

Different Strokes

Philip Reid



Rathfarnham GC expands to 18 holes

The green shoots are becoming more than that, as Rathfarnham Golf Club has proven. One of the oldest clubs in Dublin, originally founded in 1899, the club has bucked the economic trend in the industry by investing in a long-held aspiration to expand to 18 holes in a development project completed by course designer Jeff Howes.

For a long number of years, there has been talk of Rathfarnham extending to a full 18 holes. Finally, it has happened. Where members once talked wistfully of securing the so-called "promised land" in order to fulfil their wishes, it has – in the end – all happened fairly quickly. Once the adjoining parcel of land was secured, the pieces of the jigsaw fell into place.

From starting construction on July 1st, Howes – working with European Golf Services on the project and using the good weather to their best advantage – designed three new holes (the 15th, 16th and 17th) which were completed by mid-August and then set about redesigning another three holes (the eighth, ninth and 14th). It has given the Rathfarnham members, and visiting societies, a parkland course of great quality which will come into play in early-2015.

"It's not going to play host to an Irish Open," said Howes, "but it will give 99 per cent of golfers playing it a lot of fun. It looks well and it plays well."

Howes has succeeded in blending in the new with the old quite seamlessly, with all 18 greens built to USGA specifications. He described it as "a wonderful opportunity to create six picturesque, enjoyable yet challenging holes that will enhance the already high quality (of the course) ... the three new holes fell like that have always been part of the mature parkland setting."

In designing the new three holes to bring the course from 15 holes up to 18, Howes utilised a stream on the newly-acquired land.

This is evident on the 15th – an uphill par four which plays longer than its yardage – where the water is in play down the side of the fairway and on the approach to the green, while the par three 16th is a picturesque hole where the stream is again a factor.

Rathfarnham, as the 10th oldest club in the Dublin metropolitan district and with wonderful views of the Dublin mountains, has mixed progress with tradition to become a hidden gem that deserves to be enjoyed by its members and visitors. As Rionach Donlan, the club president put it, "the members voted overwhelmingly for this exciting and long-held ambition in terms of course development and they are delighted with the progress of the completed programme on schedule."

The wait, it would seem, has been worth it.

Lowry feeling flat

Shane Lowry (right) has booked his flight tickets to Sun City where he hopes to be part of the elite 30-man field in next month's Nedbank Golf Challenge. However, his place in the tournament depends on how he fares in the DP World Tour Championship in Dubai.

"It has been a long year. I am feeling very flat, feeling burned out. I might even consider not going to Sun City if I have a good finish [in Dubai]," he says.

"I would almost be better off saying, 'Right, give it one good go and take six weeks off, get ready for next year' ... Mentally I am not in the right frame of mind to finish tournaments off at this time of the year."

In terms of getting his mind well for the season's finale, Lowry will have his coach Neil Manchip with him in Dubai.



Els's course praised

Ernie Els is earning quite the reputation for his golf course designs; the latest accolade coming at the recent World Golf Awards at Quinta do Lago in Portugal.

The South African's newly opened course in Malaysia – the Els Club Teluk Datai – was lauded on the double.

It was named as the World's Best New Course for 2014 and was also given the Best New Course in Asia accolade.

Set in a tropical rainforest stretching to the shores of the Andaman Sea, the Els-designed course on the island of Langkawi – part of a portfolio he is creating in Malaysia – has a number of striking features, including the macaque and dusky leaf monkeys that roam the terrain.

The course was officially opened for play last month.

International Rules



New kick-out rule puts added pressure on underdogs – and their goalkeeper



Seán Moran in Melbourne

O'Rourke ready for challenge of making sure Ireland get enough possession

The news that Essendon pair Jobe Watson and Dustin Fletcher have been cleared to play for Australia in Saturday's Test match in Perth has focused attention again on the position of goalkeeper in the international game.

