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INFINICUT Enters New Era With Re-Invigorated Leadership



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“WHAT SHOCKED ME MOST, HOWEVER, WAS THE NUMBER OF SEASONED INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS WHO OPINED THAT KEEPING THE COURSE OPEN WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO”

FAIR COMMENT

According to the UK Met Office – the national meteorological service – this winter was the wettest on record for parts of the country. And it wasn't alone. I spend my winters in Spain so I can continue to enjoy – and work in – golf, and we've had the worst winter for 40-odd years, with low temperatures, high winds, a succession of storms, and more rain than you can shake a reservoir at.

Whichever side of the climate change debate one stands, it can't be denied that too much rain and golf are not healthy bedfellows. Even my UK home course, on the Suffolk coast – a free-draining links course – has been closed or on temporary greens; an unusual occurrence. And, of course, it was not alone. Many courses were partially underwater – or worse – for part of the winter, right across the UK.

I was surprised then to stumble across one discussion on LinkedIn about when courses should close. It was inaugurated by a keen golfer who had played the four-time Ryder Cup course, the Brabazon, at The Belfry, in the West Midlands – one of the regions that experienced its wettest winter since comparable records started in 1836.

He posted an image of the waterlogged course he'd just played, and while he'd enjoyed the company of his playing partner, he said: "I'm not sure the Brabazon should have been open. Appreciate the hard work that has gone into keeping it open but fear the amount of time they will need to put in to repair damage, not an easy decision for them when trying to please everyone."



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

READ THE FULL COMMENT ONLINE
golfmanagement.online/spring-2026



FEATURING

SPRING 2026



TRISTAN FRESLON

ANAHITA GOLF

"Around this time, I met the managing director of Les Bordes, Mark Vickery – now my father-in-law. And during the three days I was with him I realised I wanted to, ultimately, do the same job. That's why I worked directly in the business at 18."

20



EAMONN O'DONNELL

DROMOLAND CASTLE

"People saw the golf course in a new light. It gave golf its own identity separate from the castle. In preparation for hosting the Open we had invested close to €4 million on and off the golf course to elevate the full golfing experience."

26



JOAQUÍN MORA BERTRÁN

INFINITUM

"When I do play, I like to check the different types of grass for my job. I work very close with my head greenkeeper because I think it is very important, to play golf and check the conditions."

30



RYAN O'CONNOR

WOODSOME HALL

"We are focusing on cash generation and we're investing in the club and giving ourselves stability moving forward. We have so much history here, and we even do history tours of the hall which is a Grade I listed building,"

34



MICHAEL WALKER

SYNLAWN UK

"When you place a surface in front of elite professionals and every bounce, check and roll is scrutinised, there is nowhere to hide. If the technology can perform in that environment, it can perform in a golf club practice facility that sees daily use."

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"I AM DELIGHTED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ALONGSIDE JOHN AND THE TEAM AS WE RE-ESTABLISH INFINICUT AS THE GO-TO MOWER FOR GOLF AND SPORTS TURF APPLICATIONS"



COVER STORY

INFINICUT.COM

INFINICUT

Original founder John Coleman has announced the acquisition of Advanced Turf Technology (ATT) from Stanley Black & Decker, reuniting the company and its portfolio of brands – including the INFINICUT brand of professional pedestrian mowers and TMSystem cassette range – with its original ownership and founding vision.

The acquisition, completed in early February 2026, brings INFINICUT back to its roots and the core philosophy that established it as a pioneer in the turf care sector.

As the original electric mower in the professional marketplace, the INFINICUT re-defined expectations around sustainability, performance and innovation with customers around the world long before electric solutions became mainstream.

"The INFINICUT mower range was designed and developed to challenge convention and placed the focus firmly on innovation – pairing industry-leading cut quality with the very best in battery technology," commented John Coleman, managing director of Advanced Turf Technology.

"Bringing the brand back allows us to fully focus on those principles, enabling us to be reactive to changing market requirements and accelerating the next phase of its evolution."

Working alongside Coleman will be industry veteran David Withers who has been appointed to the board. A well-recognised name and face within the ground-scare industry, Withers will bring decades of

knowledge and experience to a new role as co-owner and company chairman.

Withers' career began as an equipment demonstrator for Redexim before embarking a 25-year tenure with Jacobsen where he held a number of senior leadership roles including six years as president.

The last eight years has seen Withers spearhead the ISEKI UK & Ireland business, where his proven ability to develop brands and drive sustainable growth saw the company more than double its sales.

His deep understanding of professional turf machinery, manufacturing and brand development makes him a valuable addition to the ATT strategic team at a pivotal point in its evolution.

"David's experience, insights and leadership credentials within the sector cannot be denied," added Coleman. "His support and guidance will be instrumental to establishing our new manufacturing facility, re-invigorating the INFINICUT and TMSystem brands back to their position as leaders in the marketplace and driving the business forward, both at home and further afield, as we embark on this next chapter."

Withers added: "I am delighted to have the opportunity to work alongside John and the team as we re-establish INFINICUT as the go-to mower for golf and sports turf applications around the world.

"I am looking forward to this new role and continuing to play my part in this fantastic industry of ours!" **END**

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"I REALISED THAT A DECENT PERCENTAGE OF THOSE PUNKS, WHO WERE MERCILESSLY MOCKED AND MARKED DOWN AS ANTI-SOCIAL SPAWN OF THE DEVIL, ARE THE GOLF CLUB MEMBERS OF TODAY"



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NEVER MIND THE BALL FLIGHT...

As a young teenager, I can recall watching a comedy routine on TV – it may have been by the great Irish comic Dave Allen – talking about the advent of punk rock. The line that stuck with me then – it was around 1978 and I would have been 14-ish – was about how unlikely it was that punk rock would last 50 years. The gist of it was, “can you imagine a young child sitting on grandfather’s knee and being asked to come out with one of the ‘old songs’, and Granddad giving a rendition of Anarchy in the UK”.

For some reason, this came back to me recently – probably when I was listening to a playlist of my favourite old punk tracks – and I realised that a decent percentage of those punks, who were mercilessly mocked and marked down as anti-social spawn of the devil, are the golf club members of today. I wondered if the Colonel Bufton-Tufton-type secretaries of the late 1970s had ever considered it would be that way in the 2020s – and how purple in the face it would have made them if they had.

I have no data from which to quote, but anecdotal evidence – and that of my own eyes and experience – suggests the demographic of the golf club member, certainly in the UK, has shifted since the Sex Pistols first made members of the Establishment spit out their Earl Grey in disgust. John Lydon, nee Rotten, was, of course, a member of the band when it participated in the now notorious 1976 Bill Grundy TV interview that generated hundreds of dog-whistle headlines and column inches. Now, he’s lauded as something of a ‘national treasure’.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can all see that the band was probably set up to create a storm in that interview – a trend that has led, circuitously, to the raft of conflict-based reality TV shows we now must endure. Many of those 70s Mohican-haired rebels will now be, at least, on the verge of retirement, and will be respectable members of the community, with the only clue to their mischievous past being the wearing of a Sex Pistols or Ramones T-shirt while doing the gardening or a playlist on their phone that would shock a modern-day Mary Whitehouse.

They still spend their time criticising the politicians of the day, but instead of leaping about to protest songs in ripped clothing adorned with safety pins, they do it over a post-round pint in the clubhouse of their golf club. I hope they do it smug in the knowledge that the young pro who’s trying to rid them of the dreaded slice and who believes he/she is ‘edgy’ because they listen to Kneecap, has no idea about their pupil’s anarchist history.

Back in 1976, golf clubs would have held retrospective evenings featuring the music of the Glenn Miller Orchestra and Vera Lynn, for that was the music enjoyed 30-odd years previously. Does that mean golf clubs today hold rave nights and acid house parties for their current members who want to relive the ‘old days’? I really hope that is the case. Thank you for ‘listening’. My name is David Bowers, and I’m an old punk rocker. **END**



NEWS IN BRIEF

GOLFMANAGEMENT.ONLINE/NEWS

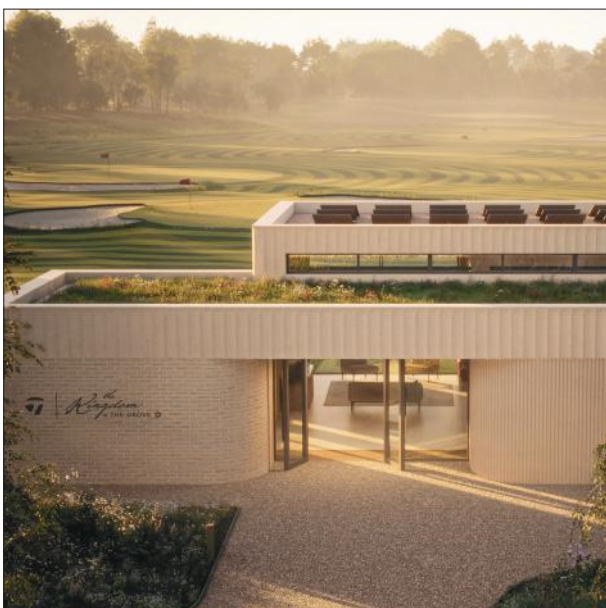


COSTA NAVARINO GOLF AND ADIDAS GOLF ANNOUNCE NEW PARTNERSHIP

adidas Golf, market leaders in the global golf retail and Costa Navarino Golf, a worldclass.golf destination, have teamed up to create a first-of-its-kind partnership in world golf. Derived from shared values — underscored by cultural heritage, inclusivity, sustainability and a desire to grow the game — the new long-term collaboration will see the two brands join forces to promote their businesses to new and existing global audiences.

