

R&A

# Developing Golf.

Sharing best practice for the benefit of the sport

VOL 2, ISSUE  
**Three**



**A**  
celebration  
of inclusive golf

The players are the stars during a memorable week at Woburn

“There is no better sport in the entire world than golf to be able to deliver a positive example for sustainability”

– Daniel Lightfoot,  
Director - Sustainable Golf at  
The R&A

VOL 2, ISSUE  
**Three**

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

[www.randa.org](http://www.randa.org)  
Email: [media@randa.org](mailto:media@randa.org)



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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**





THE G4D  
OPEN

# Woburn 2024



THE G4D OPEN		THE G4D OPEN
	NAME	CLUB
	FULTZ, Jarrett	USA
	GAMBLE*, Matthew	Royal Mid Surrey
	GILKS, Heather	Coventry
	GILKS, Martine	Coventry
	GRAY, Fiona	Downpatrick
	GREY*, Darren	Cleveland
	GROVE, Zach	USA
	HIRST-GREENHAM, Oliver	Morecambe

4/10

REA

DP WORLD  
TOUR



# The G4D Open.

A shining light for inclusivity in golf





**The 2024 G4D Open brought together an 80-strong field of male and female players to compete for honours at the wonderful Woburn Golf Club in May.**

With the Bedfordshire venue on hosting duties for the second year running, having staged the inaugural event last year, there was also an air of familiarity at the top end of the leaderboard.

The leading two players on the World Ranking for Golfers with Disability engaged in a final-round showdown on the Duchess Course, with number one Kipp Popert edging out defending champion Brendan Lawlor by one shot.

Away from the drama of that title tussle, a number of other stories were unfolding across a week in which the sunshine made a welcome appearance for the most part.

One competitor who was grateful just to be there, come rain or shine, was Popert's fellow Englishman Brad Smith, who missed out on the 2023 championship because of a family holiday that he "couldn't get out of".

Smith was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer in 2017 and had an above-knee amputation of his right leg, with side effects from treatment resulting in the need for a hip replacement on his left side in 2019.

To him, The G4D Open is a beacon of hope for those who may find themselves facing challenges similar to the ones that life has thrown his way.

"The majority of people playing here have been to dark places in their lives and a lot of us have overcome that darkness," he said. "I think something like The G4D Open provides hope and shows people with disabilities, or who may be struggling with certain aspects of life, that there are opportunities.

"Golf is for everyone, regardless of whether you have a disability or not. It's a great game to get out and play with friends or meet new people, and the mental health benefits are just huge."

At Woburn, amid such an eclectic field comprising players from all around the world,





## Kipp Popert, The G4D Open Men's Champion

"It's great to win. I was playing well coming into this week, but I didn't really have my A-game the first day. It was nice to come out on top at the end of the week in the battle with Brendan.

"I thought I did a good job on the front nine, and on the back I just tried to hit greens. I wanted to just keep it in play, what my coach has told me to do, hitting to 15 feet and such like. It goes against my instinct to be honest because I want to go as low as I can.

"I think what I was most pleased with was on the last hole. Again, I thought, 'I'm going to push this to 15 feet'. I felt like the pressure was there, but I handled it."



### About The G4D Open

Staged in partnership with The R&A and DP World Tour with support from EDGA, The G4D Open is a truly inclusive event. It features nine sport classes across multiple impairment groups and a field consisting of men and women, professionals and amateurs. A total of 19 different nations were represented at this year's event which, in conjunction with a series of development actions throughout the week, showcased all three stages of the player pathway from sampler, to participant, to competitor.





Juan Postigo Arce



## Jason O'Malley, Managing Director at Woburn

"We pride ourselves on being warm, welcoming and friendly and this shows our level of commitment to inclusivity. My view is that while some may see 80 golfers with a disability, they're actually just 80 players with incredible ability, and it's a really good spectacle. "I say this to all and sundry really but if you ever want to question where you think your golf is, or how testing it is, or if you want to really get pretty deep about it, what adversity is in life – come along this week, have a watch and see what these 80 people overcome to enjoy the sport that we love. It is nothing short of spectacular and great to be involved with."

“ Being able to get a second chance is quite amazing ”

Smith's story was just one of many, but he sees them as being unified by one common theme – and it's not disability.

"When you come to events like this you do talk about your experiences and share your stories, and it's good to see people from so many different backgrounds and with different disabilities.

"Some of the stories you hear and what people have gone through and come out the other side of is crazy, but the thing we all have in common is that we're here and we're just happy playing golf."

