

Leicestershire Golfer



Serving Leicestershire & Rutland Golf Clubs

February 2011

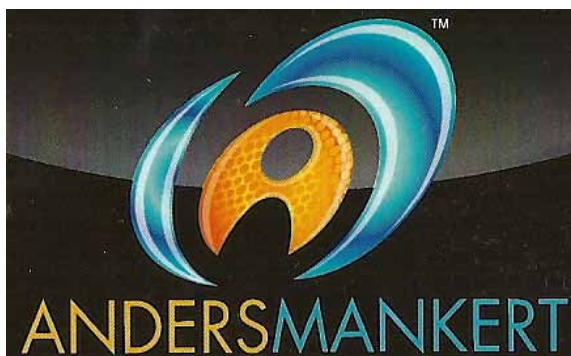


Inside this month:

Spotlight on two of Leicester's pay-and-play courses

A golf lesson on your way to work? No problem!

It's not too late to make a New Year's resolution...



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a truly local golf magazine

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It's not too late to make a resolution...

Well, that's January out of the way and we're into February already – welcome to the latest edition of Leicestershire Golfer. My name is Tim Beard, I'm the magazine's new editor and, like you, I'm a big fan of golf here and in Rutland, having lived in the county for more than 30 years.



We'll be looking to show you all the great golfing opportunities there are here in Leicestershire and Rutland, green fee deals, course features and equipment reviews too, as well as golf news and results from around the two counties.

But before the new season starts, how many of your New Year's resolutions have you managed to stick to? It's a fair bet that many of them have bitten the dust, but now's the time to start looking at New Year 'golfing resolutions'.

There are many things we can do to help our golf game and it doesn't have to involve bashing buckets of golf balls down the range or coughing up for more lessons. The first thing to do is make sure you are relaxed and ready to play.

All too many of us turn up at the golf course

a few minutes before our allotted start time, change our shoes in the car park then head straight for the tee and take a couple of quick practice swipes - then we wonder why we hit a bad shot.

If you've played golf in winter league matches and such like, you'll probably already know the value of warming-up exercises to get the blood flowing and the muscles working. Spend a couple of minutes doing a few stretches and knee bends, give the club a few swishes to get the body moving more freely, hit a few practice chips and then go to the tee. You only need to be there 15-20 minutes earlier and it can reap big rewards.

Tim Beard, Editor



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There's a great view as you approach the fourth green at Humberstone Heights

Great value golf in the heart of the city

Fancy being a member of two golf courses while paying just one annual membership fee – well that's the sort of great value that members of the two courses owned by Leicester City Council currently enjoy.

Western Park and Humberstone Heights share a number of things in common – principally, they are both on the outskirts of Leicester city centre and they are both parkland courses.

And the fact they are both council-owned means that members can enjoy golf at both courses for the same annual fee, while it also means that they can open their doors to members of the public to simply pay-and-play if they choose (For prices see "The Knowledge" panel on page 5).

Western Park is situated on the west side of the city and the course itself is located off Scudamore Road. You could be forgiven for thinking you may have taken a wrong turn as you approach the course as you have an industrial estate on one side and an housing estate on the other - but rest assured, it is there.

The course celebrated its centenary in 2010 and, as you would expect with a course that old, it is well matured. The course features

Richard Woolerton takes a look at Leicester's two city council-owned golf courses - Western Park and Humberstone Heights

lots of trees and most of the fairways are tree-lined. The fairways themselves though are pretty forgiving and open, so if you do hit the odd shot off centre you will not be punished too harshly.

"Greens are fair, true and not too fast, making the course ideal for all types of golfers"

The course also features plenty of sand with most of the greens protected by bunkers, so while the fairways may be forgiving you will need to get your approach shot. The greens are true, fair and not too fast, making the course ideal for all types of golfers. It offers a good challenge for the better players while also being not too difficult for beginners.

My favourite hole on the course was the par 5, 15th. It can play anything up to 520 yards

in length depending on tee position and from the tee you have a tricky opening shot with three fairway bunkers to negotiate that move in from the right edge of the fairway towards the middle.

The hole then doglegs round to the right and the fairway sweeps down the hill and is tree-lined on both sides before it starts to rise again up to the green.

The green is protected by sand and also slopes from back to front, so if you do not get your approach in the right spot you will be left with a tricky putt.

The course also has a well-stocked pro shop with plenty of equipment at reasonable rates. Just as importantly, the bar too is well stocked too with a good selection of food on offer.

