

Newly qualified Blairgowrie coaches ready to take golf to local schools

After organising for ten of its members to become qualified coaches last weekend, Blairgowrie Golf Club is ready to begin introducing children from its local community to golf.

The club is the latest to sign up to offer the national junior golf programme, **clubgolf**, and a lasting legacy to Scotland's staging of the 2014 Ryder Cup, and a partnership between the Scottish Golf Union, the Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association, the Professional Golfers' Association, the Golf Foundation and sportscotland.

Last weekend the club's **clubgolf** coordinator, Phil McKenna and nine other club volunteers attended **clubgolf**'s two day Level 1 volunteer training with the PGA.

"It was very easy finding the volunteers and everyone volunteered first-time," said McKenna, who will draw on his organisational expertise and motivation from extensive experience in karate as a coach, three times Scottish Champion and 2007 Scottish team captain.

"There is a great deal of enthusiasm at Blairgowrie Golf Club to develop the junior section, bring a lot more young kids into the game and hopefully find some stars of the future."

Blairgowrie has a healthy junior section but is low on girl members. McKenna and team are seizing upon the opportunity created by the Active Schools network which has taken **clubgolf**'s introductory game into all the local primary schools.

"Growing up in Blairgowrie, golf was one of those sports which was out of reach for me," said McKenna. "It was only later in life, when I was in my twenties, that I got involved and got very passionate about it, now I'm hooked. "The driving force for our coaches is to give kids, that otherwise may never have had, the opportunity to play golf and hopefully we will find a young star of the future.

We only have a handful of girl members and that's something we would like to change because there are a lot of potentially good girl golfers out there and Blairgowrie is a great facility."

Together with Caroline Lawrie, Perth & Kinross Council's Active Schools Co-ordinator for the Blairgowrie cluster, the coaches are targeting three local schools this month to generate interest and offer coaching after the April holidays.

Between them Rattray, Newhill and St Stephen's Primary Schools have 105 children in the Primary 5 age group, **clubgolf**'s main target audience, and the club has set a goal of attracting twenty percent of them to coaching.

Caroline, who has been working with Alyth Golf Club in recent years to progress children onto its **clubgolf** programme, said "it is great to have another club offering **clubgolf** coaching, ensuring there is a pathway from the schools so that children can take up the game. It is a good opportunity for children to try a new sport that they might not have had access to until now. If the children get involved then it may well encourage parents to come along and play the game as well.

"By all working together we will get more children involved, get them more active and at the same time build up club memberships."

(Picture attached: Blairgowrie GC's clubgolf co-ordinator Phil McKenna right, with PGA pro and coach tutor Alan Martin with other volunteer coaches at the recent clubgolf Level 1 course,)