



Offaly Pitch & Putt County Board



A.G.M.
Wednesday January 7th 2009
Venue: Tullamore Pitch & Putt Club

P.R.O. Report
(Including Competition Results)



Offaly Co. Board Main Sponsors



William Buckley

DUNNES



www.offalypitchandputt.ie

2008 – A Year To Remember

First and foremost I would like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year! As both a player and officer of the committee I am very happy to report that 2008 was another great year for Offaly Pitch & Putt at all levels and grades. It was a year that nature really became a dominant and determining force in our game leading to many disruptions and cancellations across the country in the pitch and putt calendar. Floods and high winds especially hit our local competitions namely the Offaly Strokeplay and both Tullamore Scratch Cups. However, players persevered and adapted to the undependable conditions and brought Offaly and their respective clubs success including county and provincial titles. Congratulations to all our Offaly players who have had a terrific year. Hopefully 2009 will be even better!!

Success: Offaly remarkably captured no less than 6 Leinster titles and numerous Leinster and National runner-up positions in 2008. This is an amazing feat for a county which only boasts 3 affiliated clubs. How many other counties, apart from Cork of course, can boast such success in 2008? We pay tribute to those who fly our flag high at the highest level and also to our local players who continue to support and keep the game alive in Offaly. The standard of play across our clubs is partly attributed to the continued dedication by our club's committees and grounds staff that provide championship standard course all year round. Also, at this time we remember those who have sadly past away in the past year, especially Paddy Sheridan, Mick Sullivan and Ber Roche, go ndéana Dia trócaire ar a anam.

Publicity: From a P.R.O. perspective it was a successful year in terms of reporting. I had the pleasure of reporting on all our competitions within Offaly, Opens and Scratch Cups across the country and of course reporting on our players' stories at county, provincial, national and international levels. I am glad to report that we have increased publicity for our competition and players in local papers through forging a respectful and mutual relationship with the Offaly Express, Offaly Independent and the Tullamore Tribune. In particular, Kevin Corrigan of the Tullamore Tribune has been very supportive. We have taken great strides in 2008 in terms of promoting and developing our game. The Offaly Pitch and Putt Co. Board successfully launched our official website. The website is dedicated ultimately to developing and generating more interest in our game and promoting it as a competitive and recreational sport for enthusiasts of all ages. It has been positively received by all in Offaly and by the Pitch and Putt community at large within Ireland and further a field. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the County Board, Erry, Ferbane and Tullmore Pitch and Putt Clubs for their support and contributions to this venture.

Sponsorship: 2008 also proved successful in terms of attracting new sponsors. Michael Egan of Clara Sport & Leisure Centre came on board to sponsor our website and also our Senior and Juvenile Inter-County Teams gear. The backing of Offaly's leading sports and leisure centre has been a great boast to our teams, who are the envy of other county teams. Another Clara man, Joe Quinn of Aspire has committed sponsorship for our website and has voiced his interests in sponsoring a major competition in 2009. Dunnes Stores have increased their sponsorship over the past year by means of sponsoring our website. We also must recognise William Buckley's continued generosity in his sponsorship of the Offaly Matchplay Championships.

We will now take a quick glance back on the year that was 2008 and the stories that made the headlines!

Offaly Championships & Scratch Cups

Offaly Strokeplay Finals at Tullamore

Tullamore hosted this year's Offaly Strokeplay Championships. Although it was a nice weekend across the country nobody could have predicted the high winds that ensued Sunday afternoon. All county strokeplays across the country were severely affected by the harsh gale force winds, that only got stronger as the day progressed. With such difficult conditions the titles were wide open for those who could adapt their game best to the conditions. Early morning risers, John Fleming and Mick Byrne, enjoyed the best of the day and enviably posted the clubhouse leads which were later joined by Vinny Murphy, Anthony Galvin and defending champion William Buckley. Following the afternoon play ladies defending champion, Tracey McGrath also enjoyed a commanding lead from Margaret Hogan and Annie Galvin.