Humberstone Heights, meanwhile, is located on the east side of the city centre off Gypsy Lane. The course is newer than Western Park, having opened in 1977. The course is an 18-hole par 72 track, with a 30-bay floodlit



The fairway rises up towards the 11th green at Western Park (above left) before the land falls again down to the green at the 12th hole



Bunkers combine to create a tricky approach shot to the third green at Western Park

Continued from page 3

driving range, and a 9-hole pitch-and-putt course to sharpen up your short game.

On the day we went to play at Humberstone Heights the wind blew and it really made it a tough test, especially on the higher holes on the course. Many of the fairways are tree-



Half price golf lessons!

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at Western Park and Humberstone Heights



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Martin Brutnall on 07973 308591

Jon Allcock on 07710 548493

Lee Skidmore on 07890 394435

Jamie Anderson on 07500 009029

Peter Livie on 07525 450708



The challenge begins - setting off down the first hole at Humberstone Heights

lined and there is also a lot of sand on the course, both on the fairways and surrounding the greens.

Again it is ideal for beginners while offering the better golfer a true test of their game too.

My favourite hole on the course was the last, a long, sweeping dogleg par 5 which moves to the right. The hole measures just over 500 yards in length and the tee shot needs to be accurate with a fairway bunker waiting to snatch up anything wayward.

The green is protected by sand and it will take two good hits to reach it in two. This hole could provide you with a birdie to finish your round, but you will need to be on your game to do it.

Council-owned facilities are an integral part of any county's golf courses, offering newcomers to the game somewhere to go and learn their skills at a very reasonable price.

But at the same time they provide excellent membership rates for those players looking for somewhere to join and get their handicap.

I believe Leicestershire is extremely lucky to have these two courses. They are good golf courses that are well run and looked after and, no matter what level of the game you are currently at be it beginner, social player, or low handicapper, they will both offer a good test of your game.

"Council-owned facilities are an integral part of any county's golf courses"



There's plenty of sand in evidence again as you approach the fifth at Humberstone Heights

Some happy memories...

I've got some great memories of these two courses going back almost 30 years when I first started playing the game of golf.

Western Park was where I played my first game on a "proper" golf course. I took 138 shots to get round but from that day I was hooked - and I still have that card tucked away in my desk to this day.

My other great memory, this time of Humberstone Heights, was when I was living in Coalville.

Early one cold and damp Sunday morning, myself and two pals turned up for a game, only to find that one of them had left his spiked golf shoes behind - not only that, he was still wearing his slippers! Suffice to say, he didn't have a great round!

Tim Beard
Editor

The Knowledge...

Western Park, Scudamore Road, Leicester, LE3 1UQ.

Pro Shop - Tel: 0116 299 5566 Club House - Tel: 0116 287 5211

Humberstone Heights, Gipsy Lane, Leicester, LE5 0TB.

Pro Shop - Tel: 0116 2995570 Bar - Tel: 0116 2761905

Annual subscription: Seven-day membership including unlimited golf at both courses is £520 for people living in the city and £580 for county residents. Five-day membership for unlimited golf is £395 for city residents and £425 for county residents. Five-day membership for over 60s living in city is £320. Junior membership is £100 a year for under 18s

Green fees: 18 holes (weekday) is £13.50, (weekend) £17. Seniors £12 and Juniors £7.

Editor Tim Beard finds out how one county pro is looking to the future...

How do you fancy a golf lesson at 6.30am on the way to work? Or perhaps a 15-minute slot to iron out a kink in your swing and get things back on track? Well, such luxuries are no problem if you talk to Anders Mankert, the pro at Cosby Golf Club.

These types of niceties are all part of the "can do" attitude which Anders has brought since taking over a few months ago, then investing heavily in his new Golf Performance Centre, which is based at the Cosby club.

Specialising in top club manufacturers Titleist and Ping, as well as quality clothing makers like Lyle & Scott and Swedish women's brand Rohnisch, Anders reckons that going the extra mile in terms of quality and service is what his customers and potential customers want – and he looks to be right.

Around 250 people turned up on a cold Monday night for an open evening to see the items on display in his totally refurbished pro's shop and to view the improved golf range and its attached state-of-the-art teaching bay where Anders tutors golfers of all standards, even some fellow pros.

"My view is that pro golfers are not natural shopkeepers – but if we are going to do something, we are going to do it properly," says Anders.

"I do lessons on two days a week from

A big investment in quality and customer service

6.30am for people going to work.

