

# R&A

# Developing Golf.

Sharing best practice for the benefit of the sport

ISSUE  
nine



## 'Rise and Aspire' in St Andrews

A celebration of five years of the  
The R&A Women in Golf Leadership Programme

“ We work together with federations to help develop golf in their region, from the grassroots all the way up to the high-performance programmes ”

– Mark Lawrie

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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**



# 'Rise and Aspire' celebrates five years of the Women's Golf Leadership Programme

A special conference held in St Andrews brought together 100 women from the programme run by The R&A



# celebrates women in programme.

who have been involved in the



**Over** 100 current and future women leaders in golf gathered from across the world in St Andrews recently to celebrate the success and sustained impact of The R&A Women in Golf Leadership Programme (WIGLP).

The 'Rise and Inspire' conference was held to mark the fifth anniversary of the WIGLP with attendees reflecting with pride on their personal development and career progression thanks to participation in the programme.

The first WIGLP was held in 2018, beginning a drive to increase the number of women working at mid-to-senior levels in golf organisations around the world. It is run and significantly funded by The R&A as a key part of its commitment to the Women in Golf Charter.

In total, 140 women from 34 countries have completed the Leadership Development and Foundation programmes over the last five years and the majority attended the milestone event in St Andrews. A further 40 women have embarked on their own learning and development journey in the last few weeks.

Participants from Australia, Great Britain and Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Peru, Portugal and Serbia are among those to have graduated.

Jackie Davidson, Director – Golf Development at The R&A, has helped drive the programme with a view to providing women with more opportunities in the golf industry.

"The Women in Golf Leadership Programme is our way of demonstrating The R&A's commitment to our own Charter and ensuring that we are supporting more women to have careers in golf or volunteering in the sport," said Davidson. "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 determining how we were going to go about doing that.

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

Individuals from cohort six of the WIGLP

Dame Katherine Grainger delivers her keynote speech



delivered the conference at the home of golf, providing thought provoking speakers, networking, reflection and an evening event.

Dame Katherine Grainger was among a number of inspirational speakers in attendance, including mentors and facilitators of the programme.

Grainger gave a motivational keynote speech about her career and journey from athlete to leadership positions and how to raise visibility and increase the impact of women's sport.

Erika Malmberg, a golfer with a disability who hit the historic opening tee shot at the inaugural G4D Open in May, talked about how she has overcome barriers in golf and her experience of playing in the first championship at Woburn.

Michelle Wie West shared her passion about her work with The R&A as a global development ambassador in a video message, with a video interview also broadcast from Suzy Whaley, President of The PGA of America.

Michelle Walshe and Stef Sword-Williams were also among the speakers on day two, while various individuals shared their personal experiences of the programmes having a positive impact on their professional lives.

Katinka Dufour, Championship Director at the DP World Tour and part of the event team for the

conference, said, "My highlight of the WIGLP was definitely being at the 'Rise and Aspire' event.

"Just having a seat in the room with all those women with incredible stories, I'm so thankful to have this network available to me and to have been a part of this journey.

"As part of the team delivering the event, my biggest learning has been the team spirit – working together using our strengths but also taking the opportunity to learn and develop new skills has been absolutely key. I'm so incredibly proud of the team for what we delivered together."

Aimi Bullock, director of golf development (volunteer) at EDGA (formerly the European Disabled Golf Association), has also been hugely inspired as part of the WIGLP and combines her life in golf while living with the life-changing condition MS.

"I will be forever grateful to be part of this amazing moment for female leaders in golf," added Bullock. "The programme has expanded my network, helped me find myself and a place in the world. Most importantly, I have gained my confidence again which had been shattered following my MS diagnosis.

"We wouldn't be here without the vision and

## The Leadership Programme in numbers

83%

Percentage of participants who have seen career progression...

40%

Percentage who have cited promotion within the same organisation

70%

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

72%

Percentage of these aiming for progression to be within the golf industry

81%

Percentage citing the 'increased network of women who support me' as a significant contribution of the programme



### R&A CEO Martin Slumbers hails success of the Women in Golf Charter

Martin Slumbers, CEO of The R&A, was among those who attended the conference and he said, "An important driver for the launch of the Women in Golf Charter was to encourage and support more women to work in the sport and develop their careers. It has been a tremendous success so far and will continue to grow.