The gents 18 hole playoff came down to an exciting finish between local hotshot Anthony Galvin and William Buckley Jnr. Buckley birdied the 17th hole to take a one shot lead into the final hole. Galvin undeterred held his chip on 18th for a birdie to leave Buckley with a 3 foot birdie attempt to win. He duly obliged in fashion to retain his county title. In the ladies Tracey McGrath maintained her commanding lead from Tullamore duo Margaret Hogan and Annie Galvin through the final third round and also retained her county title in fashion. For full list of winners please see results section.

Offaly Matchplay Finals at Ferbane

The Matchplay Finals held in Ferbane this year did not disappoint in throwing some great matches together and they was not short of unpredicted upsets along the way. The current County Strokeplay and recently crowned Leinster Matchplay champions William Buckley Jnr and Tracey McGrath were undoubtedly favourites going into the championship.

Following a week of highly entertaining matches the gents senior final come down to a local derby between Ferbane's Patsy Reams and big hitter Noel Duffy. Patsy's run to the final included tight victories over club mate Kieran Egan and Erry's Joe McGrath Jnr in the semi-final, who had beaten the favourite William Buckley Jnr in the quarters. On the other side of the draw Noel's path to the final included victories over Erry's Billy Buckley Snr. and Tullamore's big lefty Mick Hogan. Experience came to the fore in the final and Patsy claimed his maiden County Matchplay title. The inter gents final was contested by Tullamore's Darren O'Connell and Martin Mills in which Darren received a walk over. Martin had beaten Ferbane's Declan Heffernan in the semi-final while Darren overcame the challenge of Erry's hotshot Graham Newman. The O'Connell brothers made it a double victory as Darren's younger brother Michael won the Junior Grade. Michael overcame Erry's Michael Mullen in the semi-final on the fourth extra tie hole and newcomer Michael Kenny in the final.

Unfortunately, there was a low entry in the ladies sections. It was the dedicated and long time stalwarts of the game who came out in force to contest the inter grade. Erry's Geraldine Ryan overcame her friend Eileen Guerin in the semi-final and Ferbane's Ann Minnogue to claim the title. The senior ladies final was contested between defending champion Helen Wynne and Tracey McGrath. This was the second encounter within two weeks for the pair as Tracey had just overcome Helen in an entertaining Leinster Matchplay semi-final. On the night a superb display of pitching from Tracey saw her add the County Matchplay title to her Leinster Matchplay title.

Offaly Co. Board Scratch Cup at Tullamore

The County Board was delighted to announce a record attendance of over 140 players irrespective of the blustery and winter conditions. It was a day of mixed conditions from sunny spells to a heavy hailstone shower and near gale force winds! The big attendance on the day is attributed to the regard in which the course has come to be held by players across the country and indeed the warm welcome they receive on each visit. A major determining factor causing record numbers to travel on the day, however, was the fact, that come July the Tullamore Club was to host the prestigious National Gents Strokeplay Finals. For those participating in July it was a valuable chance to get some practice on the course. Once again it was the defending winner from 2007, Eddie Carey (Athgarvan), who would set the pace and retained his title from William Buckley Jnr. Of the final 13 in the 18 hole playoff, five were local players Kieran Egan and Patsy Reams (Ferbane), William Kennedy, Larry Maher Jnr. (Erry), and William Buckley Jnr. (Erry). Buckley was the only player to create a threat to Carey bringing it all square with 3 holes to play. Two birdies from Carey in the closing holes meant that the Scratch Cup was returning to the Curragh with the Kildare man once again. For full list of winners see results section.

Offaly Masters at Erry

One week on from the County Matchplay Championships held in Ferbane saw the Offaly Masters Scratch Cup take centre stage at Erry. And what a week it proved to be for Ferbane's Patsy Reams. Patsy fresh off his Offaly Matchplay title posted an early clubhouse lead with rounds of -9 and -10 for total -19. It was Erry's William Buckley Jnr who came closest to overtaking the clubhouse lead posting rounds of -6 and -12 to lie 1 shot behind. Tullamore's adopted son Mick Byrne, formally of Old County P&P Club also posted impressive rounds of -6 and -10. Athlone's M. Kenny also moved up the leader board with -13 with the ever threatening and recently crowned Tipperary Matchplay winner Paul O'Brien of Lakeside. Those who made the cut were John Fleming (-11), Joe Egan (-12), Tracey McGrath (-12), Joe McGrath Jnr (-12), M Kenny (-13), Paul O'Brien (-13), Mick Byrne (-16), William Buckley Jnr (-18) and Patsy Reams (-19). As events unfolded in the British Open which saw Padraig Harrington stride towards his retention of the Claret Jug, it was Patsy Reams who just fell over the finish line carding a nervous third round score of -4 to capture another title and make it an unforgettable week.