SEARCH 'ADIDAS GOLF' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



SYNLAWN UK BRINGS PRO-LEVEL TURF TECHNOLOGY TO THE KINGDOM AT THE GROVE

TaylorMade's new world-class testing and fitting golf facility, The Kingdom at The Grove, will feature performance turf systems from SYNLawn UK, an industry leader renowned for its bio-based innovations and advanced synthetic turf technology. Developed in partnership with TaylorMade Golf and The Grove, the facility, which will open in May, will replicate many of the supreme offerings from The Kingdom at TaylorMade's global headquarters in Carlsbad, California.

SEARCH 'SYNLAWN' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



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SCAN ME



TORO'S GREEN BLAZER AWARD GOES TO REESINK'S JON COLE

Jon Cole, Divisional Business Manager for Reesink Turfcare, exclusive distributor for Toro commercial machinery in the UK, has been named the recipient of the Toro Green Blazer Award for 2025. This isn't ordinary Toro attire, a green blazer has to be earned. The award for Toro Equipment Sales is presented during the company's annual worldwide distributor business meeting, which is held in conjunction with the GCSAA show in America, and recognises individuals who are contributing to the industry, demonstrating leadership and showing commitment to customers and customer relationships, all with commercial success.

SEARCH 'REESINK' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



SATGOLF EARLY WARNING SYSTEM PRESENTS FINDINGS AT ARABELLA

The SATGOLF project — Early Warning System for Golf Courses — has presented the results of its implementation at Arabella Golf Resort Mallorca, demonstrating how digitalisation and very short-term weather forecasting can transform the daily operations of a golf course. SATGOLF monitors in real time critical variables such as heavy rainfall, strong winds, lightning, soil humidity and compaction. Thanks to this predictive capacity, it enables precise irrigation management, reduced water consumption and more effective decision-making under adverse conditions.

SEARCH 'SATGOLF' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



BGL ACQUIRES GOLFPLEX TO STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND ITS GOLF DIVISION

Burhill Golf and Leisure Limited, part of Burhill Group Limited (BGL), has acquired GolfPlex, adding the innovative Bracknell venue to its growing portfolio. Located in Bracknell, Berkshire, GolfPlex is a modern, entertainment-led golf venue offering a broad range of experiences designed to appeal to golfers and non-golfers alike. Facilities include a state-of-the-art driving range, adventure golf, sports simulators, foot golf, and a wide variety of activities focused on making golf more fun, accessible, and engaging.

SEARCH 'GOLFPLEX' ONLINE

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MASSEREENE GOLF CLUB IN NORTHERN IRELAND SWITCHES TO TORO

Massereene Golf Club in Northern Ireland has recently changed its cutting fleet to Toro. The significant overhaul was driven by performance, reliability, and reassurance in the brand and dealer service in Keys Brothers who managed the deal. For the parkland course with narrow fairways and small greens, accuracy is the key to successful play. The same rule applies for cutting these areas. It needs to be precise and exact and Course Manager Mark Cassidy knew it would be Toro that could best handle these intricacies.

SEARCH 'MASSEREENE GOLF CLUB' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



HOEBRIDGE GOLF CENTRE COMBINES INVESTMENT WITH CHARITY FUNDRAISING

Hoebridge Golf Centre has marked a landmark year by delivering significant investment in customer experience alongside outstanding charitable fundraising, reinforcing its role as a community-focused venue within the BGL (Burhill Group Limited) portfolio. At the centre of this progress has been a full refurbishment of all bookable driving range bays, completed as part of BGL's commitment to ensuring customer experience sits at the heart of its investment decisions.

SEARCH 'HOEBRIDGE GOLF CENTRE' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



PROSTATE CANCER UK REIGNITES THE BIG GOLF RACE FOR 2026

Prostate Cancer UK is calling on golfers across the UK to make every swing count in 2026 by taking on The Big Golf Race in association with Charles Tyrwhitt, the nation's biggest golf fundraising challenge, to help fund life-saving research into the most common cancer in the UK. Since launching in 2020, The Big Golf Race has become a standout fixture in the UK golfing calendar, with more than 10,000 golfers raising over £6 million to help revolutionise the way prostate cancer is diagnosed and treated.

SEARCH 'PROSTATE CANCER' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story

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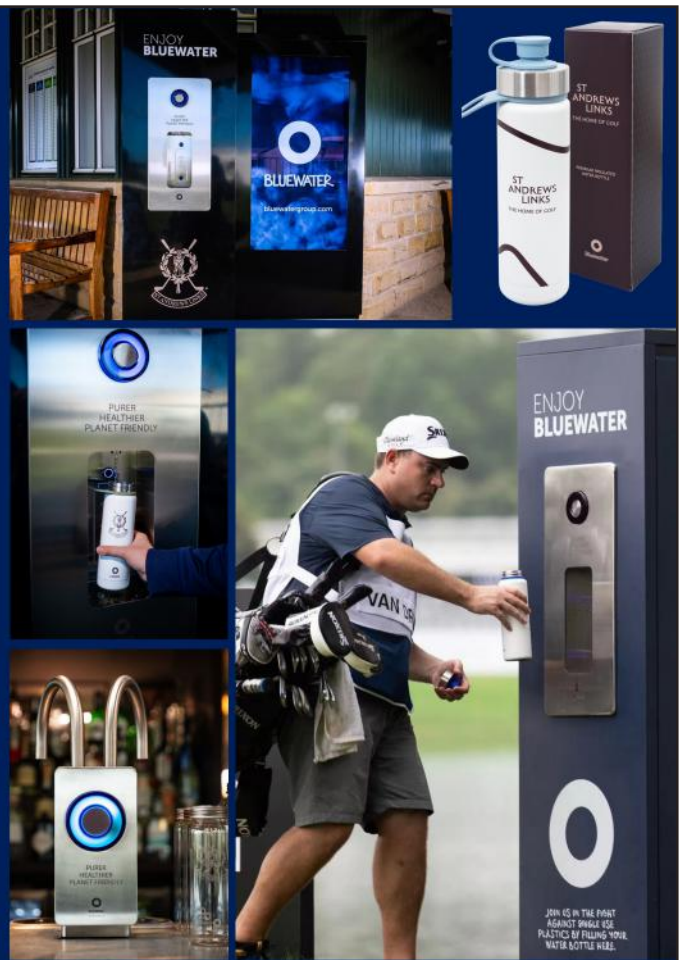
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ARGENTARIO GOLF CLUB CELEBRATES ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Argentario Golf Club, located in an unspoiled corner of south west Tuscany, this year celebrates its 20th anniversary, a milestone that reflects two decades of uncompromising vision, commitment to sustainability and the attainment of international recognition. The Club officially opened its championship course on June 2, 2006, unveiling an 18-hole layout set within one of Italy's most breathtaking natural landscapes, thanks to the long-term inspiration and vision of its owner, Augusto Orsini.

SEARCH 'ARGENTARIO' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



ROBINSWOOD GOLF CLUB DELIVERS ON GLOBAL STAGE

Robinswood Golf Club has reinforced its status as one of Asia's premier championship venues as Team England secured a dramatic 20–19 victory over Team World at the 2026 Reignwood Icons of Football. Staged across two days at Robinswood Golf Club within the 2,000-rai Reignwood Park development in Lam Luk Ka, greater Bangkok, the golfing showcase went down to the wire as Lee Sharpe holed the decisive putt on the final green to defeat Andriy Shevchenko and secure victory by a point.

SEARCH 'ROBINSWOOD' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



SWEDEN'S TOP-RANKED PRIVATE MEMBERS' COURSE CHOOSES CLUB CAR

Crownwood Club, the Swedish private members' club co-owned by Henrik Stenson and one of the world's most exciting new golf venues, has chosen Club Car to supply its golf vehicles. The stunning course on Sweden's west coast was the highest-ranked new entry in the recently-released Golf World Top 100 Courses in Continental Europe, taking 16th place just five months after opening.