Wayne Perske once feared that joy had been lost to him after a spinal condition curtailed his professional career. The Australian was a pro on the Japanese Tour and qualified for The Open at Royal Liverpool in 2006 before his back problems took a heavy toll.

Perske now has 12 screws inserted in his lower back following four spinal fusion operations, with the 49-year-old told he would never play golf again.

Now, he is not only back out on the course but also winning tournaments, having triumphed at the inaugural Scottish Open for Golfers with a Disability just before heading to The G4D Open.

"This is my first year playing All Abilities golf after thinking I wasn't going to be able to play golf again at all. Being able to get a second chance is quite amazing," he said.

"From playing as an elite professional golfer to where I just physically wasn't able to play at all, and then building my game back through this



Daphne van Houten, The G4D Open Women's Champion





## Alec Scott, Sustainability Project Manager at the DP World Tour

"This is the major on the schedule. It's the biggest field that we have on the G4D Tour and all the players want to be here and want to be competing against the best players in the world in the disabled game. It's such an important event to have on the schedule and we look forward to continuing this partnership with The R&A and building on what we've already got."

category and being given the opportunity to play in competitions, has been awesome.

"I retired in 2015 and there has been a lot of water under the bridge since then, but this is really igniting those competitive fires again."

Having been on the inside of things at the sharp end of the pro game, Perske has been heartened to see the togetherness and sense of community fostered among those on the G4D Tour.

He added, "Meeting some of the other players and seeing their journeys is also really inspiring. I've never seen so much resilience among other players and the camaraderie is much better."

"In my former career it was every man for himself, but in this one we're all cheering for each other because we all know how hard it is to get here."

The hope now is for the success of the G4D Tour and its headline championship to be replicated worldwide, with EDGA and The R&A 8-Stage Pathway offering a chance for affiliated organisations to embrace inclusive events.

"The R&A has taken the lead in promoting greater inclusion of underrepresented groups, and EDGA represents one of the most diverse player groups," said EDGA President Tony Bennett.

"The golf industry has a massive opportunity to expand the sport among the 1.2 billion people with recognised disabilities and even more among the 60% of adults living with limitations.

"An industry that delivers services that meet the needs and wants of a broader demographic provides a barrier-free environment and has an inclusive attitude that will change how golf is perceived." ●



Brendan Lawlor





Phil Meadows









# The R&A and Sustainable Golf.

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**Golf has a unique relationship with the natural environment and a responsibility to ensure that future generations are able to enjoy the game played by millions around the world**







**Daniel Lightfoot**, Director - Sustainable Golf, sheds further light on the work he and his team are doing to deliver on The R&A's vision.

"Everything we do within Sustainable Golf is about providing a showcase for sustainable strategies in golf to drive better sustainability behaviour for clubs around the world.

"With Sustainable Championship Agronomy, we're supporting Course Managers in delivering surfaces that enable our championships to be successful and provide an example of the standards that can be achieved while staying true to the values of sustainability.