Offaly Strokeplay 2008



**Offaly Matchplay & Offaly Masters
Champion 2008 Patsy Reams**

On the Leinster Stage

Leinster Strokeplay Finals Ladies at McDonagh & Gents at St. Bridgets

McDonagh proved to be a fascinating setting for the highly contended Strokeplay Finals which featured the top senior ladies in the country including 2007 winner Tracey McGrath (Erry), Margaret Hogan (Tullamore), sisters Chrissie and Marian Byrne (St. Bridgets) and clubmate Tara Dillon. Tracey quickly marked her intentions on retaining her title with a 36 hole total of 97, 5 shots clear of nearest rival Chrissie Byrne and 6 shots clear of clubmates Marian and Tara Dillon both on 103. After an amazing turnaround in the final third round playoff, Marian Byrne caught up with Tracey when she shot 47 to finish on 150 and tying with Tracey following a final 53. A nine hole battle ensued and the valiant effort of Marian Byrne fell short against the consistent form of the winner for a second year in a row Tracey McGrath. Tracey won the 9 hole playoff by 3 shots shooting an 5 under.

The victories did not stop for the strong Offaly contingent present in the Curragh. The ladies intermediate title was won by Ann Marie McCabe (Ferbane) on a score of 111 Carol o Brien (Kells) beat Ann Minogue also Ferbane on a back 18 hole countback both sharing a score of 113. When it seemed that the day couldn't get any better Zita Galvin of Tullamore made it a hat-trick for the Offaly ladies by winning the junior title ahead of Lucan's Siobhan McDonnell. The trio made it a fantastic and historic day for Offaly pitch and putt!

The gents senior event however failed to produce titles for our Offaly representatives. The championship was dominated by Athgarvan's hot shot Eddie Carey who came from behind in the third round playoff to card an equalling course record of 13 under to finish on 26 under par. Defending champion William Buckley Jnr. put in a valiant effort and rallied through the final round to finish in third 2 shots behind runner-up Sean Downes of Stackallen and a further 2 shots behind the newly crowned people's champion. Offaly added another top finishing position in the form of Tullamore's rising star Mark Hogan. The gents Leinster Intermediate Strokeplay title was won by Bobby O'Neill (Athgarvan). He had 2 shots to spare over Seamus Reilly (Stackallen), with Mark finishing a further shot behind in third place on 101.

Leinster Matchplay Finals Ladies & Gents at Erry

The scene was certainly set at Erry for the welcomed return of the Provincial Matchplay Championships to the pitch and putt calendar. The course rose to the occasion through the continued hard work of the committee and truly show cased why it is now considered as a top championship standard course. Top performances were expected from our local players and they did not disappoint. It was a local Erry pair William Buckley Jnr. and Tracey McGrath who battled through the two day event to claim another fantastic Senior Leinster Matchplay titles double in their respective Gents and Ladies grades. This follows the duo's 2007 double win at the Leinster Senior Ladies and Gents Strokeplay and also a double win in 2002 Leinster Matchplay Finals. On William's path to the title he overcame stiff opposition in the form of Kieron Morrissey (St. Patricks) won 4&3, Anthony Galvin (Tullamore) won 1up, Ian Farrelly (Duleek) won 6&5. William met his old friend and rival Sean Downes (Stackallen) in the final and won convincingly 9&8. Tracey's path to the ladies title included a walkover from Margaret Hogan (Tullamore), and wins over Tara Dillon (St. Bridgets) 4&3 and clubmate Helen Wynne in the semi by 2&1. Tracey met St. Bridgets Chrissie Byrne in the final. Local favourite went 4 down after 18, but four opening second round birdies helped her regain her composure to secure a historic Leinster Senior Ladies double.