SEARCH 'CROWNWOOD' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



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APHRODITE HILLS RESORT MARKS ONE MILLION SHOTS HIT ON TRACKMAN RANGE

Aphrodite Hills Resort has marked a significant milestone at its new golf academy, with one million shots now recorded on the island's first Trackman Range at PGA National Cyprus. Since opening in August, the Trackman Range has quickly become a focal point for golfers of all abilities, serving resort guests, members, visiting players and coaching programmes. The milestone highlights both the popularity of the facility and the volume of performance data now being generated across practice, coaching and game-based play.

SEARCH 'APHRODITE HILLS' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



BATTERY-POWERED ALLETT OMNIA DRAWS STRONG INTEREST AT BTME

Allett Mowers has celebrated a very successful launch of the battery-powered Allett Omnia at BTME 2026 in Harrogate, UK. The new pedestrian mower range attracted a mass of attention from turf professionals across the UK and overseas. Visitors praised the Omnia's innovative features, in particular the Nexus Hitch System for fast and easy cutter head changes, the Smart Steering Assist direct drive dual motor system, and the Vanguard commercial battery system.

SEARCH 'ALLETT MOWERS' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



ECOBUNKER MEETS RISING DEMAND WITH APPOINTMENT OF CHARLIE TAYLOR

Synthetic bunker edge pioneers EcoBunker have appointed Charlie Taylor to the position of Technical Sales Manager in a move that is set to strengthen the relationship between the brand and its customers. Taylor began his career at Gillingham Golf Club where he qualified as a greenkeeper. After three years at Gillingham, he moved into generalist grounds care before starting his own grounds maintenance business. Having undertaken a number of projects in collaboration with EcoBunker, when the opportunity to join the business arose, Taylor could not turn down the opportunity.

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TRISTAN FRESLON

GENERAL MANAGER GOLF CLUSTER, ANAHITA GOLF



Tristan Freslon has an unusual commute to his office. Every other day he takes a boat the 900-odd metres across a lagoon to Ile aux Cerfs Golf, in the Indian Ocean.

When he's not making that journey, the Frenchman's outlook is of the exceptional and stunning Anahita Golf & Spa Resort, Mauritius. It's a hard life, but somebody has to do it. That's not to belittle the job he does – or the career path that's taken him there.

But, well, it's Mauritius. An island paradise in the Indian Ocean.

And not only is his commute unusual, the career path that's taken him to his current role, as General Manager Golf Cluster Ile aux Cerfs Golf & Anahita Golf, is also uncommon – it may even be unique. But his entry into golf, as a youngster, was like most of his contemporaries – taking up the sport as a healthy pastime, in his case aged 12.

He recalled: "At 16 I was plus two; at 18 I was a pro. I played three tournaments on the Alps tour and attended Qualifying School, in Spain. But I quickly realised how difficult it was to earn a decent living this way.

"Around this time, I met the managing director of Les Bordes, Mark Vickery – now my father-in-law. And during the three days I was with him I realised I wanted to, ultimately, do the same job.

"That's why I worked directly in the business at 18; on reception, serving in a golf shop, on a little nine-hole set-up near Paris, on the driving range, in the restaurant, organising competitions, marshalling: anything I could do within the sport to gain valuable experience and get a good overview."

Despite his youth, it soon became apparent that he had a natural bent for understanding the facets of golf club management. Such talent attracts suitors, and, in 2015, he joined the Arnold Palmer-designed Domaine de Crecy, just east of Paris, which he left four years later with the title of assistant director.

During that time, he'd raised service standards and opened the Crecy Golf Academy – the only Easiest Swing academy in France – in association with the late Brian Sparks.

He was head-hunted and moved across the border to Belgium to take up the post of general manager at the prestigious and highly regarded Royal Waterloo Golf Club, just 25 minutes from the centre of Brussels, and under three hours travelling time from his home city of Paris.

He explained: "Royal Waterloo is a 45-hole, very private golf club in Belgium with 2,000 members. So, it's a completely different management experience to Domaine de Crecy which is a renowned members' golf club.

"As a consequence – and with the hands-on experience I gained when starting out – I have a broad vision and understand completely each department within the golf club."

There, he led several major structural projects: clubhouse renovation, irrigation modernisation, bunker reconstruction on the main course using capillary concrete technology, and the development of a master plan with architect Martin Hawtree.

He also reinforced the club's communication strategy and overall visibility.



"FOR ME, ILE AUX CERFS GOLF AND ANAHITA GOLF IS THE BEST GOLF DESTINATION IN MAURITIUS AND THE INDIAN OCEAN, FOR SURE"

"And that enabled me to take on the challenge of being general manager here in Mauritius, initially at Anahita in 2023, for Alteo, one of the largest groups in Mauritius – indeed the market leader in the tourism industry here with four hotels.

"The Group also has interests in the sugar cane industry, real estate and other leisure industries. It was a big step for me and a big challenge. But I relish such challenges."

Freslon continued: "At the outset, I worked on the five-year business plan, to reposition the golf club to a very high standard, and to have the best golf course in Mauritius and the Indian Ocean. I renewed the 72-strong premium Club Car fleet, for example, and we launched a new golf academy with Thomas Levet.

"For me, it's really important to upgrade more and more to offer the best service in Mauritius, which is now the case."

He set his sights high, with a stated objective of being recognised as delivering a world-class golfing experience and positioning Anahita Golf as the number one golf destination in Mauritius.

And that coveted recognition has come the way of the resort, with course maintenance standards and service levels significantly elevated to meet his exacting standards. Strategic partnerships, notably with Callaway, have led to the creation of an official fitting centre including Trackman technology.

Internationally, the profile of Anahita Golf has been enhanced through collaborations with premier golf destinations such as Terre Blanche – in Tristan's home country – Crans-sur-Sierre, in Switzerland, and Fancourt in South Africa.

At home, club life has been rejuvenated for members and visitors, with a calendar of more than 50 events keeping them entertained throughout the year.

Small surprise then, that when Alteo looked to appoint a visionary overall general manager with a brief for both Anahita Golf and the nearby Ile aux Cerfs Golf, they selected this impressive, dynamic young man with a proven record for achieving exactly what they wanted and more.

"I know it's a big step, (but) I always wanted to explore a different possibility of management. And this opportunity, on the best golf resort in Mauritius, for me, is a very interesting step in my career.

"I'm still ambitious, but I'm also very humbled to have been appointed. My ambition was always to be one of the best golf managers in the French golf sector.

"So that's why I have moved around and had the different opportunities. I realise that's not in many years, but I have grown a lot and I'm very happy about that.

"Yes, I work a lot... I work *a lot*. My parents were entrepreneurs, so I know the need for hard work and I understand it. I'm aware of the sacrifices needed to be the best.

"And my wife, Victoria, with her background, understands that, too."

Freslon added: "This is a new level, the next step, because it is a listed company. So, it is very different to manage because of this specific feature.

"But everywhere, I have a complete understanding of the role of the best golf course and structure in the world.

"Mauritius is a complete golf destination because we have 11 golf courses now. And there's new construction coming in the next three or four years.

"For me, Ile aux Cerfs Golf and Anahita Golf is the best golf destination in Mauritius and the Indian Ocean, for sure."

He continues: "Compared to Europe, the quality of courses in Mauritius is very high. To have the same standard in Europe, you need to go somewhere like Terre Blanche, Les Bordes or Queenwood, for example.

"We have the best service because we have enough people to take care of our guests. And we have the Mauritian *savoir faire*, and hospitality, plus, the weather is perfect and it's all part of the experience.

"I had many possibilities to go back and work in France, Belgium, or Switzerland. But we are very happy in Mauritius because the quality of life is good here. My wife has a great job and our young son is very happy.

"So, while I remain ambitious, I plan to stay here. I have a big role as golf cluster manager... a very big job."

From receptionist and shop assistant to general manager of one of the most aspirational resorts in world golf, it's been a whirlwind 15 years.

To steal and misuse a quote from the legendary UK sports commentator Sid Waddell: When Alexander of Macedonia was 33, he cried salt tears because there were no more worlds to conquer... Tristan Freslon's only 33 now and he couldn't be happier. **END**



"AS THE FIRST DESTINATION TO JOIN WORLDCLASS.GOLF FROM LATIN AMERICA, I AM THRILLED AND HUMBLED TO BE INVITED TO JOIN THIS RAPIDLY GROWING NETWORK OF HIGH-END GOLF DESTINATIONS"



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BUENAVENTURA GOLF CLUB

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BUENAVENTURA
GOLF CLUB

Located within the exclusive beach community of Buenaventura, just 100 minutes from Panama City, Buenaventura Golf Club has become one of the latest destinations to join worldclass.golf, a portfolio of the world's premier golf courses, destinations and resorts.