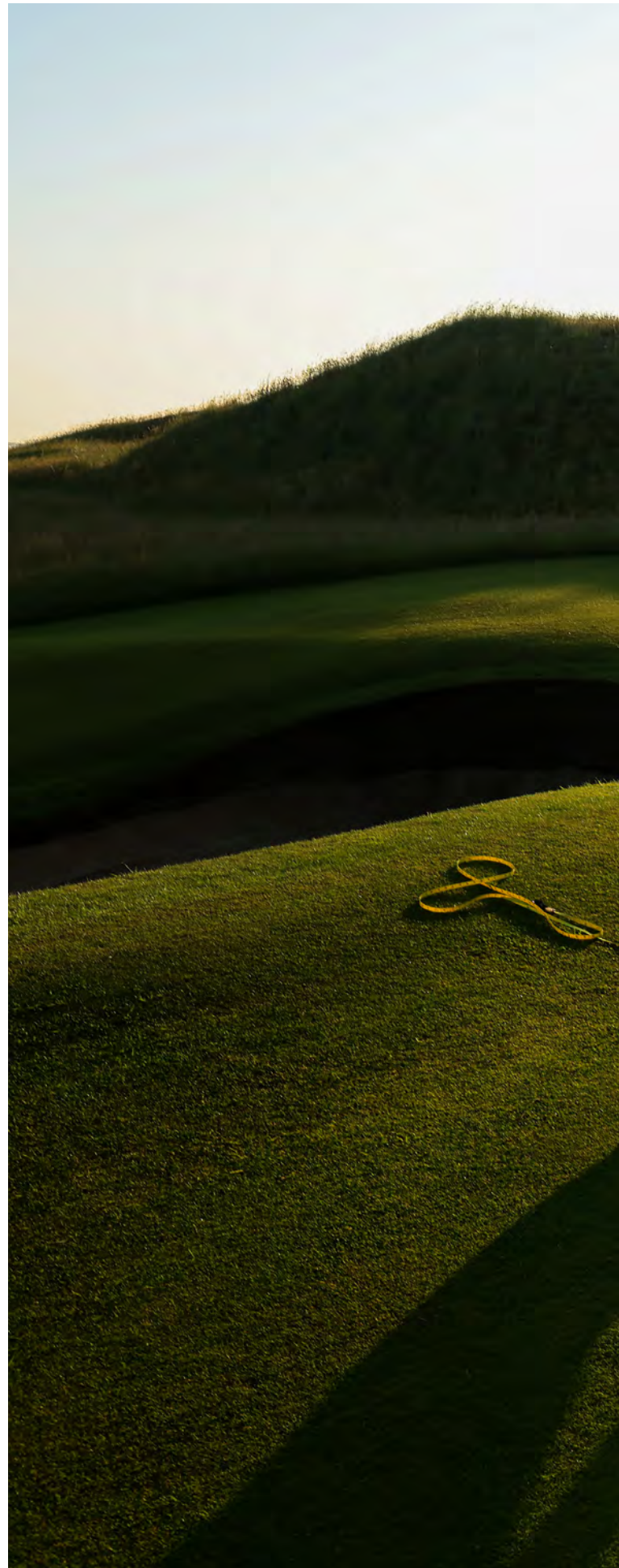
"That remit extends further with Sustainable Championships and the work we do beyond agronomy around championships like The Open and the AIG Women's Open, which are a showcase to the wider world of what can be achieved in sustainability in golf, and the positive impact golf can have on the local community and the environment.

"There are a lot of golf courses that don't host championships, and that's where the Sustainable Agronomy Service comes in, which is for any golf club that wants to engage our world-class agronomists to help them achieve their potential.

"That service is growing very well in the UK and Ireland, we have a team in Asia-Pacific, and we're just launching into Europe.

"We don't necessarily look for one-size-fits-all solutions because you'll find the market challenges and the agronomic challenges will vary hugely across different countries.

**“The R&A's job is to pull everybody together and share best practice”**







## The five strategic pillars of Sustainable Golf form the foundation of The R&A's ongoing commitment to a brighter future for the game

- **Sustainable Agronomy Service**  
Providing bespoke advice and guidance to golf facilities worldwide to increase awareness and adoption of best practices in sustainable agronomy.
- **Sustainable Championship Agronomy**  
Delivering sustainable, world-class playing conditions for championship venues – a platform for showing what is possible.
- **Golf Course 2030 Research**  
Providing research funding to establish practical solutions in sustainable agronomy, resources, biodiversity and climate change.
- **Sustainable Greenkeeping & Scholarships**  
Providing support, funding and opportunities for practical experience to new and developing greenkeeping talent.
- **Sustainable Championships (Greenlinks)**  
Demonstrating leadership in hosting sustainable golf championships and addressing The R&A's operational impacts in staging major sporting events.