Leinster Stokeplay Finals 2008



Leinster Matchplay Champions 2008



Leinster Mixed Foursomes 2008

At National Level

(All of the below are the extended paper reports of the event)

National Ladies Strokeplay Finals at Rocklodge

Two of the most prestigious and highly held single's championships take place over the space a fortnight in July, the National Ladies and National Gents Strokeplay Championships. The Ladies Championships were first on the agenda for decision. The ladies junior, inter and senior players took to the people's republic of Cork to fight for the prestigious national title. A small but strong Offaly contingent took to the roads early over Thursday and Friday morning to make the long but hopeful road to Leaside. The Rocklodge Pitch & Putt Club played host to the championships and without a doubt served up a tough challenging 18 holes for any standard of competitor of any gender. The challenge was certainly dealt to everyone, junior, inter and senior players alike.

Offaly unfortunately had no representatives in the junior section, this is mainly due to the fact that the majority of ladies playing the game in Offaly are inters with most already flirting on the line of the senior section. This is in deed testimony to the standard of play that has only risen over the past year. The junior and inter grade championships were played over the Saturday as the precursor to the senior championship the following day. In the inter section we had a strong trio in the form of two Ferbane ladies, Eileen Guerin and Ann-Marie McCabe, and one Erry lady, Geraldine Ryan. After the trio had eventually overcome an accommodation crisis on arrival they soon got down to the business of the day posting some impressive scores. Eileen made the most impressive start posting a first round score of 57 to become the joint leader after 18 holes, while Geraldine and Ann-Marie found the first round pace difficult posting a 62 and 64. But it wasn't long before the two faithfuls acclimatized to the treacherous hillside shots and improved their scores by 5 and 10 shots respectively posting second rounds of 57 and 54. Eileen however found it hard to avoid trouble in the second round and posted 66, which totaled 123 meaning Eileen would miss out on the final 18 hole playoff. Geraldine finished on 119 while reigning Inter Leinster Strokeplay champion Ann-Marie McCabe finished on 118, her second round of 54 was the second best 18 hole score recorded on the day, Dymrna Donegan of RGSC posting an impressive second round 50 to lead the championship on 110. It turned out to be a playoff of high drama. The leader dropped 6 shots in the space of the first four holes giving her challengers a more realistic shot a victory. The field was now wide opened and it was Ann-Maire that took full advantage posting the joint highest final 18 score of 55 an aggregate of 173 for 54 holes. A missed three foot birdie opportunity on the final hole proved costly for Ann-Marie as Lucan's Breda Purcell carded a final 18 hole 55 to post an aggregate score of 172 for 54 holes, becoming the newly crowned inter ladies champion for 2008. Ann-Marie was very happy to claim second spot on the day. Geraldine Ryan who carried an injury into the championships did remarkably well to finish out the three rounds to finish on 182 for the championship.

On Sunday morning the big guns of the senior ladies grade descended on Rocklodge to do battle for the strokeplay title. The rumours of whether the defending champion Ger Ward would be taking part in the championships were quickly laid to rest as the four times National Stokeplay winner appeared as her name was announced to take her place on the first tee. Ger had missed most of the season due to injury and was a major doubt leading into the championship but this did not deter her efforts of retaining the title and make it a fifth strokeplay victory. Offaly's lone challenger to the crown was Tracey McGrath of Erry. Expectations that this could be Tracey's year were undoubtedly high and justified as she had achieved the Leinster double in the weeks prior, retaining the Leinster Strokeplay title in McDonagh following a nine hole playoff and adding the Leinster Matchplay title only two weeks before in Erry. But there was a strong field to contend with and National titles are not easily won.