Fletcher is expected to be the home side's goalkeeper, a position that doesn't exist in the

Australian game. He and Essendon captain Watson are both believed to have been served with infringement notices over the controversy surrounding the club's supplements programme in the 2012 season.

Normally players under such notice would stand suspended but the AFL have the power to vary the terms of the anti-doping code and it confirmed yesterday that the two players had joined the Australia camp.

Heroes
Fletcher is one of the players who have become heroes for taking on the goalkeeping jersey and performing very well.

From the time 30 years ago when South Australia's Garry McIntosh made such an impact in the first series in 1984 – dashing from goal with the intention of catching man and ball – AFL teams have found a succession of players who adapted well to the position, from Stephen Silvagni to previously less heralded performers like Andrew Kell-

away and Glen Jakovich.

This year Ireland have opted to bring two goalkeepers, Meath's Paddy O'Rourke and Niall Morgan from Tyrone. The practice until now had been – especially in the away series – for selectors to include just one specialist and for an outfield player to deputise if the goalkeeper is injured. At one stage in the 2005 series, Dublin's Bryan Cullen had to play in goal.

The rationale behind this departure is the new rule forbid-

“They're going to be a lot bigger so we'll have to be clever with placement”

ding short kick-outs and stipulating that they must travel at least 45 metres. Management have been so concerned by the need to have accurate re-starts that two goalkeepers with precise kicking ability have been

chosen in case one of them gets injured. And last week manager Paul Earley had some karmic reinforcement when O'Rourke fell prey to a stomach upset.

"I don't know whether it was jetlag setting in a couple of days later," says O'Rourke. "The first day we landed I was fine, trained the next morning. We had our down-time and went in to the city, walked around, came back to the hotel then and all of a sudden it came on me. I was sick as a dog for 24 hours, from Friday evening right through to Saturday evening."

On the bench

He had recovered in time to play some role in Sunday's practice match. "It was vital that I got some sort of game time. In the backs or the forwards you can slot in somewhere but when you're a goalie, if you're not fit to start, that's it, you're going to be on the bench."

O'Rourke, who kept goal for Ireland in both of last year's Tests, doesn't believe however

Ireland's Paddy O'Rourke and Colm Begley take the field for last weekend's practise match in Melbourne.

PHOTOGRAPH: CATHAL NOONAN/INPHO

that the changes to the kick-outs are necessarily going to weaken Ireland.

"I don't think it will affect our side of things. Even looking back on kick-outs last year, very few of them went inside the 45. It's about getting it to a place where you have a 75 per cent or more chance of getting the ball."

"Obviously they're going to be a lot bigger and they'll probably go zonal so we'll have to be clever with placement. If they push up and are standing zonal, five or 10 metres on the mid-field side of the 45, it's going to make it very difficult. We've been working on it and it's not like they're springing the rule on us, we've been working on it for the last two months and we've plans in place."

Quote of the week

“I'll be angry for a good few days ... I will keep myself in my own little room and have a little chat with myself and come out and win (in Dubai)”

– Ian Poulter, after knocking at the door in the HSBC and the Turkish Airlines Open only to come up short.

By the number

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There are four Irish players competing in the European Tour's season-ending DP World Tour Championship in Dubai: Rory McIlroy, Graeme McDowell (right), Shane Lowry and Michael Hoey



Twitter Talk

"My god, I can't believe it's been twelve hours since that putt dropped. Holy hell this is just so amazing!!!!!! Made it to the airport!!"

– Christina Kim (right) on returning to the winner's circle with a playoff victory in the Lorena Ochoa Invitational, her first win on tour in nine years.

"What an amazing person, she gives a new meaning to the phrase never give up"



Irish pro golfer Mark Murphy on Kim's resilience and return to winning ways.

"Massive congrats to my good buddy @Bkoepka on the win in Turkey! Very well deserved, enjoy the celebrations!"

– world number one Rory McIlroy tips the cap to his American friend Brooks Koepka on his breakthrough tour victory.