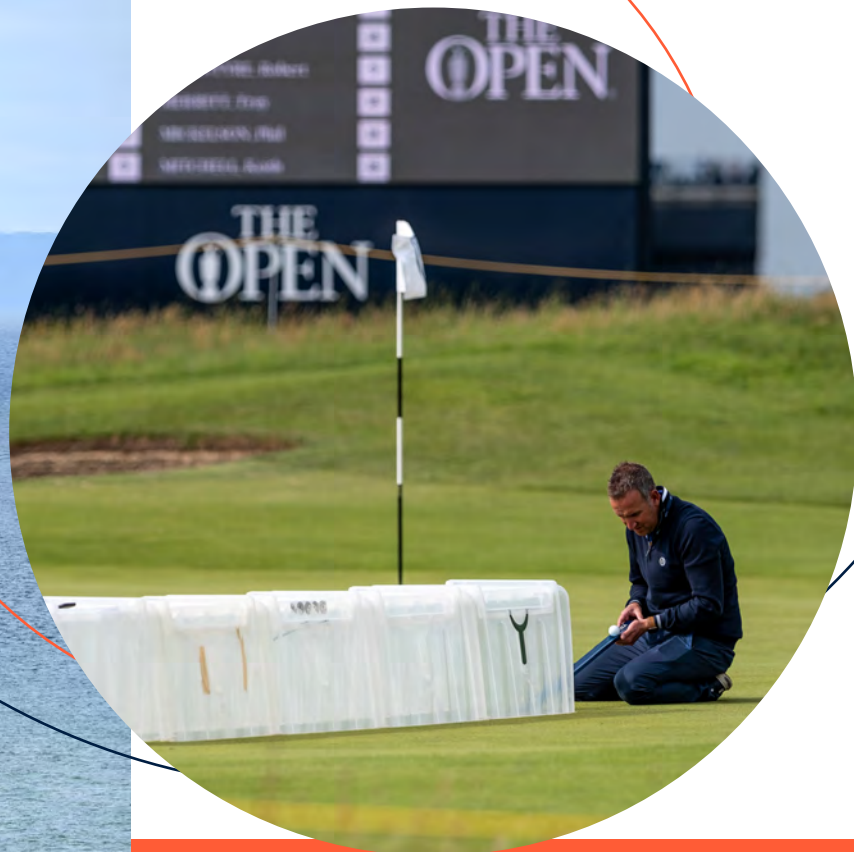
"The R&A's job is to pull everybody together and share best practice, but it's also to understand the cultural differences and the agronomic differences within all the countries and try to find sustainable strategies that are best for the specific circumstances.

"Another pillar is Golf Course 2030, which is a research platform for identifying sustainability

issues and finding solutions.

"Something that has to really underpin our message around agronomic and environmental sustainability is that it's a positive thing. We've got an opportunity to bring people together — our affiliates, greenkeepers and other key stakeholders — and to share best practice with the aim of continuously raising the bar.





## 'No better sport'

"There is no better sport in the entire world than golf to be able to deliver a positive example for sustainability. We are in the best position to show how amazing golf can be for land use, biodiversity and embracing the beauty of the natural environment. It's also great for people, for their health, for getting out in the wider world and exercising, and for connecting with the wider community. The opportunities are so powerful and I'm really optimistic about the future of this sport we love."

"That's our remit, that's our responsibility, and that's what we're aiming to do.

"Finally, we have a huge programme around education under the banner of Sustainable Greenkeeping & Scholarships, which is about helping greenkeepers develop their skills and experience in this area and providing career opportunities to people all around the world.

"Those five pillars go to the heart of The R&A's main objective, which is to ensure golf is thriving in 50 years' time, and I'm hugely optimistic about what can be achieved.

"But it's not just about The R&A having that vision because we can't do it alone – the key is to work with stakeholders to create a community of change." ●



Case  
Study



# The Thailand Golf Foundation.





***“For the sustainability and future development of golf in Thailand, it is important for all stakeholders to have a long-term vision”***

**The formation of the Thailand Golf Foundation (TGF) at the beginning of 2023 marked a new milestone for golf in the country.**



**Here, the Foundation's Secretary-General, Rae-Vadee T. Suwan, explains the origins of the organisation and the impact it is having.**

#### **When did the idea of forming the TGF come about?**

The idea came to my mind many years ago, after four decades of my involvement in the game of golf. It was three years ago that I actually started floating the idea to have the golf foundation established for Thailand.

I did some research on how the golf foundations were being managed in Australia, in Europe, and well-established countries to gain insights into forming one here in Thailand. I also consulted many people in golfing circles to sound out their opinions.

At the end I reached the conclusion that it was better to start the ball rolling and then try to get more supporters on the bandwagon than to just wait for things to happen.

My conversations over several years with Dominic Wall from The R&A gave me the courage to start forming the Foundation, knowing that I could count on necessary support from the game's governing body.

#### **Why was this seen as an important step?**

For the sustainability and future development of golf in Thailand, it is important for all stakeholders to have a long-term vision.

Golf is now regarded as a platform for career opportunities into many fields and for many levels of players.

Previously, the office-holders in the





“Joint action from all stakeholders can produce more fruitful results”

various golfing associations would concentrate on their core responsibilities and oversee their own activities, with little connection between them.

The Thailand Golf Foundation is an open space for the various stakeholders to come together to brainstorm and exchange ideas on what can be done to help grow the game we love in a sustainable way.

The Foundation can serve as the main coordination centre for the country, to distribute knowledge, know-how and development based on learnings from across the world.

It can help seek support and cooperation for member associations from the various overseas organisations.