"I also have clubs booking sessions for players where I do a number of 15-minute slots. It's all about offering good customer service."

"You don't have to try out clubs by hitting balls into a net in the back of a shop - test them on the range"

"Titleist and Ping are our two main brands. They don't sell clubs cheaply on the internet or to golf equipment retailers so we can really compete on price. Plus we can custom fit clubs. We have all the models, all the heads

and the different types of shafts and we don't charge for fitting," he adds.

"You don't have to try the clubs by hitting balls into a net in the back of a shop – you can just walk on to the range and test them properly."

Meanwhile, in the teaching bay, hi-tech cameras which film at 200 frames per second capture and store the complexities of your swing on digital video so you can see what progress you are making on the big screen in the bay and implement it out on the course.

But what brought Anders to Cosby after spending 17 years coming up through the ranks from an apprentice up to head pro at Kilworth Springs Golf Club on the southern edge of the county?



The professional's shop has received a complete makeover and is now warm and welcoming

"I wanted to keep moving forward. Cosby had real potential, it is a very progressive club and its ambitions match my own"

Anders Mankert
Professional
Golf Performance Centre

Right – Pro Anders Mankert with some of the new range of Titleist and Ping equipment available in the shop

"I wanted to keep moving forward. When I came here I saw the range and the real potential. Plus Cosby is a very progressive club and its ambitions match my own," he says.

To help him deliver customer satisfaction while he is busy teaching on the range, Anders has assistant pro Chris Lager and pro shop staff member Victoria Moore to keep customers happy.

Anders enjoys a nationwide clientele. "We welcome not only golfers but non-golfers and non-members of Cosby Golf Club," says



Anders. "We have people coming for lessons, clubs and clothing from all over the Midlands and beyond."

On the day I was there, he had people coming for lessons from as far afield as

Cheshire and Norfolk. The next big date in the Golf Performance Centre's calendar is a Titleist Fitting Day on Friday, February 25th.

Sessions are by appointment only, so to book a place call Anders on 0116 286 4759.



Displays in the refurbished shop include not only Titleist and Ping but Scotty Cameron putters too



Assistant pro Chris Lager shows off some of new clothing range on display in the shop



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Water eats into the side of the green at Stapleford Park's short but tricky 10th hole

Senior

The European Senior Tour will return to Stapleford Park, near Melton Mowbray, from June 3-5 for the second edition of the ISPS Handa Senior Masters presented by the Stapleford Forum.

Following the success of last year's inaugural event, sponsors ISPS are once again backing the tournament, which attracted some of the leading Senior Tour players in 2010 including Sam Torrance, a former club captain at Sta-

stars are set to return

pleford Park, and 1991 Masters Tournament winner Ian Woosnam, who are both former Ryder Cup Captains and ISPS ambassadors.

The event is also likely to welcome the 2010 Order of Merit Winner from Thailand, Boonchu Ruangkit, as well as defending champion Bill Longmuir of Scotland, who won last year.

"I'm really looking forward to coming back to Stapleford Park," said Longmuir. "I love staying at the Stapleford Park Country House Hotel and the course is fantastic, so I can't wait to get back there."

ISPS (International Sports Promotion Society) chairman, Dr Haruhisa Handa, the Japanese philanthropist who is an International Ambassador for the European Senior Tour, said: "I am thrilled that the ISPS Handa Senior Masters will return to Stapleford Park, and I would like to thank the Stapleford Forum for their continued support."

"ISPS is committed to supporting golf in every way it can, and we really hope to progress what the sport can do for blind and disabled

people. The ISPS Handa Senior Masters is one of five events on the 2011 Senior Tour schedule supported by ISPS.

Shuif Hussain, managing director of Stapleford Park, said: "We are very pleased to be hosting the Senior Tour at Stapleford Park once again in 2011."

"I love staying at Stapleford Park Country House Hotel and the course is fantastic – I can't wait to get back"

Bill Longmuir

Handa Senior Masters winner 2010

The Senior Tour created a real buzz in and around Melton Mowbray and Rutland last year."

The tournament will once again be promoted by WSM Sponsorship, who organised the event alongside ISPS, the Stapleford Forum and the European Senior Tour.



Bill Longmuir shows off the brand new ISPS Handa Masters trophy after winning the event at Stapleford Park in May last year

Get inside the tournament ropes...

If you've ever fancied getting inside the ropes at a major golf event, Stapleford Park, near Melton Mowbray, in Leicestershire, is offering local golfers a great opportunity.