"As we try to attract more and more senior women into the game working wise, it was apparent that there wasn't enough experience and opportunity. So, in effect, we said we are going to create our own programmes and pathways to allow women to have the opportunity to learn, grow and develop their skills and go on to more senior positions.

"We are creating a more senior workforce for the industry and I am very proud of what we are doing, and the women who have gone through the programme and made it a success."

determination of Jackie Davidson at The R&A to bring the leadership programme to life and the amazing duo of Alison Townson and Dr Jenny Denyer as facilitators.”

Shreena Patel, a Digital Marketing Specialist (Europe) for Adidas Golf, has come through the Foundation Programme, and said, “I really enjoyed having the opportunity to meet other women in the industry from around the world, and becoming part of a network where we have kept in touch after completing the programme. I recently got promoted to a new job and my group were some of the first people I told.

“The programme has helped hugely with my confidence which has been a massive help especially as I was coming into an industry that I didn’t know too much about. Working in a male dominated industry I often found it hard to speak up even when I had good ideas, so this has greatly benefitted me.

“My coach was fantastic. It was sometimes like a therapy session as she (Lauren) unearthed a

lot of things which have helped me progress my career and having that support from someone who has gone through different experiences opens you up to being OK with what happens and how to deal with situations that may arise.”

Davidson concluded: “The ‘Rise and Aspire’ conference provided an inspiring, learning and networking opportunity, as well as demonstrating The R&A’s commitment to continuing to support participants in their development.

“The networking opportunities the programme provides are bringing women in the golf industry closer together with increased collaboration and support, not to mention all the friendships that have been created. Over 1,300 organisations across the world have signed the Women in Golf Charter as we continue to grow the sport for women and girls on and off the course.”

**For further information on the WIGLP, click [HERE](#) ●**







“ It isn't a course, it's a journey of transformational change. The women who have come through the programme have visibly changed in their confidence, self-assuredness and ability to project themselves forward ”

– Jackie Davidson,  
Director – Golf Development  
at The R&A

## The Foundation Programme in numbers

93%

Percentage who have seen career progression since starting/being on the programme

90%

Percentage citing increased levels of confidence as one of the main ways in which the programme has contributed

75%

Percentage citing increased levels of self-belief

70%

Percentage citing an increased level of management/leadership capability





**Mark Lawrie** is a man dedicated to his job, but he isn't seeking any special praise because he loves the work he does.

Despite family ties to Scotland, it is Argentina where he has made his home, although he spends almost as much time on the road.

#### **What's your background?**

My family background is in farming. My great grandfather came over to Brazil from Scotland for work, and his sons – including my grandfather – ended up buying land in Argentina and becoming farmers.

I was into rugby and, like many who play that sport, there comes a time when rugby and your back don't get on very well! My wife, who was then my girlfriend, was a pretty good golfer and she suggested I take it up. I uttered the kind of words that come back to haunt you, "golf is for old people". But I did start playing and I took to it quickly. I got hooked; I was a convert.

Eventually I got roped into the committees at the clubs I belonged to and when I went back to farming after my studies, I was asked to become President of a regional federation in Argentina.

That got me involved with the Argentina Golf

Association (AAG) and I became a member of the board. I spent five or six years in that role and when the Executive Director retired, somebody had the very bad idea of suggesting I might want to be his replacement!

It was tempting because I've always loved sport, and getting involved in this way was a super opportunity. But on the other hand, I was living on a farm and had all the benefits of that, so it was difficult to weigh it up. I was married by then, so I talked it over with my wife and she said to do it, and we moved back to Buenos Aires.

I had a great 15-year stint there and towards the end of that time, Peter Dawson said The R&A were looking for someone in the region. I had been a member (of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews) since around 2000 so I knew what The R&A was about.