Buenaventura has redefined luxury golf in Latin America since its inauguration in 2012. With world-class facilities, including the majestic clubhouse; The Buenaventura Golf & Beach Resort Hotel; Corotú Spa; more than five specialty restaurants; three beach clubs; an exclusive Equestrian Club; Sports Club; Marina; and an International School, Buenaventura offers a fully integrated lifestyle experience. The community also features rentals and a diverse real estate portfolio including condominiums, villas, and residential lots where homeowners can build their dream residence in this beach front paradise.

The 18-hole Nicklaus Design golf course at Buenaventura is designed to elevate your golfing experience. From its undulating fairways, white sand traps, and water obstacles to its beautiful Corotú trees, perfectly distributed throughout the entire landscape, the sporting experience on offer is one-of-a-kind. Indeed, the course plays host to a wide range of national and international golf tournaments, including the PGA Tour Latin America.

And work on a second world-class golf course – designed by Robert Trent Jones II – is due to commence in 2026. Set across 6,810 yards of rolling terrain, the new 18-hole Buenaventura golf course will seamlessly blend natural beauty with meticulous design. Showcasing Panama's diverse landscapes, this course will integrate lush jungle, expansive prairies, and a breathtaking beachfront, making the scenery an integral part of the golfing experience.

Commenting on joining worldclass.golf, Miguel Marín, general manager at Buenaventura Golf Club said: "As the first destination to join worldclass.golf from Latin America, I am thrilled and humbled to be invited to join this rapidly growing network of high-end golf destinations from around the world. We strive to deliver an elevated visitor experience at Buenaventura Golf Club and I take personal pride – and satisfaction – in the way the course is presented, and the positive feedback we receive from guests playing our spectacular Nicklaus-designed golf course."

CEO & Founder of Worldclass Golf Destinations, Michael Lenihan added: "I know how hard Miguel and his golf operations team work in order to deliver an exceptional visitor experience, and I look forward to helping Buenaventura reach a wider audience on the global stage." **END**







Words Michael Lenihan
Online dromoland.ie

EAMONN O'DONNELL

DIRECTOR OF GOLF, DROMOLAND CASTLE



In the world of Irish golf, few figures embody dedication, ambition and quiet transformation quite like Eamonn O'Donnell, the director of golf at Dromoland Castle.

Now approaching his seventh year in the role – the longest tenure of his career – O'Donnell is both reflective and intensely driven, eager not only to honour the remarkable heritage of the estate but also to push it further onto the international stage.

His journey into golf was gradual rather than preordained, and it is now impossible to imagine the modern Dromoland Castle without his imprint.

O'Donnell grew up in Dungarvan and followed a very different academic path initially. "My background would have started off going down the legal route & into Law," he says with a smile, acknowledging the unusual pivot his life took.

"When I started at college, I never saw golf as a career. It was just something I loved and enjoyed playing with friends."

To support himself through college in Cork, he spent his summers caddying at the Old Head of Kinsale. "Part of pushing myself through college was earning a couple of euro during the summers," he explains.

That opportunity led to several remarkable summers in the United States, working at Pine Valley and Maidstone Golf Club.

Those experiences, he admits, changed everything. "Seeing the level of operations there, the people, the service – it opened my eyes."

After completing his studies at college, O'Donnell found himself at a personal crossroads. His father became quite ill, and a

friend who managed Adare Manor suggested he take a job there.

"He said to me, 'Come up, you'll enjoy it. You'll meet loads of people, have great fun, play a bit of golf. And when you need to get away for family reasons, you can.'"

It sounded temporary, but it became a turning point. O'Donnell spent several formative years at Adare, involved in operations and even assisting with two Irish Opens and a JP McManus Pro Am. "Before I knew it," he says, "you're fully in. And I've been in golf for twenty odd years since."

From there, he moved through roles at Mount Wolseley, Waterford Castle and Druids Glen, each time shaping and refining operations. What's unusual about O'Donnell's career is how he entered each of these positions... "I've been lucky – the timing and opportunity have always coincided," he says matter of factly.

"Every role, has just felt the right time to take on the next challenge and progress my career." It is an understated acknowledgment of his reputation in the industry: a leader who brings clarity, energy and a calm sense of direction.

That reputation brought him to Dromoland Castle in May 2019, approached directly by then Managing Director Mark Nolan.

"When I spoke with him, it was very clear golf was at a crossroads within the organisation," O'Donnell recalls.

"It was costing money. It lacked direction." What was needed was not only investment but a vision – a plan to elevate Dromoland's golf offering to match the five star excellence of its iconic castle.



“WE PLACE HUGE PRIDE IN THE VISITOR JOURNEY. A GUEST IS COMING IN LOOKING TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING SPECIAL”

His first step was the building of a new golf shop and welcome area, a project he was involved in even before officially joining.

“The welcome from staff was always there,” he explains, “but the golf facilities didn’t match the standard. We needed something that reflected what Dromoland should be.”

The new shop allowed the team to elevate customer experience, grow revenue, and reinvest into the course – all foundational to the transformation he would lead.

Today, Dromoland Castle boasts more than 600 members, with most membership categories operating a waiting list. The club hosts roughly 38,000 to 40,000 rounds a year, an impressively high volume given the premium nature of the venue.

A key attraction is its ability to remain playable 365 days a year, thanks to strategic investment in drainage and course improvements. “We’re lucky,” O’Donnell says.

“Members get year round golf, which you can’t say for every venue, especially in the west of Ireland. We have an incredible team of greenkeepers lead by our Superintendent, Paul Coleman

But it is in the visitor experience where O’Donnell’s impact becomes especially clear. Tourism – especially US tourism – is the lifeblood of the region.

“We place huge pride in the visitor journey. A guest is coming in looking to experience something special,” he explains.

The practice facilities, now fully Trackman equipped, offer a high tech experience rarely matched in Ireland. “Toptracer is fantastic,” he notes, “but Trackman was the right fit for us. Our guests expect the best.”

One of O’Donnell’s boldest moves came during the pandemic, when he spearheaded the return of the KPMG Women’s Irish Open to Dromoland after a decade long absence.

“I thought, this event has disappeared – and it shouldn’t have,” he recalls. He approached the LET, gathered information, and brought the idea to the board, who agreed to back it financially.

“We signed the contract knowing we were effectively liable for €1.8 million per event,” he says. “But it was the right thing to do.”

The event achieved one of the highest attendance figures on the LET outside the Women’s Open, and its global broadcast dramatically boosted visibility for the course.

“People saw the golf course in a new light. It gave golf its own identity separate from the castle. In preparation for hosting the Open we had invested close to €4 million on and off the golf course to elevate the full golfing experience.”

As for hosting future major events, O’Donnell is clear: “I’d love to see the Solheim Cup come back to Ireland. And I think Dromoland would be an ideal venue.”

There have been early explorations, though nothing formal. With Adare Manor hosting the Ryder Cup in 2027, the region is bracing for unprecedented global attention. O’Donnell believes the timing is ideal. “It would be foolish not to look at the bigger picture.”

While his role centres on golf, O’Donnell is now heavily involved in the resort’s wider expansion, including plans for 24 new accommodation rooms, upgrades to the leisure centre, and a significant F&B uplift.

He sits on the executive committee driving the development. “It’s exciting to be part of it,” he says. “Yes, it’s outside my original remit, but that’s the strength of Dromoland – we work as one team.”

He is also working closely on the upcoming purpose built greenkeeping facility. “Modern greenkeeping is changing,” he says. “We’re building something that future proofs the team.”

Despite this broadening leadership role, O’Donnell is quick to dismiss any notion of becoming a general manager himself. “No, no, no,” he says, entirely certain. “A resort GM is a different animal. I’m very happy in my lane as director of golf,” he laughs.

If there is one area where O’Donnell is less disciplined, it is his work life balance. “My mother says I’m married to the job and she’s waiting for the reception,” he jokes.

“I’m starting to take Sundays off. I’ll put the phone away, go for a walk, clear the head.”

Into his early 40s, with no family commitments tying him down, O’Donnell almost moved to Dubai before joining Dromoland recalling: “The itch was there, but the timing wasn’t right.”

For now, he is fully committed to the next phase of Dromoland’s evolution.

“The region is buzzing – the Walker Cup at Lahinch; the Irish Open at Doonbeg; the Ryder Cup at Adare. It’s an incredibly exciting period.” **END**

JOAQUÍN MORA BERTRÁN

DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, INFINITUM



INFINITUM

After all the strenuous preparations for, and presentation of the DP World Tour Qualifying School's Final Stage over their renowned Lakes and Hills courses, it is reasonable to assume that the team at INFINITUM might have relaxed after its six-round conclusion in November.

Kicked back perhaps, free-wheeling towards the Christmas holiday and into the new year. Not a bit of it, says Joaquín Mora Bertrán, the prestigious three-course resort's Deputy Director General.