Having successfully hosted the county's first tour championship event last year – the inaugural Handa Senior Masters, featuring the likes of Sam Torrance and Ian Woosnam – plans are well under way for this

year's event and the venue is now looking for golf lovers to act as volunteer marshalls during the three-day competition.

Volunteers are needed to carry scoreboards out with the teams, act as marshalls and help to run the giant main scoreboard which tracks everyone's progress during the tournament.

Designed by Donald Steel as a links-style parkland layout, the course is laid out in

two huge horseshoe-shaped nines which almost encircle the top class hotel and leisure facilities here.

The 2011 Handa Seniors Masters will take place from June 3-5 this year, slightly later than last year's event.

Anyone interested in volunteering to help is asked to contact club professional Rich Alderson at Stapleford Park on 01572 787000.

Alliance is back under way after being hit by the winter weather

It was a disappointing end for the Leicestershire and Rutland Golf Alliance to the first half of their 2010/11 programme when three of the last five scheduled meetings had to be called off because of the intense wintry weather.

But the opening tournament of the programme's second half went ahead as planned at Beedles Lake (pictured right). The climax will come in late April when the championships are decided at Forest Hill GC.

Craig Shave (Whetstone) with 45.5 points headed the professionals order of merit at the halfway point of the season, just clear of Matthew Cort (Rothley Park) with 42 points. This pair were clear in front of Bryn Morris (Kibworth) 20.5 points third.

They had been in close competition throughout recent months, with Shave having three pro medal wins and Cort two. So no doubt their contests will continue. Cort also won a mixed with amateur Sam Haynes. The amateurs' leaderboard was headed by three golfers on 20 points each at the halfway mark – Mark Franklin, Julian Harris and Graham Cross.

But at Beedles Lake, it was Bob Larratt (Kib-

Larratt leads the way for pros and pro/am



worth), a European Seniors Tour pro, who led the way with his 70 card from three tied on 71 – Shave, Cort and county open champion Matt Stephens (Kirby Muxloe).

Larratt and amateur Mick Brookes (Glen Gorse) were first overall with 40 points from three pro/am pairs on 39, separated on Alliance rule. Mark Whittle and Dave Baggott (Hinckley) were in second place.

On January 27 the county Alliance was due to be at Western Park, then on February 3 at Kibworth, February 10 at Birstall, February 17 at Market Harborough, and February 24 at Humberstone Heights.

Any amateurs interested in playing in these weekly Alliance events should contact their club professional for more information. Starting times can be booked a month ahead now.

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Membership at Stapleford

Make Stapleford your home from home. With a Stapleford Park membership, you can enjoy unlimited golf, use of the pool, tennis courts, technogym, fitness classes and discounts on food and beverages and accommodation. We also run special member events. Memberships start from £100 per month, terms and conditions apply.

If you would like further information, contact us on 01572 787000 or visit www.staplefordpark.com

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New County Girls' Captain

Florence King (Rothley Park) and Evie Carter (Longcliffe) have taken over as Girls' Captain and Vice Captain respectively for 2011.

They were handed their county badges at a squad get-together at the end of December at Forest Hill Golf Club.

The badge presentation was made by County Junior Organiser Helen Buckingham (Forest Hill) and Zoe North (Kilworth Springs) who was Captain in 2010.

"Looking forward to a successful year with the county's strongest girls' squad to date"



Get-together: (From left) Evie Carter, Zoe North, Florence King and Helen Buckingham

Zoe was thanked for all her hard work and complimented on the way she has nurtured team spirit. She wished Florence and Evie every success for 2011.

Florence and Evie are looking forward to a successful year with the county's strongest girls' squad to date. All the squad of eleven have handicaps of 10 or less.

The team have five Midlands North league

matches to play against Derbyshire Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and, for the first time, Shropshire. There are also friendlies against Warwickshire and the County Boys.

Leicestershire and Rutland is hosting the Four Counties Championship – Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire,

Lincolnshire and Leicestershire & Rutland) this year.

This will take place at Hinckley Golf Club on 17th August. The Girls' County Championships will be held on Sunday, June 26th, at Whetstone Golf Club, where Alice Watson (Park Hill) will be hoping to make it three titles in a row.



Ping 1959 putters could be the Anser to prayers



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW INVITED

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Loughborough, Leicestershire.
LE12 8TF

Terry's in the top 6!

