

Match & Handicap Report 2020 – prepared by Keith Hanna

Mr Captain, President, and members when I stood in front of you in February 2020, I did not expect that within four weeks our plans for the season would be thrown into disarray. After an enforced closure, amendments to rules and weeks of casual golf, our Club Competitions restarted on 13th June.

At that time, the Match & Handicap Committee in agreement with the Council decided not to proceed with the competition schedule. This decision was based on the fact we had already lost two months golf and there was the possibility of courses being forced to close again. Also, with the restrictions in place it was impossible for us to proceed with Captains Day, Presidents Day, and Members Day in their traditional format. Which meant from June through to October we played a sweep every Saturday plus competitions running over two days on Sunday and Wednesday.

With our Winter Season fast approaching and the switch to World Handicap System scheduled for Monday 2nd November, the Match & Handicap Committee reached the decision not to hold our Winter Leagues. This has subsequently proved to be the right decision with Club v1, our handicapping system, having to withdraw the Winter Handicap options and the fact we lost two weeks prior to Christmas plus at the time of writing are in the middle of a further ten-week lockdown. Leading to what has proved to be a disappointing 2020 golfing season but our hope is that in 2021 we will be able to run a full schedule of summer competitions.

Restrictions permitting these competitions will start on 3rd April 2021 with the Millennium Cup, followed by the first Sunday Competition which will continue to be run over a Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday* and the first Wednesday Competition which will run over a Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday every week. [* Exception: May Day weekend]. They will also, include Captains Day, Presidents Day and Members Day which will be organised as best we can under the restrictions in place at the time.

For our midweek golfer's, week beginning the 5th April 2021 will see the return of our 60 Plus and 5 Day Members competitions both of which will run from a Monday through to a Friday from the Blue Tee Boxes.

2021 will also bring a few changes which include:

- 36 Hole Seniors being scheduled to run over a two-week period, played from White Tee Boxes
- 36 Hole Super Seniors being scheduled to run over a two-week period, played from Blue Tee Boxes
- The PGA Tankard, Fred Daly, and MS Society qualifiers [subject to confirmation from organiser] and Charity Day being open to all members.
- The 36 Hole Club Championship being played over a Saturday and the Sunday Competition
- The Match Play Pairs reverting to Four Ball if the Jimmy Bruen & Pierce Purcell are played in this format.

Inter Club Competitions

Even after courses opened, the return of visitors to courses delayed the start of the GUI's final year of Inter Club Competitions and forced the cancellation of both the East Antrim League and Holt Shield.

With the season curtailed the GUI took the decision to run only the Senior Cup, Junior Cup, Jimmy Bruen and Pierce Purcell with the Ulster Branch adding the Ulster Cup to the schedule. They also amended the format so that the team with home advantage played three/four matches at home and two/three matches away, with all matches played on the same day. It is our understanding the same format will be used in 2021.

In the pair's competitions, both played as Four Ball to allow for social distancing, the Jimmy Bruen team progressed to the second round before being beaten by Masserene and the Pierce Purcell team progressed to the third round before being beaten by Moyola Park.

In the single competitions our teams in the Ulster Cup and Junior Cup also got to the third-round where they were beaten by Fortwilliam and Greenisland. With home advantage in all third-round matches proving decisive.

With the availability a good squad of low handicaps and under the guidance of Johnny Foster Golf Academy professional Chris Gallagher the Senior Cup team proved hard to beat. With wins over Ballyclare, Galgorm and Moyola Park they progressed to a quarter final against Balmoral coming through that match with a four-one win to book their place in the Semi-Final against Belvoir Park.

The Semi-Final was scheduled for the 26th September and the team travelled to Co. Donegal Golf Club amid chaos as the Irish Government announced a lock-down and travel restrictions. There they played a very strong team with a combined handicap of +10. Despite being underdogs and playing the tournament favourites we continued to be hard to beat with four matches reaching at least the sixteenth before Belvoir gained the three points required to take them to the final. In comparison Belvoir had strolled to victory in the final.

Congratulations must go to Chris and the team in getting to the Semi-Final and it is encouraging to see Greenacres Golf Club reaching another Semi-Final after doing the same in the Fred Daly and Holt Shield last year.

Again at the time of writing this report Golf Ireland are planning a full schedule of Inter Club Competitions for 2021 and we have just submitted our entry into all events we have enough members eligible to play in.

Conclusion

To finish my report, I would like to remind members to read the notice boards and check our website not only over the coming months as the new season starts but through-out the year as they will be a valuable source of information about what is happening within the club and the competitions being played

Then finally I would like to wish this year's Captain, President, Team Captains and Members every success in the 2021 golfing season.