Peter said they would be opening an office in Buenos Aires. I was comfortable at the time with the AAG, but the thing that really kicked it on was when Peter took me to a meeting at Augusta National and we met with the Masters Tournament representatives, which was the beginnings of establishing the Latin American Amateur Championship. I was beginning to

“ The R&A helps federations to define plans and make sure they have the resources in place to deliver them ”

# Meet The R&A team: Mark Lawrie.

## The R&A's Regional Managing Director Latin America & Caribbean on his love of sport and devotion to the job

understand Peter was putting me in a position where there would be no turning back!

There was a transition period where I did both jobs and that was hectic. Eventually, I left the AAG and took up the position I'm in now.

### How would you describe your role?

When I first came into the role in 2014, one of the key things was to make people aware of what The R&A did. There was a loose understanding of us being the people who run The Open and do the Rules, but there was no real concept of our governance role.

We started to have those conversations and work with federations to help them streamline what they were doing, because we found a lot of them had too many fronts open and not enough resources, both human and material.

The R&A helps federations to define plans and make sure they have the resources in place to deliver them on a daily basis. It's more about creating the framework and not trying to take over the day-to-day running, because that tends not to work.

We work together with those federations to help develop golf in their region, from

the grassroots all the way up to the high-performance programmes that are operating.

There is a lot of travel involved as it's a big territory. You're on the road for 20 to 25 weeks of the year, depending on the activities and the championships you attend. It's important to visit our affiliates and they really appreciate us being present. It's talking with them and seeing what they do and what they hope to achieve that brings it all alive.

The scope of the work The R&A does around the world in terms of nurturing and developing golf is quite amazing. In the regions I operate in, we send coaches to different countries, we send agronomists, we send experts in marketing to help promote tournaments - there is so much work going on all the time to grow the sport.

And there is so much diversity in these regions - no two countries are alike - and they all present different challenges and opportunities.

### What's the most satisfying part of your role?

Firstly, it's important to stress that the role is not about me, and the words "I" and "me" don't come into it - it's about "us" and "we". The work being undertaken requires a good team in place.

Argentina's Ela Anacona won the Women's Amateur Latin America championship at Pilar Golf, near Buenos Aires, in November



My role is to get the right people in the right places to say and do the right things for the benefit of their country and their federation – it is satisfying when that happens.

We've been able to do things like set up amateur tournaments in countries and regions where they didn't have them before, and we've done exciting things like creating a programme on the Golf Channel where every federation in our region gets the chance to tell their story. That's viewed by people who play golf in their country and it might be the first time they've really understood what their federation does.

If you asked "the person in the middle of the fairway" what their federation does, they might have some vague answer about giving them a handicap or running a national competition, but they'd struggle to put together a really in-depth response. We want to get that knowledge out there and build that understanding.

Things like that help to grow and strengthen the game by strengthening the federations themselves. When we look back at everything we've done in the region, if there are 30 or more federations in a better place than when we came in, that would make us all very happy. ●



“ The scope of the work The R&A does around the world in terms of nurturing and developing golf is quite amazing ”

## Mark's ideal weekend

People often ask me if I play a lot of golf. My answer is this: golf and golf administration don't go very well together! But I still like to play when I have time, so an ideal weekend might include some golf. I also like to switch off from it sometimes, but I do like sport in general, so watching rugby and polo is something I enjoy. Most important of all is time with the family. We like to have barbecues where the whole family comes together. Our kids are grown up now and they have grandchildren who we adore. In short, the ideal weekend involves family and friends – and if there's time, a bit of golf.



Case  
Study

# Spain's Friends Cup initiative is bringing more players to golf.

"We know that 85 per cent of players are introduced to golf through a friend or relative"

**Spain** has enjoyed tremendous success with its Friends Cup initiative, welcoming hundreds of new players to the sport of golf. Founded on the principle of golfers inviting non-golfing friends and relatives to share in their passion, it has yielded remarkable results.



**Javier Guibelalde, marketing director at the Royal Spanish Golf Federation**, discusses how the scheme is driving golf participation numbers in Spain.

### **Can you explain what the Friends Cup is?**

The premise of the Friends Cup is that existing golfers bring new players into the game.