Lingdale Golf Club's managing secretary Terry Walker is on the shortlist of six nominees for the coveted title of Golf Club Manager of the Year for 2010.

This is a magnificent achievement as Terry only joined the Woodhouse Eaves club in 2009. A panel of judges will now interview each of the six nominees and visit their respective clubs in order to arrive at their decision as to the winner and runner-up.

The winner will be formally announced at the Golf Club Managers' Association's Annual General Meeting at The Kendleshire Golf Club, Bristol on April 6th.

Terry said "I am thrilled to be in this position, and whilst I will be going all out to win, the fact that the worst I can now come is joint third is a wonderful feeling.



"I am indebted to Lingdale Golf Club for giving me the opportunity to launch my career and the management (both past and present), staff and members have all been very supportive.

"There has not been a day when I haven't looked forward to coming to work and that says a lot about this Golf Club."

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Leading golf equipment manufacturer PING has drawn inspiration from its rich heritage of designing some of the most recognisable and successful putters in professional golf to create a completely new Karsten 1959 series.

Iconic and instantly recognizable designs like the Anser, Zing, B60 and Craze have been upgraded using high-performance and modern manufacturing processes to produce a high-performance, modern collection of putters.

Their manufacturers say that the Karsten 1959 putters are confidence-builders from the moment they're placed behind the ball. A thin, satin-finish top line offers a clean look and spot-on alignment.

At impact, an elastomer insert behind the face softens the feel while a traditional steel face delivers solid response, consistency and feedback that golfers can rely on.

"The Karsten 1959 putters have been designed so they can be custom fitted to suit individual putting strokes"

Representing the latest advancement in feel, forgiveness and alignment, the Karsten 1959 putters have been designed, like every PING golf club, so that they can be custom fitted to suit individual putting strokes.

These putters are available for both right and lefthanders in the following well-known PING designs; Anser 2, B60, Zing, Craze-E, My Day and Anser X.

UK RRP: £85 for Anser 2, B60, Zing, My Day and Anser X models and £105 for Craze-E model.

For further information on all putters in the PING range go to: www.ping.com

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Matchplay Championship

Compete in an Individual or Betterball Pairs knockout matchplay golf competition open to amateur golfers from across the Midlands.

To enter you must be a member of a golf club in the Midlands and have an official CONGU handicap.

Golfers are allocated in to one of four regions based on their golf club's location - North, East, South or West.

The first round is played over 36 holes on a home and away basis. Winners will then continue to compete against their fellow golfers to try and win their region and a place in the The Midlands Finals, which will be held at the superb

Longcliffe Golf Club

a great heathland course set in the Charnwood Forest, near Loughborough.

The winners of the individual and pairs competition at The Midlands Finals will win fantastic cash vouchers.

For more information, log on to:

www.golfingdays.co.uk

or email: info@golfingdays.co.uk

It's the funny side of golf...

Laws of Golf: There are two things you can learn by stopping your backswing at the top and checking the position of your hands – how many hands you have, and which one is wearing the glove.

Golfer to Caddy: "I'd move heaven and earth to break 100 on this course."

Caddy to Golfer: "Try heaven, you've already moved most of the earth."

More Laws of Golf: The less skilled the player, the more likely he is to share his ideas about the golf swing.

Wolstenholme backs amateur "Ryder Cup"

Gary Wolstenholme, a Leicestershire golfing legend, has become the official Ambassador to The Four Nations Golf Challenge.

Gary represented Great Britain & Ireland in the Walker Cup on six occasions and England a record 218 times and enthused at the concept of the newly-announced 2011 Four Nations Golf Challenge. This team competition devised and organised by Concierge Golf for club golfers of all handicaps, gives players an opportunity to play for their country – England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales – and experience their very own 'Ryder Cup moment'.

Gary said, "When I first heard about the Four Nations Golf Challenge I thought 'what a brilliant idea' as it offers that opportunity for club golfers to qualify for their national team and experience the kind of nail-biting finish witnessed in the Ryder Cup.

"There's nothing else like it for an amateur, feeling the passion that our top professionals experience in playing the game for national

pride. I'm really excited about what I feel could become one of the most exciting competitions devised for the club golfer.

Open to men and women, the event will culminate in a Grand Final to be contested by four teams of 12 players representing the home nations at The Oxfordshire Golf Club from September 25-28, 2011. To earn their chance, a pair will need to win a maximum of four four-ball, better-ball matches, starting in May, in regional brackets of 16 pairs each.

