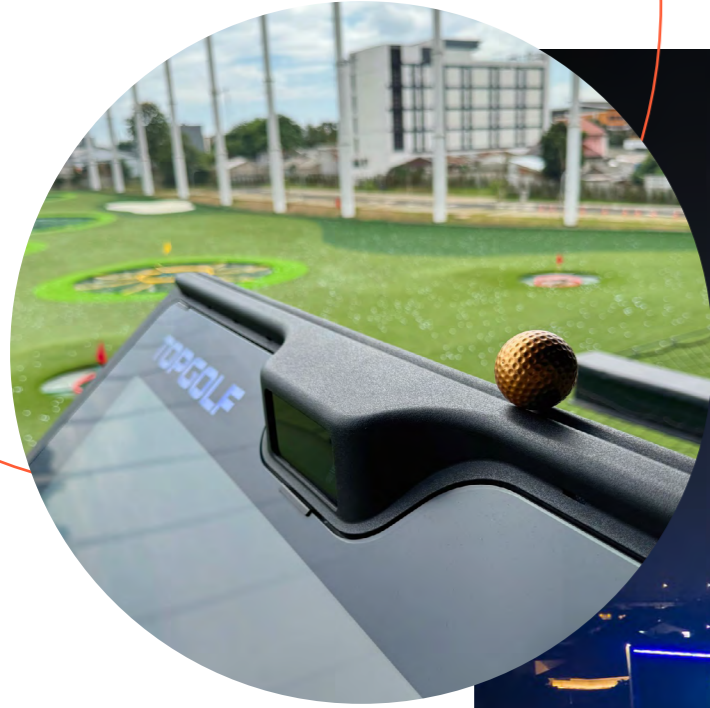
engagement and participation in the sport.

It is part of a strategic move to introduce the sport to a broader audience through the engaging world of Roblox, leveraging the platform's 90 million daily users to foster a new generation of golf fans.

Now, the ongoing collaboration with The Gang has seen golf become the first sport on Roblox to incorporate an Active Play initiative – core to the strategy of taking golf to new audiences.

Working with Topgolf, The R&A and The Gang transferred players from in-game virtual play to





About the initiative

Exclusively for players in Indonesia, participants had to complete a three-hole challenge on Roblox to win a voucher for Topgolf Jakarta. On completion of the three holes, a pop-up notification informed the player that they could redeem the voucher, valid for three months, to play for an hour at Topgolf Jakarta free of charge.

- 47,000 players engaged in the activation
- 50/50 split between males and females
- On average 2,105 players per day took part in the challenge
- The average player spent 10.3 minutes completing the challenge
- To date, over 150 players have visited Topgolf having won a free voucher
- Each player has brought an average of three family or friends with them
- Many players have since returned to the venue for a second visit

real-world play at a new Topgolf facility recently opened in Jakarta, and the first one in Indonesia.

In 'Just Swing', Indonesian players took part in the Topgolf Challenge to earn a free one-hour play session at the new facility in Jakarta – and the numbers highlight how successful it has been in building a bridge between virtual and in-person play.

Phil Anderton, Chief Development Officer at The R&A, is thrilled at the impact the initiative has had.

"Our ambition was to see if we could create

a pathway that took players from the virtual world of golf into playing the sport in real life," he explained. "We're delighted to see this idea come to fruition and deliver in exactly the way we envisaged.

"Through this activation, tens of thousands of people in Indonesia have been encouraged to engage with golf, many of them for the first time.

"This activation with Topgolf Jakarta has proven that gaming can be used as an entry point into participation, and we are excited to continue using this innovative approach to

engage the next generation of golfers."

Francis Dehnhardt, Director of Operations at Topgolf Indonesia, added, "We are proud to have played a role in this fantastic initiative. We have seen hundreds of people come through the doors of Topgolf Jakarta to become real-world golfers after they or a friend or family member engaged with the Active Play initiative on Roblox.

"It's wonderful to see people making that transition from playing golf on a computer to picking up a club and getting a feel for the real thing.

"We are confident the success of this initiative will pave the way for many more like it, and that the sport will attract a whole new generation of golfers whose first introduction to the game was through the virtual world."