"In reality, at INFINITUM there is no rest. We host more than 50 tournaments a year," he explains, their industriousness underscored by Mora talking to Golf Management in the middle of overseeing the INFINITUM Spring Series – the season's opener for the ECCO Tour, a Danish-based development tour.

This was swiftly followed by the Spanish Women's Senior International Championship, with competitors from all over Europe heading for INIFINITUM's picturesque location in the heart of the Costa Dorada, close to the Mediterranean Sea.

Elite golfers challenging themselves and their fellow competitors on elite courses, but the treatment they received from the hosts will have been at the same exceptional level as is afforded to the most humble visitor during any of the many competitions that Mora and his team run with pride, dedication, and attention to detail.

"I am very lucky with my team because I have the best team possible," he enthuses. "I have very good managers for golf, for sales, and for service. It is an amazing team.

"And INFINITUM is an amazing project, and now the next thing is we will start building the new five-star hotel, 150 rooms, which will open in 2028."

This will add another layer to the resort that appears well on its way to meeting its ambition of placing itself "at the world's highest level" which includes membership to worldclass.golf.

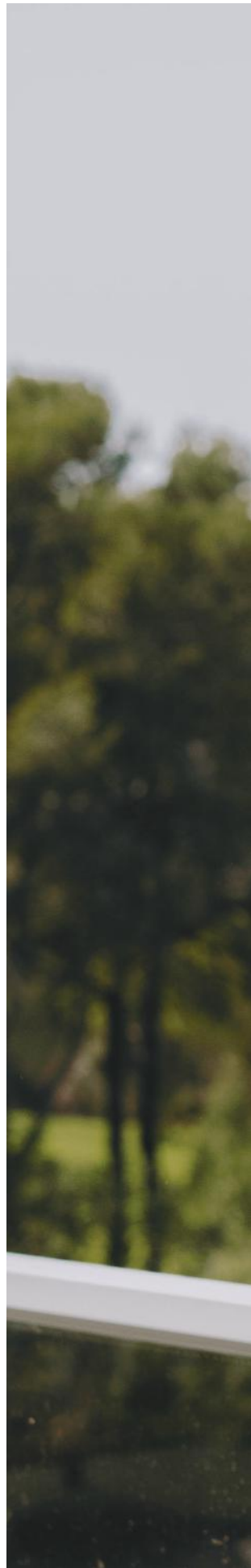
Besides its highly-rated 45 holes – the nine-hole Ruins course is just as challenging as the two 18-hole Lakes and Hills – it has a hugely successful residential development, with a quarter of its inhabitants having an interest in golf.

But Mora anticipates a steep rise in that percentage, saying: "Keep in mind that the real estate we are developing now is close to our Beach Club, but not to the golf courses. When we begin developing the homes within the golf courses, it will change completely."

INFINITUM's virtually weekly involvement in golf event organisation benefits from the vast experience Mora brought with him when he joined three years ago having been part of family-run Catalana Golf, a leading sports marketing company.

Along with father Luis and brother Jose Maria, Catalana Golf is responsible for a plethora of golf tournaments, including the Sergio Garcia Pro-Am.

Mora has been in the golf industry for almost 30 years, has a Master's degree in golf course management, and became a qualified professional and instructor in 1997 while in the middle of a ten-year spell as a bank executive.







"I WORK VERY CLOSE WITH MY HEAD GREENKEEPER BECAUSE I THINK IT IS VERY IMPORTANT, TO PLAY GOLF AND CHECK THE CONDITIONS"

"[Qualifying as a golf professional] happened by chance. At that time, a friend told me he wanted to turn professional and encouraged me to do the same. I completed the required courses and exams, and in 1997 I obtained the title of professional player and golf instructor."

He did not have to tax his mathematics skills to record his low scores as a player, showing an immediate aptitude for the game that he began aged nine, and progressing to the level of a two-handicapper by the time he turned pro.

Like many a Spanish youngster taking his first steps in golf in the shadow cast by Seve Ballesteros's fame, charisma and achievements, he was in awe of the five-time major champion, who he says was "on another planet."

But his favourite player was Lee Trevino, who revealed a scientific approach to the game that foreshadowed that of Bryson DeChambeau.

"My idol was Lee Trevino. I remember when he came to Barcelona. Inside his bag I catch sight of a box of 12 balls and there was a thing inside to measure the balls. Only four balls were picked by him to play, and the other ones for practice, because the other balls were not exactly round. He was a very different player."

Mora was born and raised in a town called Llanerres, close to Barcelona. "It is a residential area with a beach, a yacht club, a golf course, and two pitch-and-putt courses. It offers a great quality of life."

He never considered trying to follow his icon Trevino into a life as a tournament professional, conceding: "I was two handicap."

"The best golfers who have had the professional tour life maybe are plus four, plus five. My level wasn't good enough. To play DP World tournaments, it is another level."

His time spent playing now is vastly reduced from the days when he was a banker. "On a Wednesday I would maybe play with a bank customer, Saturday with friends, Sundays with my father. Now I have very little free time, and I dedicate it to my family."

"When I do play, I like to check the different types of grass for my job. I work very close with my head greenkeeper because I think it is very important, to play golf and check the conditions."

Mora, who has a wife and three children – sons aged 24 and 22, and a daughter of 18

– is approaching his 60th birthday, but feels "as if I were 10 years younger. Fortunately, I am in very good health."

This is no doubt in part to his enthusiasm for mountain bike riding. "I love the mountains. When I was younger, I went to the mountains with my father and my brother every weekend."

"When I am on the bicycle, the only thing on my mind is nature and the beautiful scenery. When I am cycling with friends I will try not to speak about the job. It is difficult [distancing himself from thoughts of work] because I have two phones."

"In my position in INFINITUM I have 140 people in my team. It is complicated because a lot of people are playing golf at the weekend, we have five different restaurants inside INFINITUM, and it is my responsibility to run the restaurants, the tournaments as well."

"But I am fortunate to have a highly professional team at INFINITUM, and every day I learn things from them. We form a great team."

The resort currently has 220 golf club members, a figure that, as mentioned, Mora anticipates rising in the future given the reasonable assumption that people purchasing houses yet to be built on the courses' borders will likely have an interest in playing.

INFINITUM has earned its place in the avid golfer's consciousness in part due to its being home to the DP World Tour Qualifying School's Final Stage since 2017, but its appeal is enhanced, says Mora, by its "natural environment, tranquillity, gastronomy, climate, and activities."

The latter category includes hiking, bicycle trails, and sailing; a thirst for good wine is easily sated, situated as INFINITUM is amid two of Spain's most prestigious wine regions; and an appetite for culture can be satisfied with a visit to the Roman ruins of Tarragona.

Renovation work on both the Lakes and Hills courses has already hoisted INFINITUM to a premium level.

Mora is insistent that his and the team's dedication and commitment will help to ensure "that both international and domestic clients will choose to live within a resort offering unbeatable golf conditions, complemented by an excellent climate and cuisine, and the rich history and culture of the Tarragona region, which sets us apart from other resorts in Europe." **END**





Words Michael Lenihan
Online woodsome.co.uk

RYAN O'CONNOR

GENERAL MANAGER, WOODSOME HALL



Few careers in golf management follow a straight line. For Ryan O'Connor, now general manager of Woodsome Hall Golf Club in Huddersfield, his path has been defined by opportunity, hard lessons, unexpected detours, and a deepening appreciation of what shapes a golf club's identity.

His story is intertwined with the extraordinary heritage of Woodsome Hall, home to what may be the oldest golf clubhouse in the world.

O'Connor's journey began not in a boardroom but on the turf itself. Growing up just 150 yards from a golf course, he discovered the game early. "I played golf from the age of 13," he recalls, adding with a laugh, "I could bizarrely play both left handed and right handed."

By his teens he was junior captain, but like many young people he reached a crossroads after school, unsure of his next step – until a friend mentioned a golf management course.

A place on the programme at Myer-scough College opened the door to Marriott Golf, where he began his career in 2001. What followed was a grounding in the nuts and bolts of golf operations: "Picking up golf balls, washing buggies, all that sort of stuff," he says, before eventually earning a posting at Marriott's Sprowston Manor in Norwich.

Marriott provided not only experience but mentorship. He speaks appreciatively of key figures: "I was surrounded by people who have gone on to really big things in the golf industry," he says, referencing influences such as David MacLaren, Stephen Follett and Jason O'Malley.

These early years instilled the hospitality ethos he still carries today.

In 2008, at just 27 years old, O'Connor made the transition from a corporate environment to a traditional private members' club, accepting the role of general manager at Royal Norwich.

"At the time, I was chasing my career," he admits. "The opportunity to be a GM was just too much to turn down."