The Oxfordshire, a spectacular rolling layout designed by Rees Jones and owned by the Leaderboard Group, opened its own state-of-the-art four-star hotel last May and every finalist will stay free of charge throughout the four days of the Grand Final. The cost of entry is £20 per person (£40 per pair) and entries will close on April 30th, 2011.

For tournament registration and other information click onto:

www.fournationsgolfchallenge.co.uk

Alternatively, call 01276 35505.



From left - Callaway's RAZR X, RAZR X Tour and RAZR X Forged irons

Callaway's new RAZR X irons

You only have to wait until February 15th to get your hands on a new set of the Callaway RAZR X irons, the company has announced.

The new RAZR X and RAZR X Tour irons feature Callaway's proprietary RAZR Technology, which shifts the centre of gravity lower and deeper in the clubhead, offering increased shot-making.

Player research has shown that golfers tend to strike the ball lower on the clubface and these irons are designed for optimal performance on such shots.

Both the RAZR X and RAZR X Tour irons

also contain Callaway's Variable Face Thickness Power System, with a fully integrated clubface/undercut cavity system that enables the company's engineers to precisely position mass properties and design the face of each individual iron for maximum ball speeds on all shots.

RAZR X Tour Irons offer a more compact head shape with less offset and a thinner topline preferred by better players.

The new RAZR X Forged irons are made of forged 1020 Carbon Steel to produce a soft feel and responsive feedback. The Tour-inspired head shape now features

a higher, squared-off toe with a sharper leading edge.

Introduced on professional tours around the world late in the 2010 season, the RAZR X Forged irons are already in the bags of some of the game's elite players. The new product introduction retail price for RAZR X irons is £599 with steel shafts and £729 with graphite shafts.

The new product introduction retail price for RAZR X Tour irons is £699 for a set with Dynamic Gold steel shafts. The RAZR X Forged irons will retail at £799 and feature Project X shafts.

Great centenary year for L&RGU

The Leicestershire and Rutland Golf Union's Centenary Year 2010 proved highly successful, with great support for all the traditional annual championships as well as the additional Centenary tournaments. Now at the start of 2011, those who moved into the winner's circle will be hoping to repeat their achievements during the new campaign. There will also be a strong focus on success in inter-county team and other fixtures.

But one outstanding county amateur during the past few years, Jake Amos (Kilworth Springs) turned professional when he went out to Thailand to compete in Asian Tour qualifying early in the New Year. He has represented Leicestershire and Rutland on numerous occasions, but last December graduated with a sociology BA having spent more than 3 years at Augusta State University in America. He was an England boy international at both under 16 and under 18 levels.

Amos was twice runner-up in the county

championship, including last summer to Michael Reed (Birstall). Meanwhile, another young county amateur teenager Greg Eason (Kirby Muxloe) is at the start of his collegiate studies on a golf scholarship at a university in the United States of America.

Last summer Eason became the men's county match-play champion, as well as playing for the county juniors and doing well in national amateur events. He was an England boy international too.

"Hopes are high all round at this stage of the new golfing year and intrigue abounds"

The LRGU men's order of merit was topped by Steve Sansome (Birstall) with his 497.5 pts. from the 8 counting competitions, with Greg Eason on 406 points runner-up despite missing some of the tournaments and matches.

Sansome had launched the 2010 fixtures by winning the 72-holes spring tournament for

the Fraser Trophy, with two rounds over two different courses.

It was the second season for LRGU junior orders of merit – a boys scratch and handicap table. Callum Blair (Glen Gorse) with 105 pts. topped the gross, his clubmate Ben Packwood the handicap with 92 pts, and Glen Gorse GC's Fame Grayson collected 108 in winning the girls net table. Glen Gorse juniors had strong finishes throughout 2010.

Ashley Mason (Glen Gorse) is overage now for the county boys, for whom he has played for four years and was captain last season. He has been presented with a memento by the LRGU President-Elect Roger Barker (Longcliffe).

Mason has also played for both the county men's first and second teams in the last 2 years, including making a contribution to the 2nds. Anglian League 2010 title winning squad.

But hopes are high all round at this stage of the new golfing year and intrigue abounds as it waits to unfold. The LRGU annual dinner and annual meeting are in February.

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Hitting your greens with confidence

Lutterworth Golf Club's pro Dan Bailey helps you to target your approach to the flag...

This month I would like to talk to you about the importance of, and how to, improve your iron shots to the green.