Know the rules ...

Q A player leaves a putt about an inch short of the hole. In disgust, he hits his shoe with the head of his putter. The impact bends the neck of the putter, changing its playing characteristics. The player then holes the one-inch putt with the putter. Rule 4-3b states in part: "If, during a stipulated round, a player's club is damaged other than in the normal course of play ... changing its playing characteristics, the club must not subsequently be used or replaced during the round." The penalty for breach of Rule 4-3b is disqualification. Would the Committee be justified in waiving or modifying the disqualification penalty in these circumstances, provided the player does not subsequently use the altered putter during the round?

A No. The player should be disqualified.

In the bag

Brooks Koepka (winner of the Turkish Airlines Open)

Driver – Titleist 913D2 (8.5 degrees)

3-wood – Titleist 915F (13.5 degrees)
Hybrid – Titleist (15Hd) (20.5 degrees)

4-9 irons – Titleist CB 714

Pitching wedge – Titleist CB714 (48 degrees)

Sand wedge – Titleist Vokey Design SM5 (52 degrees)

Lob wedge – Titleist Vokey Design SM5 (56 degrees)

Putter – Scotty Cameron GoLo 3

Ball – Titleist Pro VIX



Ireland in for 'very tough' Test, says Walsh

SEÁN MORAN in Melbourne

There are very few in the Ireland set-up with as long an acquaintance with International Rules as conditioning coach Nicholas Walsh. As a teenager and Cavan minor in 1999 he captained Ireland in the now discontinued junior series against the AFL Academy in Australia.

Having signed for Melbourne Demons, his AFL career was still-born because of a run of injuries but he assisted Ireland manager Brian McEniff in the 2001 series in Australia, to advise on interchange.

A year later, he was named as a stand-by by then manager John O'Keefe and although in-

cluded in the panel for the first Test, he didn't get to play.

Walsh came home in 2003 and played with his county and club Cavan Gaels, a career again disrupted by injury, until at the end of 2011 having kept in touch with the Australian game, he was offered a chance to work on the coaching staff at the new Greater Western Sydney Giants.

"I'm entering my fourth year [working with GWS Giants]," he says. "I was generally strength and conditioning up to this year but I've moved over into coaching and development. My role over the next few years will be working those first to third year players."

"I'm going to be coaching some of the backline as well. My goal would be to become an assistant coach or the like somewhere down the line. "I want to go down the coaching route rather than sports science route."

Backroom team
In the meantime he's part of the Ireland backroom team, as they hope to become the first county since the modern resumption of the series to win three consecutive series.

That of course is part of the problem for the international project. So poor has been the Australian challenge that the future of the series appears to be permanently on life support. This year the AFL has put to-

gether a very strong team for the first time in four years and Walsh says it has been a talking point for the first time in a while: "It has got a lot more coverage this year in the papers, the websites and on social media. When you put your best players out there, that's what attracts the people to it."

"It's the same with the Irish players; when the top lads come over here, the Irish people will go to see them."

"We played an indigenous [AFL] team last year and a lot of people felt it wasn't their best team but it was something the AFL were trying. This year we're playing against some very good players, real stars who are winning best and fairest in their

own clubs, so it's going to be a very tough Test in Perth."

After the heavy beating handed out to the Australians last year the rules were adjusted to redress perceived imbalances in the game and also to make the internationals more appealing to the top AFL players.

If that was an issue, the solution appears to have worked as the Australian selection for Saturday is full of elite players.

Walsh however, in common with Ireland manager Paul Earley, sees last year's rules as being inadequately tested.

"I didn't think there was anything wrong with the rules as they were. The issue last year was that they weren't playing their best players."

Gaelic Games Club Championships

Dublin sides make capital gains with semi-finals set for Parnell Park

IAN O'RIORDAN

Both the Dublin hurling and football champions are effectively at home in Parnell Park for a double-bill of Leinster club semi-finals this Sunday.