"When I became GM at Royal Norwich, I was still quite young," O'Connor recalls. "Now 27 these days isn't young, but back then it was. I remember attending GCMA meetings at the time, and I was by far the youngest person in the room."

The shift was jarring. Applying Marriott style systems to a member led club proved ineffective, which perhaps explains why O'Connor initially didn't think he would be the ideal candidate for the position.

"A previous colleague of mine called me to ask if I had applied for the role, to which I replied 'they don't want somebody like me... I'm 27 with a corporate background.'

"He then said that Royal Norwich had contacted him to get my number and that I was what they were looking for."

But, in hindsight, O'Connor's gut feeling was proved correct, and the club's looming relocation added pressure, with aging infrastructure and limited investment making day to day management challenging.

"For the first six months... it was just not sticking. It was not going to work," he says. "I was a real rabbit in the headlights."

Yet the experience toughened him. He managed member expectations during



“WOODSOME IS THE TYPE OF CLUB WHERE IT DOESN'T NEED DRAMATIC CHANGE”

uncertain years and learned to navigate the culture of private golf clubs – insight that would serve him throughout his career.

After three years at Royal Norwich, personal circumstances drew O'Connor to a brief tenure at Halesworth Golf Club, before a return north followed, leading him to Woodsome Hall for the first time in 2014.

But within ten months he left for family reasons – a decision he now calls “the biggest regret” of his career.

“At the time I had family pressures, including parents who were ill and a relationship which broke down three months after the move,” he shares openly. “I literally burnt myself out... working 70, 80 hours a week.”

Planning to step away from the industry entirely, he found unexpected renewal at Nelson Golf Club, a smaller operation that restored his energy and love for club life.

That paved the way to Stockport Golf Club, where he became their first general manager, helping modernise operations and making what he describes as “bold decisions” to drive the club forward.

A turning point came when he moved into the software side of the industry with Club Systems and ClubV1 in November 2022. Although a departure from club life, the role broadened his understanding of how deeply technology underpins modern golf operations.

“I found it really eye opening,” he says. “As a GM, you think it's a click of the fingers. It is so complex.”

The experience gave him empathy for both managers and developers, strengthening his expertise in digital infrastructure – knowledge now essential as clubs transition to integrated platforms.

However, just over a year later, when the manager at Woodsome Hall announced his planned departure, O'Connor returned to advise the club – only to find himself unexpectedly being courted for the role again.

“Two hours later, I was agreeing to a coffee with the captain, and I came back,” he says. “It was like the stars were aligned.”

The welcome was overwhelming. “Lots of members were so pleased to see me back,” he says, reflecting on the importance of his earlier tenure, even though it lasted only ten months. He had, during that short period, led the pivotal proposal for the club's Dormy House accommodation – now renamed the Cottage on the Course, achieving an 83 per

cent member approval vote – a legacy that left a lasting imprint on the club's development.

Now two years into his second spell, O'Connor is committed for the long term. “I have no intention of leaving again,” he says with conviction. And to understand O'Connor's deep connection to Woodsome Hall, one must appreciate the extraordinary setting in which he works.

The clubhouse at Woodsome Hall is no ordinary building. Constructed in 1462, it is believed to be the oldest golf clubhouse in the UK, and potentially the oldest in the world. This medieval manor, with its stone archways, historic timbering, and atmospheric rooms, provides a sense of place that few modern clubs can match.

As O'Connor notes: “Our beauty is our challenge.” The Grade I listed status protects its historic character but imposes strict limitations.

“You literally have to consult the documents to see if you can put a pin in the wall,” he says. The main function room can host only 62 people, and the bar and kitchen are on opposite sides of the building – an operational quirk unimaginable in a contemporary clubhouse.

Yet the building's charm is undeniable. “It still takes my breath away every time I drive up the driveway,” he admits.

This heritage is not just a backdrop but a marketing asset. “We've got history here that you just don't find in America,” he explains. Its international appeal – particularly to US visitors – is a strategic focus for the club as it seeks to raise its national and global profile.

Still only 45, O'Connor's vision for Woodsome Hall balances respect for its history with the practical demands of a modern membership club. Investing in the golf course – originally designed by Harry Colt and later updated by James Braid – is a priority, with significant drainage projects already under way, plus a semi permanent function room is under exploration.

“Woodsome is the type of club where it doesn't need dramatic change,” he says, adding “we are focusing on cash generation and we're investing in the club and giving ourselves stability moving forward.”

“We have so much history here, and we even do history tours of the hall which is a Grade I listed building,” he concludes. **END**

SOMABAY GOLF

SOMABAYGOLF.COM

Words Ahmed Belkasem

Location Hurghada, Egypt

For decades, the global golf community has celebrated legendary courses from Scotland to California, but a new destination has quietly captured the attention of discerning players, and golf management professionals alike... Somabay Golf.

Along Egypt's Red Sea coastline, Somabay has quietly evolved into one of the Middle East's most compelling golf destinations. While the dramatic desert-meets-sea landscape provides a natural stage for world-class golf, the destination's true distinction lies in its strategic focus on sustainability, integrated golf infrastructure, and long-term course development.

Rather than simply creating a single championship layout, Somabay has pursued a broader vision: developing a golf destination built on responsible environmental practices, modern training facilities, and multi-course expansion that positions the Red Sea as a growing hub for international golf tourism.

Central to this vision is the Gary Player Championship Course, complemented by advanced academy facilities and the upcoming Somabay Hidden Coves Golf Course, which together will form the foundation of Somabay's future as a multi-course golf destination.

Operating two championship golf courses in an arid coastal environment presents inherent challenges. At Somabay, sustainability has therefore been embedded into the operational philosophy from the earliest stages of development.

The course operates under the internationally recognised framework of the GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf, with Somabay Golf achieving GEO Certification – one of the most respected sustainability benchmarks in golf.

Somabay's location along the Red Sea peninsula places it adjacent to one of the world's most biodiverse marine ecosystems. Protecting this environment has been central to the destination's development philosophy.

Responsible Water Management is one of the most critical aspects of golf course management in desert climates, which is why Somabay utilises advanced irrigation systems supported by soil moisture monitoring and climate-responsive technology.

This ensures precise water delivery across playing surfaces, minimising waste while maintaining championship-level turf conditions.

A key element of Somabay Golf's sustainability strategy lies in its carefully selected





“OUR NEW 18-HOLE GOLF COURSE IS CREATED TO COMPLEMENT THE EXISTING GARY PLAYER DESIGN LAYOUT”

turfgrass varieties, chosen specifically to perform in the Red Sea’s arid coastal climate while supporting efficient water management.

Across the Hidden Coves Course and Academy facilities, Pure Dynasty Paspalum was the selected turfgrass. Paspalum is widely recognised as one of the most sustainable turf options for coastal golf courses due to its ability to thrive using saline or recycled irrigation water.

This capability significantly reduces reliance on freshwater resources while maintaining high-quality playing surfaces.

The combination of Kikuyu for durability and Paspalum for salinity tolerance supports Somabay’s broader agronomic strategy, enabling the course to maintain championship-level conditions.

At the heart of Somabay’s golf offering lies the Gary Player Championship Course, which stretches over 7,255 yards and plays to a par of 72, offering strategic challenges for professional players while remaining accessible to recreational golfers.

The routing takes full advantage of the peninsula’s dramatic topography, incorporating elevated tees, sweeping fairways, and panoramic sea views across multiple holes. Wind patterns from the Red Sea add an additional strategic dimension, requiring players to adapt their shot selection throughout the round.

Water hazards – rare within desert golf environments – are integrated into 13 holes, providing both aesthetic beauty and strategic complexity.

Importantly, the course design minimised excessive earth movement during construction, aligning with the broader sustainability principles that underpin Somabay’s development philosophy.

Beyond the championship course, Somabay has invested significantly in building one of the region’s most comprehensive golf training environments.

The Somabay Golf Academy supports player development at all levels, from beginners and amateur golfers to elite athletes and professional training camps.

Key facilities include a floodlit driving range supporting evening practice and training throughout the year; a dedicated short-game practice area with chipping, pitching, and bunker amenities; a floodlit 9-hole par-3 course for both skill develop-

ment and leisure play; the advanced Scoring Arena, which allows players to refine their competitive short-game techniques in a dynamic setting; and professional coaching services paired with state-of-the-art swing analysis technology.

These facilities allow Somabay Golf to host international golf camps, coaching academies, and development programs, positioning the destination as a growing hub for golf training in the region.

Looking ahead, Somabay Golf is entering a new phase of development with the introduction of the Somabay Hidden Coves Golf Course, a new 18-hole championship layout currently under development along the dramatic coastline of the Red Sea peninsula.

Designed by Tim Lobb, Hidden Coves represents a significant step forward in Somabay’s long-term sustainability strategy and is being designed as the first fully integrated sustainable golf course in the region.