Joint action from all stakeholders can produce more fruitful results and gain more confidence

from other involved parties.

#### **Were the various stakeholders supportive of the idea from the start?**

Most stakeholders agreed to the idea of having the golf foundation, but were sceptical on how to manage the burden of running a non-profit foundation and who should be in charge of that.

The fact that the game of golf is viewed as a rich person's sport and little government support is allocated to the national association was of great concern to those who were asked to help start the foundation, as a lack of funding would pose a barrier to success.

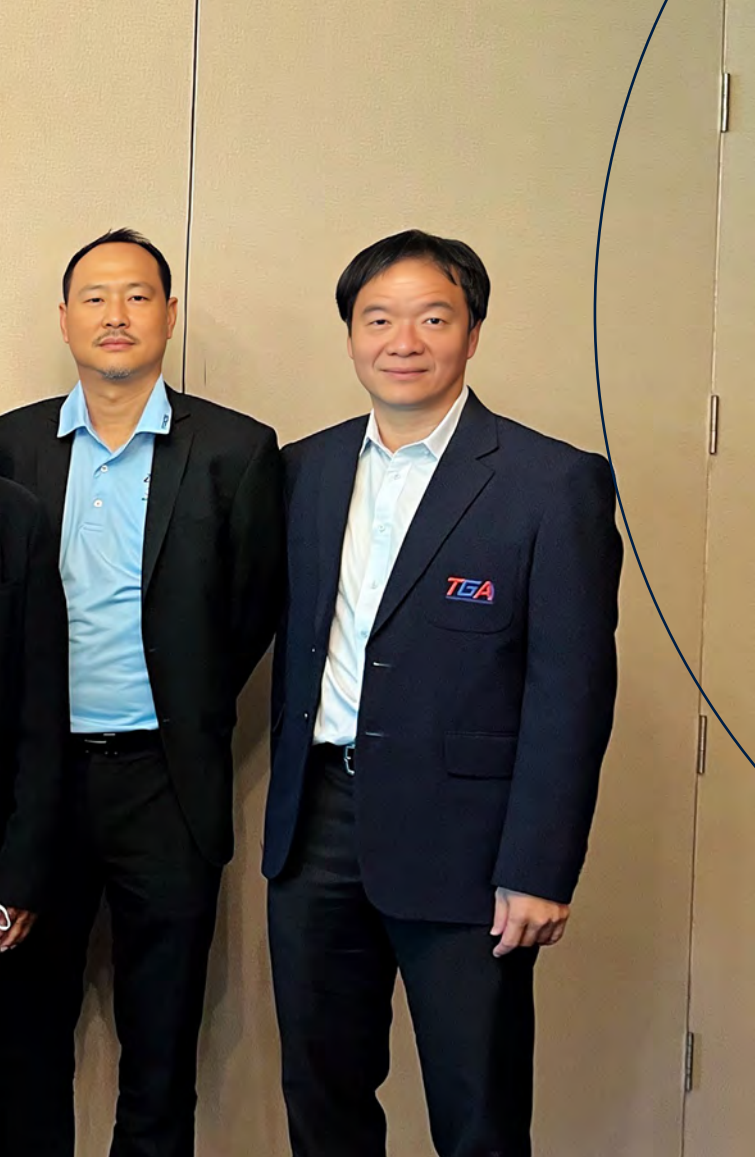
#### **How did you seek to overcome that funding issue?**

The first priority in the formation of the Thailand Golf Foundation was to raise sufficient funds to be able to launch its objectives.

In December 2023, the TGF staged its first fundraising golf tournament with The R&A Trophy at stake for the winner.

Siam Country Club in Bangkok, the capital's





## The six primary objectives of the Thailand Golf Foundation

1. To promote the game of golf to be widely played by the young generation throughout the country
2. To support and provide the necessary equipment, facilities and instructors
3. To promote tournaments, training and coaching for potential players
4. To support activities that are beneficial to all related golfing bodies
5. To cooperate with other agencies on social benefits and charitable causes
6. To refrain from all political activities.

newest golf club, was on hosting duties and the inviting venue helped draw golfers from far and wide to take part. The founder board members helped to recruit a full field to ensure the first event was a success.

Donations were also received from non-players to help support the Foundation, with some 800,000 baht (£17,100) raised.

When the TGF was registered, all the founding associations put in their equal contribution, totalling £4,000.

### How does the TGF function?

The presidents of all associations are members on the board, as well as some invited golf officials. The board members communicate regularly through the group chat channel.