We know that 85 per cent of players in Spain are introduced to golf through a friend or relative. It may be they have invited them to play a round or just taken them to the driving range, but either way it opens the door for them to experience golf for the first time.

The Federation tells its associated clubs that if they want to reach new people and bring them to the sport, this is the best way to do it – by encouraging members to bring their friends or relatives along.

### **How does it work on a practical level?**

The Friends Cup is like an open day, where non-members and non-golfers are invited to come along to a club to play.

We give the clubs who want to participate a flyer with information, and they can send it to their members, asking them to invite a friend, husband, wife, son, daughter – whoever it may be. It's just an opportunity to invite someone new to the sport of golf.

Then on the day, they play in groups of four – two players, two non-players – and the regular players will play tee to green, while the non-players will do the putting. There are around 20 or 30 pairs, with a shotgun start, and they play anything from five to nine holes.

It's a fun format in a relaxed atmosphere, and the required skill level is not so high that it might put people off. The feedback clubs get is that everyone – the players and the non-players – really enjoys it.

At the end of the day's play, everyone can go to the clubhouse, and they will get something like a free drink. We also provide gifts for all of the participants.

### **What follow-up does the Federation undertake to retain these newcomers?**

One key thing we do is subsidise the provision of lessons for the non-players and provide the option for them to attend these lessons with existing players.

We don't want to just provide the Friends Cup experience and have no way of ensuring the people who take part actually come back again.

Our figures show that 21 per cent of people who are introduced to golf through the Friends Cup initiative end up becoming players, which is a very high number for any campaign like this.

We can track this data because in Spain it is mandatory to be licensed through the Federation in order to play.

### **What other participation initiatives does the Federation run?**

Some other examples include golf schools, where we subsidise golf lessons for children up to the age of 18.

In a similar way to the Friends Cup, this gives them a chance to experience the game and develop a passion for it.

We also run collective campaigns where clubs can target specific groups, which could include reaching out to local companies to offer subsidised lessons.

“ The feedback clubs get is that everyone – the players and the non-players – really enjoys it ”



“ The Federation encourages clubs to offer a free first lesson for women to encourage participation ”

**Is there an emphasis on increasing female participation?**

Our work at the Federation helps golf clubs to gain players of all types.

Similar to other countries, we have more male players but around 30 per cent of our members are women and we hope to see that number increase.

The Federation encourages clubs to offer a free first lesson for women to encourage participation.

By making the sport more open and inclusive, we will attract more people to it – and that is good for the future of golf.

**Can you tell us about the Hola Golf website?**

The Hola Golf website is a portal to a wealth of information regarding ongoing campaigns in Spain, with a library of video content covering a broad range of topics.

Labelled as a "welcome site to golf", there are videos on the subjects of health, participation, women in golf and the economic impacts of the sport. Visitors can also view TV programmes dedicated to golf. ●



**Golf in Spain**

**400**

**Friends Cups hosted**

**255**

**courses used**

**3,493**

**people attended subsidised**

**follow-up golf lessons**

**921**

**newly registered players after participating in Friends Cup**





## Route 365

Spain's Route 365 project started during the pandemic when the absence of tourism – which usually brings in 1.2 million players annually – forced a rethink on how to attract people to courses across the country. The idea was to encourage golfers to discover new places to play, with eight routes established in an initiative that involves 218 courses around Spain.

It has now attracted almost 10,000 registered players, who each have access to a passport that is stamped at every course they play.

There is also a digital stamp, which means their playing activity can be tracked and ranked against other players, with prizes on offer.

Participating courses offer incentives for people to play, ranging from a free drink to discounted rounds, and players can check on the Route 365 website to see what's on offer.

## The eight routes

- Ruta Balear – 10 courses
- Ruta Canaria – 12 courses
- Ruta Castilla – 28 courses
- Ruta del Ebro – 14 courses
- Ruta del Sol – 57 courses
- Ruta Manchega – 17 courses
- Ruta Mediterranea – 41 courses
- Ruta Verde – 39 courses

# R&A



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