“Our new 18-hole golf course is created to complement the existing Gary Player Design layout,” commented Lobb. “It was not our intention to design a traditional championship course but to create a family friendly and manageable test of golf for the holiday golfer.”

From land shaping and routing to irrigation systems, turfgrass selection, and landscape integration, the project has been carefully planned to minimise environmental impact while enhancing the natural character of the surrounding terrain.

The course design embraces the peninsula’s natural coastal formations, incorporating the dramatic coves and undulating desert landscape to create a layout that feels both organic and immersive.

Once completed, Hidden Coves will transform Somabay into a two-championship-course destination, significantly expanding its ability to host international tournaments, training camps, and multi-round golf tourism experiences.

The addition of the new course will strengthen Somabay’s position within the global golf travel market while reinforcing its reputation for environmentally responsible golf development.

Somabay Golf is part of a broader Red Sea destination that combines luxury resorts, marine sports, wellness facilities, and residential communities, and is a growing golf destination in the region. **END**





Words Roddy Williams
Online synlawn.co.uk

MICHAEL WALKER

CEO, SYNLAWN UK



The future of golf facilities are increasingly being shaped by two powerful forces: sustainability and performance. As clubs across the UK and Europe face growing expectations from players, rising costs and tighter environmental regulations the search for smarter infrastructure has moved firmly to the top of the agenda.

As CEO of SYNLawn UK, Michael Walker is bringing a new generation of products and solutions to the market – tour-calibre synthetic systems and plant-based construction materials designed not simply to imitate natural turf, but to deliver consistent playing performance while dramatically reducing the environmental and operational pressures placed on modern golf facilities.

Canadian-born Walker's international career spans luxury hospitality, infrastructure, wellness and sustainable construction.

Born in Toronto before settling in Vancouver, he later headed to Southern California and worked his way into senior management roles with the KSL Resorts portfolio at La Quinta Resort & Club at the renowned PGA West golf complex. He also led premier US luxury golf destinations, including Grand Wailea in Maui, Doral Golf Resort in Miami and the Arizona Biltmore.

After 9/11, he moved to the UK and later contributed to major UK transport assets, including London City Airport, Gatwick, and the Heathrow Express, before pivoting to champion natural plant-based medicines and joining the fight for natural cures for cancer and other terminal diseases.

Advanced by his knowledge of plant-based materials, he now equally champions

innovation and advancements in natural building materials and a collection of environmental initiatives for the golf industry

And with sustainability the bridge, the combination of advanced synthetic turf technology and plant-based construction systems now underpins SYNLawn UK's approach to the future of golf facilities.

"The conversation is no longer just about surfaces," Walker explains. "It's about how golf clubs can build environments that perform commercially, function sustainably and remain resilient for decades.

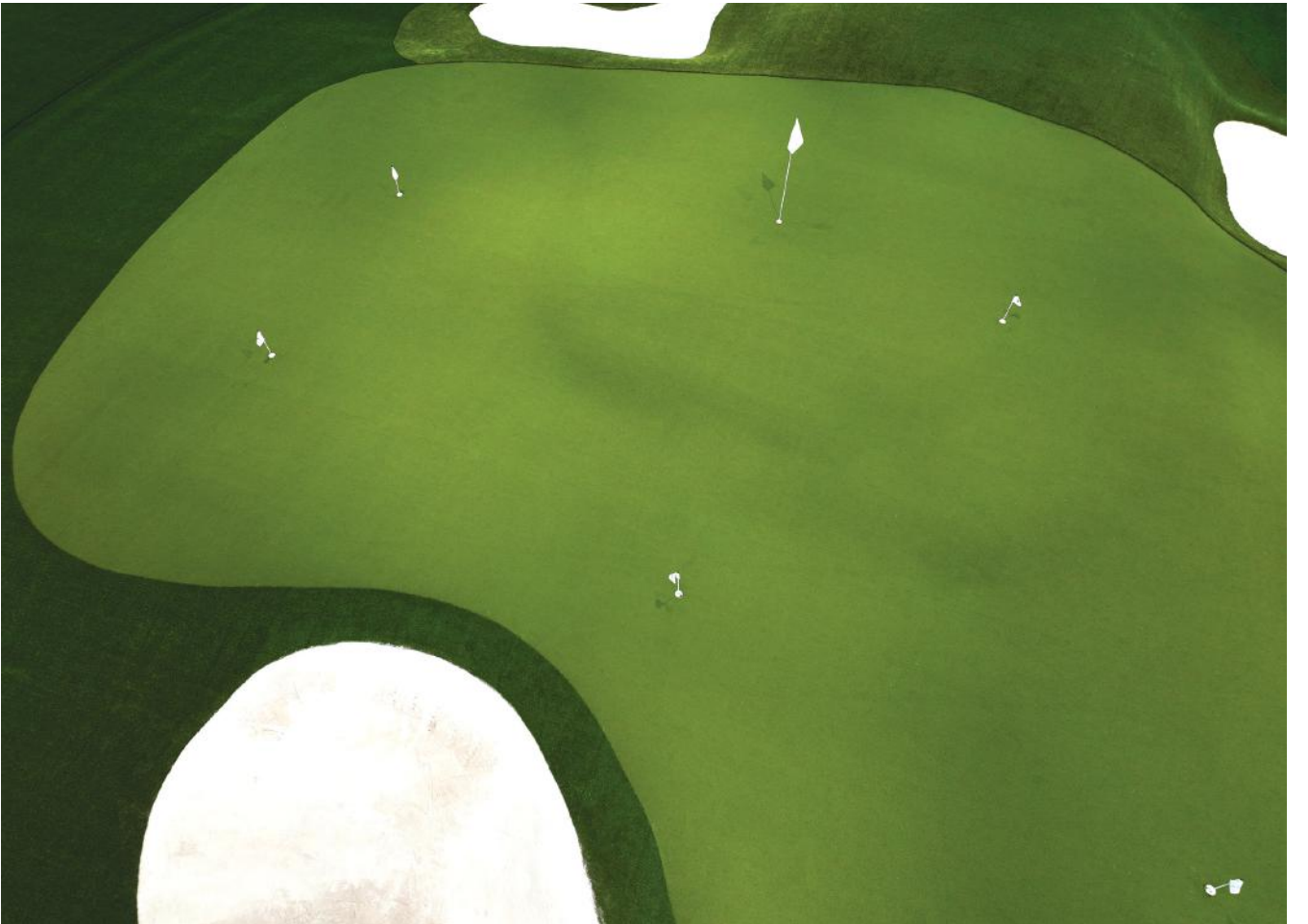
"The science behind synthetic turf has evolved enormously," he says. "For a long time, artificial surfaces in golf were associated with basic driving range mats or temporary installations.

"What we're seeing now is a completely different level of engineering, where the surface, the sub-base and the overall installation form a performance system rather than just a product," said Walker.

That performance was placed under intense scrutiny when SYNLawn became the Official Synthetic Surface partner to TGL presented by SoFi, the technology-driven indoor golf league created by Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy.

Inside the purpose-built arena sits more than 31,000 square feet of synthetic turf, tasked with delivering consistent ball reaction under the gaze of some of the best players in the world.

"For me, that project was validation," Walker says. "When you place a surface in front of elite professionals and every bounce, check and roll is scrutinised, there is



"THE RANGE IS BECOMING ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE ASSETS A GOLF CLUB CAN HAVE"

nowhere to hide. If the technology can perform in that environment, it can perform in a golf club practice facility that sees daily use."

The partnership also highlighted something else that Walker believes is transforming the golf landscape – the changing role of practice facilities.

"Let's be honest," he says. "For many years, expectations around the driving range were fairly low. If there were a few mats and somewhere to hit balls before the first tee, that was considered perfectly acceptable.

"The range is becoming one of the most valuable assets a golf club can have," Walker explains. "It is a space that can generate activity throughout the day and evening, across different age groups and skill levels."

This shift has brought a new set of demands for the surfaces themselves. Practice environments must cope with high levels of footfall, repeated ball strikes and year-round use while still delivering consistent performance.

"We are not installing mats... we are installing playing systems," he added.

And one of the most prominent examples in the UK can be found at The Kingdom at The Grove, a state-of-the-art practice facility developed by TaylorMade.

The complex replicates many of the features found at TaylorMade's elite fitting centre in California and incorporates a 7.4-acre driving range redevelopment alongside precision short-game areas.

Through Build With Hemp, Walker has been exploring how natural materials can be integrated into construction projects to reduce environmental impact while improving long-term structural performance.

Walker's vision for golf infrastructure extends beyond playing surfaces.

"Golf clubs occupy large landscapes and contain a huge amount of infrastructure – pathways, practice areas, buildings, fencing, landscaping and drainage systems," he says. "When you start looking at those elements collectively, you realise there is enormous potential to build them in a more sustainable way."