Topics that need to be discussed in detail and decided on are sent for all to study before a meeting is convened in person.

So far, full in-person board meetings have been held every three months, but some members may meet up occasionally to work on an event or function being planned.

## Creating a pathway

"The Thailand Golf Foundation aims to fill in the gaps and create a pathway to make the game more accessible so the country can grow participation numbers and be able to select the best players to represent Thailand on the global stage.

"Moreover, golf is now seen as a sport with many career path opportunities. Golfers can branch out to play professional golf, become instructors, caddies, coaches, work in golf equipment fitting, course maintenance, club management and many other positions.

"The game of golf instils good discipline for the young generation and can help mould their characters into responsible adulthood."





“Golf is now regarded as a platform for career opportunities into many fields”



**What plans are there for the near future?**

This year the golfing communities will be made aware of the long history of golf in Thailand as the TGF is planning to organise a nationwide Golf Day to celebrate the first century of the game in the country. This planned event would coincide with the 120th birthday of the late Her Majesty Queen Rambhai Barni of King Rama 7, who was regarded as the royal pioneer who introduced the game of women's golf to the country.

She graciously gave Her patronage to the Thailand Ladies Golf Association when it was formed in 1978 and donated a challenge trophy in Her name to the winner of the Thailand Ladies Amateur Open Golf Championship. The Thailand Seniors' Amateur Golf Association was also granted the royal patronage by HM Queen Rambhai Bani.

The Thailand Golf Foundation hopes to raise sufficient funds from this planned event to be in a position to fulfil its objectives and contribute to worthy charitable causes. ●

**The members of the Thailand Golf Foundation**

1. Thailand Golf Association
2. Thailand Ladies Golf Association
3. Professional Golf Association of Thailand
4. Thailand Ladies Professional Golf Association
5. Thai Senior Professional Golf Association
6. Thai Golf Courses Association