As for the importance of this shot type, the stats speak for themselves as the top 10 players on average on the US Tour feature high in the Greens in Regulation (GIR) and Average Score Percentage from 150 yards out.

From my experience of playing with club amateurs in pro-ams and the Alliance, I see the frustration they have when, on average, a third of their iron shots are either not struck properly or end up starting 20 yards wide of the target, producing inaccurate results.

Now, this may be down to 'high expectations' not being achieved, or more likely that the shot wasn't thought out and executed properly within the capabilities of the player.

We have all played with or know some member who makes you wince while watching them hit a golf ball, often with the grace of 'chopping a tree down with an axe' – but they're still able to put a decent round together.

This is because more often than not he or she understands the limits of their capabilities and carries out the shot with confidence, achieving - if not in

an orthodox fashion - the desired result.

Now, just going out and playing within the boundaries of your own capabilities may all of a sudden have a positive effect

"He or she understands the limits of their capabilities and carries out the shot with confidence"

on your game. But be aware that all you will be achieving is the best of what you have at that moment, not what you can actually achieve through being taught the correct techniques and methods by a professional tutor.

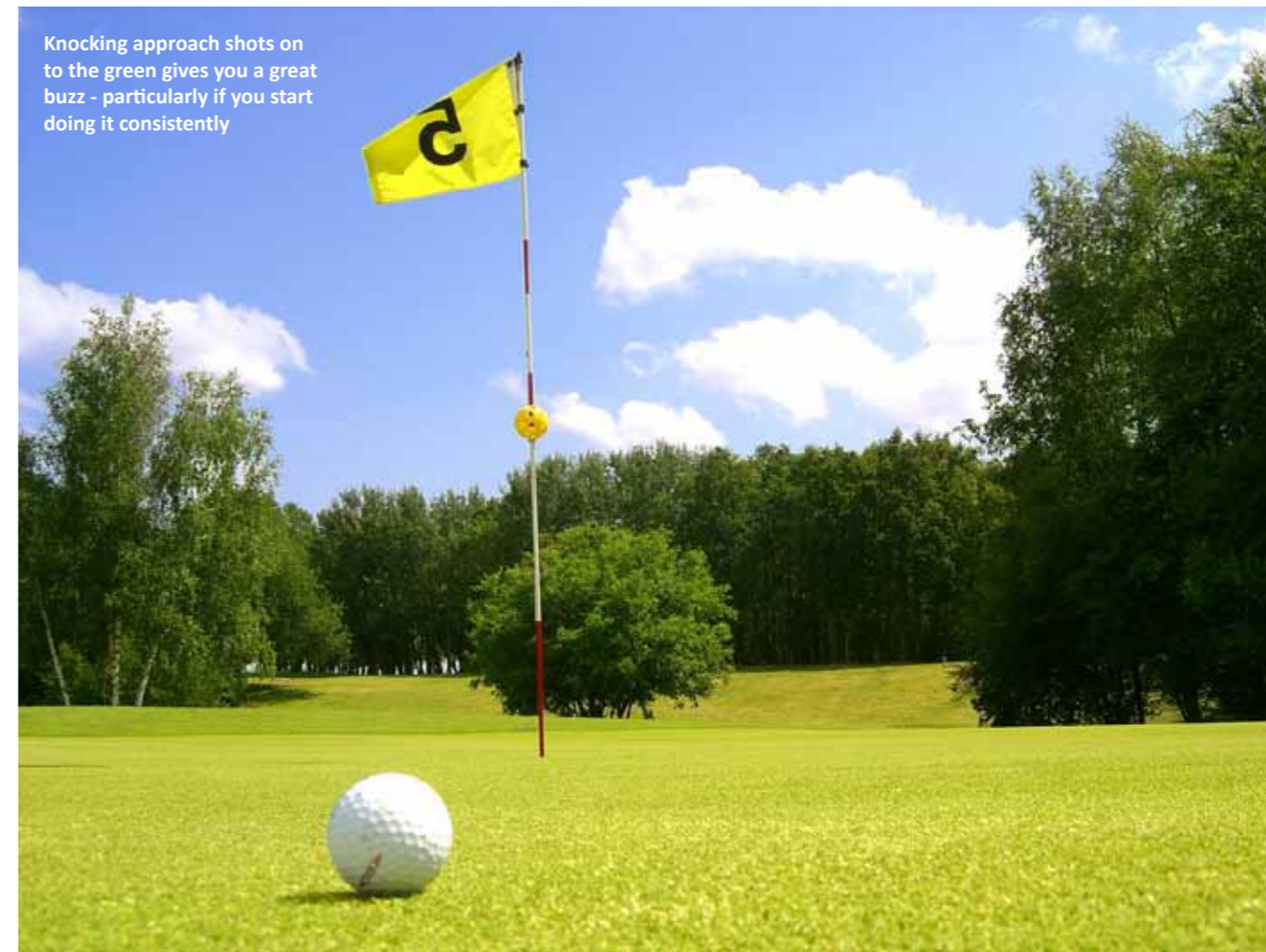
So, in order to really improve your game, you must first have true awareness of what stage you are at, then play a few rounds uninhibited by any higher expectation of what you can easily achieve.