It was simply the luck of the draw for the Dublin teams. Kilmacud Crokes will host newly crowned Kilkenny hurling champions Ballyhale Shamrocks at 2pm, while St Vincent's host Westmeath football champions Garrycastle at 4pm.

Hurling final
Offaly champions Kilcormac/Killoughey are already through to the hurling final, which will take place in Portlaoise on Sunday, December 7th.

The Leinster football final is set for December 14th, and will be played at a neutral venue. St Vincent's, the reigning All-Ireland champions, are well fancied to beat Garrycastle, with the winners facing either Rhode or Moorefield, who meet in Tullamore on Sunday's other semi-final.

By winning back their Kilkenny hurling title, Ballyhale are back on course for a fourth Leinster title in eight years. It also leaves Henry Shefflin continuing to defer a decision on his inter-county future.

Remaining club championship fixtures

Football
Sunday, November 23rd
Connacht club SFC final: Ballintubber (Mayo) v Corofin (Galway), MacHale Park, 2.0.
Leinster club SFC semi-finals: Rhode (Offaly) v Moorefield (Kildare), O'Connor Park, 2.0. St Vincent's (Dublin) v Garrycastle (Westmeath), Parnell Park, 4pm.

Sunday, November 30th
Munster club SFC final: Austin Stacks (Kerry) v The Nire (Waterford), Páirc Uí Rinn, 2.0
Ulster club SFC final: Omagh (Tyrone) v

Slaughtneil (Derry), Athletic Grounds, 3.30.
Sunday, December 14th – Leinster club SFC final (venue TBC).

Hurling
Sunday, November 23rd
Leinster club SHC semi-final: Kilmacud Crokes (Dublin) v Ballyhale Shamrocks (Kilkenny), Parnell Park, 2.0.
Munster club SHC final: Kilmallock (Limerick) v Cratloe (Clare), Gaelic Grounds, 2.0.
Sunday, December 7th – Leinster club SHC final (venue TBC).

Later that day, the Ulster club football final between Tyrone champions Omagh and Derry champions Slaughtneil will take place at the Athletic Grounds in Armagh, with a 3.30 throw-in.

Austin Stacks manager Stephen Stack believes his panel have the strength in reserve to win the provincial title. "After missing out for 20 years on the trot [in the county championship], if we've to go until Christmas 12 months from now we'll keep going," said Stack. "I've no fear of them retiring now."

Dublin

Kilkenny on course to return to full training

EAMON DONOGHUE

After eight months of frustration and rehab, Dublin footballer Ciarán Kilkenny will be ready to return to full training with the county's senior panel shortly after their training ban is lifted on December 8th.

One of the country's most talented young footballers, the 21-year-old Dublin forward suffered a cruciate ligament tear against Kildare last March which ended his football for the season.

Yet after the enforced term on the sidelines he's now eyeing match fitness by the new year and a complete return in advance of the start of the National League.

The Castletknock club man says he's now learned his lesson in terms of being "a lot more intelligent" about the amount of games he plays following the long-term injury.

A dual player, Kilkenny had been representing his club, county and university in both codes and at numerous grades right up until his services were required by the county's senior footballers two years ago.

At that point he pulled the plug on his inter-county hurling ambitions.

"I'm hoping to be back training now in the next few weeks, before Christmas," he says, "I'm working really hard now and should be fully ready to go from January onwards."

"I'll be back training fully towards the end of December and I'm hoping to be back before the national league."

The gym
The St Patrick's College student says he's currently training one-on-one in the gym, three to four times a week with the Dublin senior footballers' head of athletic development Martin Kennedy – as well as doing "his own bit".

"I'm waiting, not rushing back into it – I'd be alright now, but you just have to be cautious with these sort of injuries and make your legs as strong as you can before you go back...."

"For now I'm just focusing on getting the knee right before I focus on anything else."