**THAILAND GOLF FOUNDATION****CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF TOURNAMENT**

at Club Bangkok December 2023

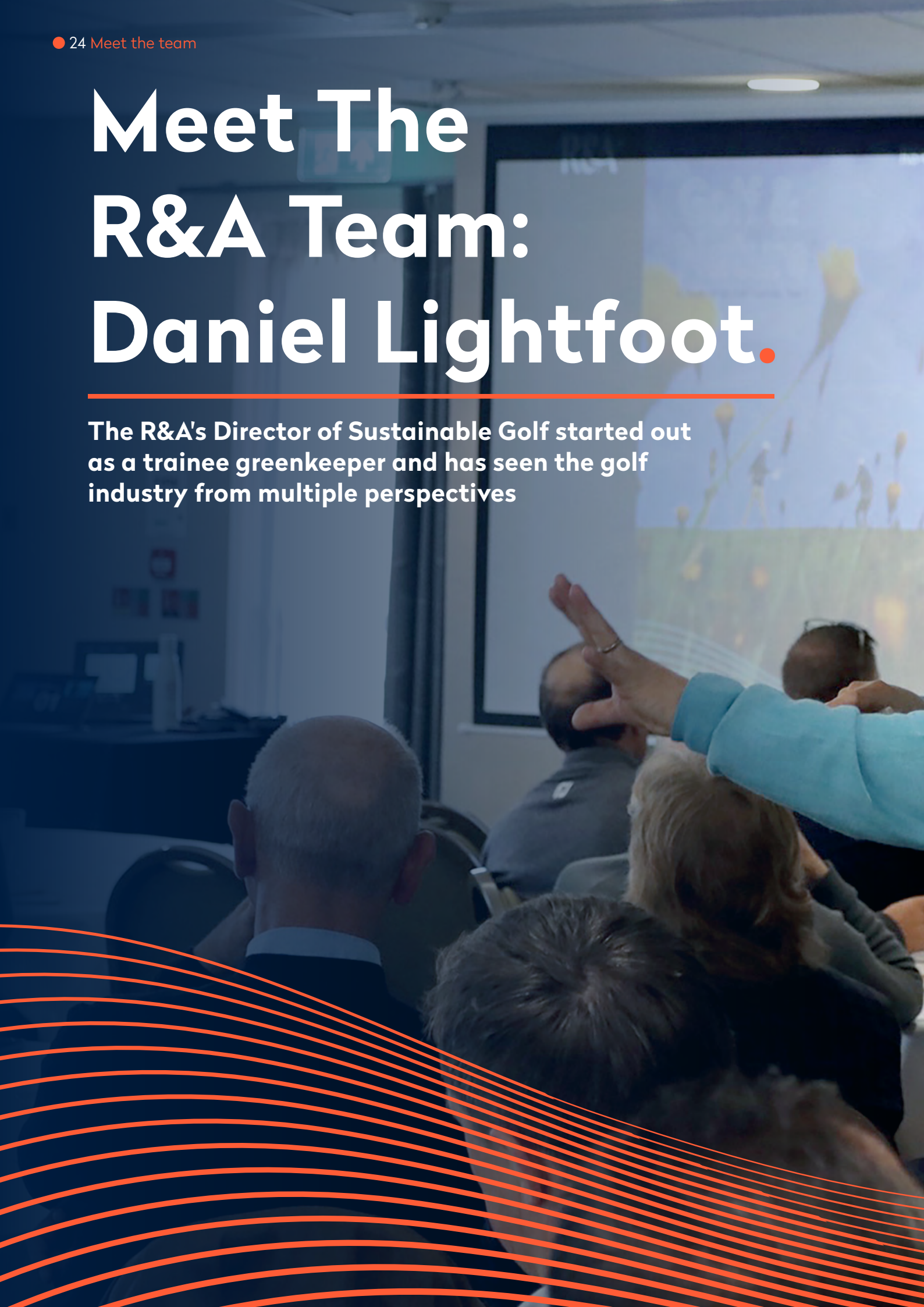




# Meet The R&A Team: Daniel Lightfoot.

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The R&A's Director of Sustainable Golf started out as a trainee greenkeeper and has seen the golf industry from multiple perspectives







**Daniel Lightfoot**

**How did you start out in the golf industry?**

I was planning to do international politics and economics at Leeds University, but I didn't get the grades that I wanted. I got into Nottingham, but I decided that, as I hadn't got in at my first choice, I would do something else.

I was looking through the UCAS book and I saw there was a HND in golf course management, and I thought, 'Now that sounds more fun'.

I played golf as a kid, I was a member of Enfield Golf Club, but, ultimately, my first impression of it was doing my HND at college in 1994. From a practical point of view, I didn't know anything.

Many of my friends had gone to Cambridge, Oxford or some other top university, and they were studying medicine and law and all those things, and there was me turning up to an agricultural college doing golf course management. I did have a moment when I thought, 'What am I doing here?'. But it all comes back down to golf – I love playing golf, I love being on the golf course and that just made it feel like the right choice for me.

**What has been your career journey up to joining The R&A?**

I did a placement at The Hertfordshire Golf & Country Club and at the end of it they offered me a job. Within three months I was First Assistant and then Deputy, so I got into a decent position fairly quickly. I then got a Deputy's job at Gatton Manor Golf Club before being made head greenkeeper by the age of 24.

Next, I went to Merrist Wood College as a lecturer in turfgrass science, where I did the first year of my PGCE and started a Master's degree in sport surface technology.

Out of the blue, one of my students told me about the Course Manager role becoming available at Bearwood Lakes and I got the job. I spent nine years there, finished my Master's, and I loved it. I also became a Master Greenkeeper while I was there and really established myself on the map.

A job then came up at Syngenta, and I spent time there in commercial roles and really enjoyed working there. They put me through





my MBA, so I added to my qualifications. After nine years, I got a call from The R&A saying they were looking for someone to head up the new Sustainable Golf business they'd developed and wanted someone who could drive it forward.

### **Describe your role as Director of Sustainable Golf**

There are five strategic pillars to Sustainable Golf, and my role is to be a facilitator and provide leadership across that broad scope.

I aim to facilitate my teams and give them the resources they need to be able to do their job. It's my role to find out how we can do a better job at championships, how we can do a better job in sustainable agronomy, how we can grow our agronomy teams, how we can grow our education, and how we do better research so that I can support that.

On the leadership side, my job is to stand up at the front and really deliver that message about what we're doing. I've been in the industry a long time now, so I know a lot of people, but you can always know more.

### **What do you enjoy most about the role?**

First of all, I've got an amazing team of great people. Some of them I've known a long time, and some I've known for six months, but it's just an absolutely outstanding team with some world-class agronomists and world-class employees and that was my main reason for joining.

Another big thing is The R&A itself and what it stands for, and to understand that and be part of it is incredibly empowering. It's an inspirational place to work and I'm working alongside inspirational people as well. ●

### **Daniel's perfect weekend**

It would definitely involve a game of golf and, although they're likely to lose, I do like to go and watch West Ham with my son. I also love watching my kids do sport, more than I do playing it myself, so I'd go and watch my son play football and my daughter do horse riding. Then I'd finish it with a nice family meal and the Lightfoot family quiz.