Hemp-based materials are now being incorporated into SYNlawn UK installations, particularly within the sub-base layers that sit beneath turf systems, and Walker believes clubs can create facilities that perform better while reducing reliance on traditional construction materials.

It also supports a wider shift across golf course management, with clubs facing increasing pressure from rising water costs, tighter environmental regulations and the ongoing challenge of maintaining high playing standards with limited resources.

"Practice areas are some of the most intensively used parts of a golf facility," he says.

"They require constant maintenance, irrigation and renovation to remain playable.

"Synthetic systems reduce irrigation demand and eliminate recovery periods, allowing greenkeeping teams to focus their attention on the main course," he said.

"At the same time, engineered drainage layers beneath the surfaces can capture rainwater and redirect it across the property, supporting natural turf areas elsewhere on the course. Plus, the environmental considerations extend to the turf itself."

SYNLawn's backing systems incorporate bio-based components derived from sugar cane and soy, while the grass fibres utilise recycled plastics.

Importantly, the materials are designed to be recyclable at the end of their lifespan, addressing one of the long-standing concerns associated with artificial turf products.

"It's about lifecycle thinking," Walker says. "We operate within a closed-loop model where products are designed to perform for many years and then be recycled when they reach the end of that life."

For golf club owners and operators, however, sustainability is only one part of the equation. Ultimately, investments must also make commercial sense. Walker encourages clubs to look beyond installation costs and evaluate the full operational picture.

"The real comparison is between the cost of maintaining natural practice areas and the long-term performance of engineered systems," he says. "Practice facilities are no longer simply warm-up areas. They are high-frequency assets that can generate predictable income."

Looking ahead, Walker sees the next phase of golf facility development emerging from the intersection of three powerful forces: technology, sustainability and social engagement.

"The heritage of golf courses will always matter," he says. "What we are doing is helping clubs build facilities around those courses that are more resilient, more sustainable and more commercially effective." **END**

THE FAIRWAYS PROJECT

DRIVING CHANGE FOR WOMEN WORKING IN GOLF



When the Women in Golf Awards launched in 2022, the team had just six weeks to bring the inaugural event to life.

What followed was extraordinary: 80 women from across every corner of the golf industry – many of whom had never met, and in some cases didn't even know of one another – came together in a powerful moment of visibility and community.

That first year proved not only that the appetite for recognition and connection existed, but that the industry had long been missing a platform dedicated to celebrating and amplifying women's contributions.

Women who attended that night are now mentoring younger women in their sector and governing bodies are working with winners and nominees to gain a clearer understanding of their needs. The impact has been fast and wide spreading.

Since that first night, the Awards have become far more than a single annual event. They have grown into a catalyst for conversation, representation, and structural change across the sector.

The Awards day itself now includes free education and golf sessions, and in conjunction with The Kate & Justin Rose Foundation the awards has launched a bursary for women aged under 21 to support their career progression.

Now, the Awards is entering a new chapter: The Fairways Project, a five-year global research initiative in partnership with 59club designed to better understand and improve the experiences of women working in golf.

This has been one of the long-term ambitions of founder Nicole Wheatley who

created the awards to give women working in golf the opportunities she herself never experienced.

"We've become an industry built on instinct, not insight, particularly when it comes to women," commented Wheatley, who has over 20 years experiencing working in the golf business.

"We want to find out whether there are any commonalities between the experiences of a Golf Club Manager in England and a Greenkeeper in The Netherlands and to establish what opportunities there are to improve their working lives.

"The ultimate aim – as with everything we embark on – is to retain the female talent we have and attract more of it."

This project was instigated following an Education & Insights Day held for previous winners and finalists of the awards. Women participants were invited to take part in a round table that uncovered a number of recurring themes, one of which was how perception often becomes a barrier itself.

Women sometimes hesitate to pursue roles or speak up due to an internalised belief that they will not be welcome or taken seriously – even in environments that may be more open than assumed.

Unsurprisingly, working in male dominated environments can make women feel they must adapt or assimilate to be included, sometimes at the cost of authenticity.

Participants described a workplace culture where male-centric conversation around topics women don't take an interest in and decision-making still taking place on the golf course or in the pub.





“THIS IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT PROJECT. WE KNOW THAT THE GOLF INDUSTRY WANTS TO EMBRACE THE TALENT OF WOMEN AT EVERY LEVEL AND WE HAVE THE MEANS TO ENABLE THAT”

Some also noted that being a good golfer actually made a difference to how male colleagues and clients perceived them.

A positive take away was the significance of supportive male colleagues, mentors, and leaders. Women repeatedly cited positive, affirming experiences with men who championed their ideas, opened doors, or simply made room for them in environments where they were the ‘first’ or the ‘only.’

In many cases, these men have had to pivot quickly to accommodate a woman stepping into previously all-male situations. Their willingness to adapt has often made the difference between a woman advancing or deciding the industry is not for her.

“These examples illustrate that progress in golf is not a gendered effort; it is collaborative. Progress relies on the entire ecosystem working together,” continues Wheatley.

“Some of the impact of the awards has come as a direct result of men being in the room. They now know the young women coming through and acknowledge the contributions they are making.

“This is why we are keen to make sure we have men involved in The Fairways Project. We want to know their experiences and what they observe. It’s going to be fascinating.”

The conversations at the Education & Insights Day underscored both the progress made and the work still needed to create an inclusive, supportive environment for women in golf. It is not just about breaking down external barriers, but also about addressing the internalised limitations created by years of under-representation.

Through community, mentorship, and intentional leadership, the industry has a powerful opportunity to evolve which is where the 59club partnership will help.

Over the next five years, the Fairways Project will map women’s journeys across the industry.

The project will harness 59club’s advanced survey software, analytics, and training provision to deliver a clear picture of women’s experiences in golf, identifying opportunities and challenges and tracking aspirations and leadership pathways.

“We hope that the insights we capture will provide golf with the tools to benchmark progress, inform decisions, and ultimately

shape a stronger and more inclusive future for the game,” explains Sarah Jane Shepherd, Global Franchise Manager at 59club.

“This is such an important project. We know that the golf industry wants to embrace the talent of women at every level and we have the means to enable that.”

The Fairways Project has industry-wide support with all of the awards’ partners and sponsors backing the campaign. They know that learning more about their female workforce will enable them to make more informed decisions and make better provision for the women employed in their respective sectors.

What is quite special about this collaborative approach is that everyone wins. The data will be openly available to the industry and participants are being invited to ask the questions they want to know the answers to. With hundreds of women from around the globe already signed up, the momentum is palpable.

The impact and reach of the awards itself have already exceeded its founder’s expectations. As well as creating a firm foundation for women working in golf in the UK, the awards now has a global audience.

The 2025 International Woman category attracted nominations from 17 different countries demonstrating the interest it is generating elsewhere.

The UK event will remain at the heart of the programme – a celebration defined by community and collaboration – but as the demand for similar platforms is emerging worldwide there are now plans in discussion for Awards in the USA, Europe, and Australia.

“The international incarnations of the awards will be slightly different to those of the UK, but the need is just the same,” added Wheatley.

“For every woman working in golf there are hundreds of men doing the same job, so it is exceedingly rare that their contributions are seen and acknowledged. Ultimately, there is one overriding singular ambition... to give women the support that I never had.”

This new data project has the potential to create a turning point for the industry. The Fairways Project marks a bold step forward – one that moves the conversation from anecdote to insight, from good intentions to measurable change. **END**



DETAILS MATTER



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“UNDER MY DIRECTION, CLEARWATER HAS EXPANDED ITS PRESENCE
BEYOND THE UK, BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS OVERSEAS”



Words

Matthew Mears
Director
ClearWater

GUEST BOOK

MATTHEW MEARS



For the past ten years, I have played a central role in shaping ClearWater into a recognised and trusted brand within the golf industry, both across the UK and overseas. As Director, I have guided the business through a period of sustained development, ensuring ClearWater remains a leading supplier within its sector while continually adapting to the evolving needs of golf facilities.

My leadership has been marked by a strong focus on industry relationships. By working closely with golf clubs and course operators, I have ensured ClearWater's products and services remain aligned with the practical demands of golf. My commitment to understanding customer needs has enabled the business to deliver solutions that are reliable, relevant, and valued throughout the industry.

Under my direction, ClearWater has expanded its presence beyond the UK, building partnerships overseas and establishing the brand as a recognised name in golf. My emphasis on consistent quality, service excellence, and long-term collaboration has strengthened ClearWater's reputation, helping the business secure new opportunities and maintain trusted relationships abroad.

Today, ClearWater's strong market position reflects my sustained commitment to growth, partnership, and industry understanding — qualities that continue to guide the business forward. **END**

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