Since 'Just Swing' was launched on Roblox, it has enjoyed more than 3.5 million visits and reached 220 countries where the game has been played.

In total, over 100,000 users have completed a survey where 77% said they wanted to play golf after playing 'Just Swing' on Roblox. ●

Safeguarding education.

Making sure golf is a sport for everyone



“ We are committed to empowering our affiliates to create safe, inclusive environments for all ”



Golf federations around the world are being encouraged to engage with a new online safeguarding education programme promoted by The R&A in partnership with the International Golf Federation (IGF) and UNICEF UK.

Delivered through the Open University, the Safeguarding in Sport e-learning programme is available to all golf federations and their workforce from grassroots to performance level.

Consisting of three courses available in several languages and suitable for everyone from coaches and volunteers up to those who serve as the safeguarding lead within their federation, the programme complements The R&A's Safeguarding Toolkit, further strengthening the organisation's support in this vitally important area.

The courses, originally developed by FIFA, have been adapted to cover a broad audience across multiple sports through a collaborative effort among a range of governing bodies.

Phil Anderton, Chief Development Officer at The R&A, underlined the organisation's commitment to providing the tools for its affiliates to foster a culture where safeguarding is a priority.

"Safeguarding is of paramount importance to The R&A and we are committed to empowering our affiliates to create safe, inclusive environments for all," he said.

"Golf, like all sports, thrives when people feel secure and valued, and the Safeguarding in Sport e-learning programme is designed to ensure that everyone can participate in a safe and supportive environment.

"We encourage golf federations around the world to engage with this resource, to foster a culture of safety and inclusion in order to strengthen their safeguarding practices for the good of golf and all those who are involved in it." ●

[Click here for more information](#)

Austrian golf ushered in a bright new era with the official opening of their Performance and Competence Centre last year.

Located at Fontana Golf Club in Oberwaltersdorf, just south of the capital Vienna, the venue boasts state-of-the-art training facilities available to golfers all year round.

The centre also plays host to numerous key stakeholders, housing the expertise of a variety of Austrian golfing institutions under one roof.

We spoke to the Austrian Golf Association's Niki Wiesberger to find out more about this flagship project...



Niki Wiesberger
Director of Marketing and IT,
Austrian Golf Association

What was the catalyst for this facility being built?

There had always been the idea of developing a dedicated training facility for all of our athletes which they would be able to use throughout the whole year. It was a struggle to get this project on its feet because picking a location for the facility was a tough task. You want it to be somewhere that is within reach and with public transportation, because we know that is an issue for many, especially the younger players.

During Austria's bid for the 2022 Ryder Cup, sustainability and the further use of all the infrastructure for the hosting of the event was a big topic. In Fontana, which would have been the hosting venue, we had a perfect situation with a big tennis facility already on site which we would have used as a media centre during the Ryder Cup, with a plan to develop it into a national training centre after.

We didn't win the bid, but in 2022 we made the decision to downsize the project from an indoor and outdoor training centre to what would fit our needs for year-round training. We partnered with Fontana to deliver what is now the Performance and Competence Centre.

How did you ensure members were on board with this project?

Being a members' association, where the Austrian golf clubs are the members, it was important to share the vision of what we wanted to achieve as this was obviously not something where our members would see an immediate benefit. We tried to paint the bigger picture for the development of the sport in Austria, as well as many areas where our members would benefit in the mid-term and long run.

Case Study

Austria's own home of golf.

The new Performance and Competence Centre in Fontana represents a milestone for the professionalisation of golf in Austria



“ We tried to paint the bigger picture for the development of sport in Austria ”

Golf in Austria
160 clubs
120,000 golfers
60/40 male/female split



So much more than just a building

It's not only about having a location and an infrastructure where boys and girls can perfect their game – it's also about developing a sporting culture and developing awareness for what has already been achieved, especially in a small country as Austria.

Golf is not our national sport, but I really do believe that we as a country can be very proud of what has already been achieved, with names like Marcus Brier, Christine Wolf, Sepp Straka and my brother Bernd Wiesberger.

We want to show these success stories to players, but also to let them know that it doesn't come by itself. We want to motivate, we want to generate awareness and we want to develop the sport. We're very thankful that we've received the opportunity to do this in Fontana.