**“I’ve got an amazing team of great people”**



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Caption



# High Performance in

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The support of equipment giant Mizuno for The R&A Foundation is providing African golf stars



Tanaka Chatora



# Africa.

oving to be a boost for emerging



The R&A's Africa High Performance Programme is being boosted with the provision of golf clubs from Mizuno to help develop talent across the continent.

The R&A has embarked on a series of initiatives to grow the game of golf across Africa, including the launch of the Africa Amateur Championship and Women's Invitational in February, with an overarching message that golf is a game for everyone.

A key strategy for further establishing the sport across the continent is to increase the number of elite players in the region, to act as an inspiration for aspiring young golfers. Japanese equipment manufacturer Mizuno has come on board to assist in that objective, donating golf equipment to The R&A Foundation, which will be used by players in the High Performance Programme.

## Promising African talents

Launched in 2022 by The R&A in partnership with the International Golf Federation (IGF), the PGA of South Africa and Olympic Solidarity, the High Performance Programme provides support for the most promising talents across the African continent. An elite squad sits at the heart of the initiative with coaching camps, held in countries such as Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, acting as a pathway to that elite squad.

"We realised the need to create a stronger feeder network into the programme," said Eden Thompson, R&A Development Manager – Africa. "Thereby broadening the exposure of players to a high level of coaching."

One of the more significant challenges in establishing the programme has been the provision of equipment. It became evident that there were talented young players lacking access to the right equipment to aid their development. That is where Mizuno and The R&A Foundation have stepped in.

"It emerged that even some of the top players were sharing equipment," said Kevin Barker, Director – Golf Development – GB&I and Africa at The R&A. "We reached out to the British Golf Industry Association (BGIA) in search of partners willing to lend a helping hand. Mizuno was the manufacturer who answered the call."

## Making a difference

Mizuno has provided enough equipment to The R&A Foundation to initially support 15 players, with plans to extend this support to a total of 60 players this year.





Chanelle  
Wangari  
Mwangi



“This will hopefully make a big difference for a few players,” said Rob Jackson of Mizuno. “We need to do more than just say ‘grow the game’. Rihachi Mizuno founded our company to contribute to society through sports. He would be proud of this project.”

Seventeen-year-old Tanaka Chatora of Zimbabwe is one of the players to have benefited from Mizuno’s involvement in the programme. Chatora is one of the most talented junior golfers in Africa with a number of strong performances already under his belt.

“I recently received the clubs from Mizuno, and I want to express my gratitude to both The R&A Foundation and Mizuno,” he said. “They have really helped my game, they have

allowed me to play with more confidence. The High Performance Programme is really inspiring young people to get into golf and to work on their games to get the same opportunities I have enjoyed.”

#### **Platform to grow game**

The R&A’s involvement in the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship (AAC) and Latin America Amateur Championship (LAAC) has demonstrated how successful support for the elite game can be in providing a platform to grow the game from the grassroots, encouraging young players to follow in the footsteps of those who have enjoyed victories and solid finishes.

Following the success of the AAC and LAAC,





Winner of the Africa Amateur Championship, Altin van der Merwe, and Kyra Van Kan, the Africa Amateur Women's Invitational Champion

The R&A hosted the inaugural Africa Amateur Championship in February at Leopard Creek in South Africa. In total, 72 men and 20 women competed, representing 24 affiliated African countries.

Altin van der Merwe, the winner of the Africa Amateur Championship, earned an exemption to play in The Open at Royal Troon in July.

"I can't wait," said the champion. "It's links golf and I'll be licking my chops out there with the little sting 2-iron. I can't wait!"

#### **Bright future**

Three spots were also up for grabs in The 152nd Open at The Gateway to the Open Mizuno Open, played recently. Ryosuke Kinoshita,

Guntaek Koh and Yuto Katsuragawa all qualified.

In last year's Mizuno Open, two former Asia-Pacific Amateur Champions – Keita Nakajima and Takumi Kanaya – earned spots in the field for The 151st Open at Royal Liverpool.

Both now established professionals, their success is a clear demonstration of the importance of top-level championships, like the Asia-Pacific Amateur and now the Africa Amateur, to create pathways for young players.

With the establishment of the Africa Amateur Championship and the burgeoning Africa High Performance Programme, supported by Mizuno, the future of elite golf across the continent of Africa looks bright. ●



# R&A



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