Once complete, look at your results and pinpoint the areas most in need of improvement, then seek advice to make these better.

Once you have understood, implemented and trust these changes, it will be worth playing in that same free-spirited way that you did before. It sounds simple but how many of you have ever done that?

So where does all this fit in with improving iron play to the green?

Well, looking at the facts, most amateurs



Knocking approach shots on to the green gives you a great buzz - particularly if you start doing it consistently

I have played with have a reasonable skill level, swing the club with a reasonable level of sound principles in place and have the capabilities to be consistent with their results, but fall short in their approach to where their golf is actually at and what they are likely to be able to achieve.

Narrowing things down even further, THE biggest recurring fault when it comes to iron shots is not striking the ball well. I mean really well, so that a similar distance, carry and ball flight is consistently achieved. One that can be measured, tapped into and stored onto your GPS range finder or latest phone app!!

My best advice, after seeking professional coaching to improve golf swing techniques and methods, is to go back to basics on the practice field once a week and carry out this session.

Using a 7 iron, choose three targets slightly different distances (50 yards, 100 yards, 150 yards say), start by hitting full shots at the furthest target which should feel fairly familiar to you like it would be on the course.

Then after between 6 and 10 hits, start making yourself aware, through your senses, of what a good strike can LOOK (Visual),

FEEL (Kinesthetic) and SOUND (Verbal) like.

Next, take note of those perceptions and store them away in a favorite place in your mind (next to that feeling you got when you won the July Midweek Medal in 2008).

Once you have a catalogue of these Visual, Feelings and Sounds in your mind, keep playing them back to yourself at the relevant times during the strike.



This method will eventually, if repeated often enough and uninhibited by any unwanted sensory feedback, should plant them firmly into your subconscious.

Be ready to use them for the next task which is to try and repeat these while manufacturing

a swing to the middle target (one that would not take a full swing to achieve), then again for the nearer target.

Why do this? Well, it reinforces the need to rely on these good perceptions as an element of natural judgement and takes you back to a time before you took this great game up fully, back to a time when you owned that Wilson Sam Snead Blue Ridge bladed 4 iron with an old, slick, hardened grip that you used to take to the local driving range every Thursday night and used to aim at all the targets, no matter how far away or near they were.

Once complete take it out onto the course and use on your full approach shots to the greens, using the correct club for the particular distance in front of you and keep allowing those perceptions to flow through your mind during every swing. Don't worry if you struggle to grasp these concepts or have any difficulty implementing any procedures.

Do not hesitate to contact me at Lutterworth Golf Club 01455 557199 as I am available for coaching every day, or contact your local PGA Club Professional who will be happy to explain similar game improvement practice sessions similar to this one during a lesson or a series of lessons.

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English Golf Union – The National Golf Centre, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire LN10 6PU. Phone: 01526 354500 Website: www.englishgolfunion.org Email: info@englishgolfunion.org



Ukko is turning on the style

Looking good on the golf course goes a long way to making you feel good - and, in turn, that can help you to feel confident and play well too. Golf clothing purveyors Ukko will soon be launching their Spring range, so here's a little preview for you.

Pictured left is their white and burgundy "Avery" Polo shirt made in double mercerized cotton is £49.95. The London-based firm has local links with its hand-finished sock suppliers being based here in Leicester.

For more information, log on to: www.ukko.com

Westwood is buckling up



Druh Belts & Buckles has signed up golf's world number one Lee Westwood as a brand ambassador.

The 37-year-old Englishman, who ousted Tiger Woods from the top spot in October, will be seen wearing Druh this season as he joins Sweden's Robert Karlsson and Thailand's Thongchai Jaidee as a Druh ambassador. Druh Belts retail at around £159 for snake-skin and around £59 for leather and guarantees that the snakes used in production are not a protected species.

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