The centre places a big emphasis on the latest technology – how did you achieve this?

We wanted to make sure we used the area we had in the best way possible, covering as many aspects as possible, and that we were providing something to a state-of-the-art level.

Technology is becoming a bigger part of the industry and in elite sport, so it was a big focus point for us to bring in partners who would supply us with the know-how of what is out there already and what is to come.

We're proud that we have partnered with well-known brands and have a very healthy partnership with them. We've developed something where not only the youngest love to come and practise on a regular basis, but also for our elite athletes. They have great facilities out there and the resources to go abroad, but instead they decide to come to our facility and benefit from all of the services that we are now able to provide.

What sort of benefits are players deriving from having access to this technology?

What we've definitely seen is that using these technologies and educating our players on how

to use it for themselves, they come in more often and they tend to work more professionally.

We used some of this technology prior to moving into the facility, but the great thing now is that it is basically available on a daily basis. Even if there is no team camp, they can come in, we have an on-site coach and they can run through their routines and check their numbers and much more.

This is important in golf as training can easily become a guessing game. With all the data you can generate now, it is way easier for players to find the weak points as well as the strong points and work on both. This is an area where we've definitely seen our players developing and taking practice more seriously.

Does the centre provide coaching education?

We've seen that for many coaches out there in our clubs, and internationally, education stops after receiving a degree from the PGA education programme.

This might have been sufficient 10-15 years ago, where not too much changed in how people look at a golf swing, but I think we're in an era where it's not about the beauty of a golf swing anymore, it's about the efficiency. It's about





A closer look at the state-of-the-art facilities...

- **Driving range**
A 1,300m² indoor driving range offers a fairway and first cut tee line for 24 players with various training options. A ball flight of over seven meters creates ideal conditions for swing and ball flight analysis using Trackman systems. The facility is also upgraded with a 200m² putting and chipping green with a speed of approximately 10 on the stimpmeter.
- **Technology stage**
There are three Trackman simulator bays available, all equipped with the latest high-speed video technology and Smart2Move 3D Dual Force Plates. The High-Tech Bay TM3 offers additional overhead camera positions as well as a ZEN Swing Stage for training and stroke analysis on uneven surfaces. The Putt Studio features the largest ZEN Green Stage currently available with a fully integrated PuttView system – a hittable solution for varied and efficient putting training. The PuttView X is also the first time augmented reality has been used in golf training, offering new possibilities for analysing greens.
- **Short game area**
Short game in a new dimension – short game optimisation on an indoor area for all requirements with a 750m² pitch and putt green by Southwest Greens. Players can test their skills on a championship green with a speed of approximately 10 on the stimpmeter. The artificial turf sand bunker offers a unique training experience.

being able to collect data, to read data, and it's getting more and more complex.
When a player decides to visit a golf club and maybe have their first lesson, it's important on the one hand that they have a great experience with somebody who makes them enjoy the day, but also somebody whose knowledge is driven by data.

We just had our first season of performance workshops, where we bring in international experts across different areas of the game, including renowned coaches from the DP World Tour, and coaches can be part of this community and take part in these classes.
It's important for us that our clubs know what they get when they hire or decide to work together with a teaching professional. We want to raise the standards but also create a system where it's not a guessing game who you decide to work with.

Starting in 2025, we will extend these workshops not only to elite players and coaches, but also to club employees. We see this as our big mission to develop the market from the ground up and this is why we will have many more education programmes for the Austrian and the international market.

We do believe the Performance and Competence Centre will become a very important national and international platform for further development of teaching professionals.

What are your hopes for the future of the facility?

The first year for us was a little bit of a learning phase, with a change of situation for the national teams, but we also needed to see how much the regional teams would be able to use the facility and just how everything works in general.

We wanted to do this without too much pressure on all of our resources and we've now seen how everything works. We've had plenty of guests from other federations already, and we've had international workshops and so on.

It is important to us to not only develop our offering for the Austrian market, but also for our neighbours.

We would be very excited if we were able to develop our centre not only as Austria's home of golf, but also as a place where we can welcome our European partners and where we can help develop our beautiful sport more broadly. ●

“ We're proud that we have partnered with well-known brands ”



R&A



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