Tracey made the perfect start steadily picking three birdies on the front nine and five on the back to card a first and bogey free round total of 46 to join Ger Ward as co-leader after 18 holes. First round scores of sub 50 were also posted by Cork's Claire Flynn 49 and Dublin's stalwart Sheelagh Elmes 48. It was all to play for now. Tracey continued her birdie run on the 19th hole and found herself putting for 10 under on the long second hole, but lapses in concentration lead to three drop shots. But Tracey soon fought back in the following holes to wipe out the uncharacteristic mistake to finish on 50 and an aggregate total of 96 for 36 holes, three behind Ger Ward who finished on 93. St. Bridget's Tara Dillon added a 47 to her first round of 51 to finish on 98. Claire Flynn and Sheelagh Elmes both finished on 101. So the scene was set for the playoff, three players with scores in the 90's were well ahead of the remaining 16 strong pack of players on scores ranging from 101 to 107. Ger Ward teed off with a three shot cushion from Tracey McGrath and a five shot lead from Tara Dillon. Even though only back to the game from injury Ger showed she still has what it takes and carded a third round of 51 to maintain a three shot gap to reclaim her National Strokeplay title for Dublin. Tracey had cut the gap to within one shot after 8 holes but the luck on the day seemed to sway the Dubliner's way on the ninth hole getting a more fortunate hop off the sand than Tracey. To both Tara and Tracey's credit they both kept fighting, Tara carded a third round 49 to become the clubhouse leader with 147 with the final pairing still on the course. But the wealth of expensive once again shone through and it was to be Ger's day once again, finishing on 144. Tara claimed second one shot ahead of Tracey who finished on 148 to claim third spot for a fourth top four medal finishes in the past four years.

Congratulations to all who traveled and took part in the Nationals in Cork, Offaly were proudly represented in fine fashion.

National Gents Strokeplay Finals at Tullamore

It was that time of year again when the top gents of all grades came head to head to battle it out for the coveted National Strokeplay titles. What better place to host such a prestigious event but our very own Tullamore Pitch and Putt Club. The club played proud hosts to over 130 competitors and large galleries of supporters on a rare weekend of glorious sunshine and soaring temperatures that truly showed the course in all its glory. A fitting venue for the National Gents Strokeplay Finals of 2008.

The gents junior section were the first to tee off early Saturday morning. Tullamore's Michael O'Connell and Erry's Michael Mullins led the Offaly attack. There was impressive scoring and local favourite O'Connell did not disappoint he finished on 104 just 3 shots behind the 36 hole leader Davy Hallinan of Tipperary on 101. A run of some uncharacteristic shots from Michael Mullins on the back 9 holes led to the loss of valuable shots which in the end sacrificed him a place in the playoff with O'Connell. There was further impressive play in the playoff with the Cork duo of O'Farrell and Doolin carding rounds of 51 and 50 respectively to put the pressure on Tipp's Hallinan and Offaly's O'Connell with the lead in the clubhouse of 155. But Hallinan was up for the challenge and he showed he had no cobwebs from his break of a decade or more from the game, he shot a steady 52 to secure the junior title on 153. Local man O'Connell was unfortunate on the final few holes and had to be content with 4th place on 157, he was beaten by Cork's O'Farrell on the back 18's.

The inter gents were next in line on Saturday and what a championship it turned out to be. Outstanding pitch and putt that would have matched any senior gents standard was on the display in a fascinating playoff. Local Mark Hogan and Erry's Graham Newman carried Offaly's hopes of a win going into the playoff. In what is always a hard fought grade both players had played great pitch and putt to put themselves into real contention for the title along with 12 other competitors. Both had opening rounds of 47 and Newman repeated this to finish on 94 for 36 holes while Hogan added a 49 to finish on 96 for 36. They both found themselves in case of the overall leader

Tipperary's Stephen Shoer who shot magnificent rounds of 45 and 47 to lie 2 shots ahead of Newman and 4 ahead of Hogan going into the final 18 hole playoff. Nobody could have foreseen what a spectacle of pitch and putt that lay ahead, Shoer birdied the first 9 holes to take an outstanding lead that nobody could catch. He finished the 18 holes on 41 an unbelievable 29 under par for three rounds and a very worthy winner nobody could begrudge. Unfortunately, the Offaly duo could not mirror such play but did themselves proud and on another day their scoring would have been in contention for the title but it was to be Shoer's day. Hogan shot a final round 50 to finish on 16 under to claim joint second but he was beaten on the back 18s and had to settle for third place. Newman finished one place further in fourth. We are sure that there will be a lot of titles ahead for these two rising pitch and putt stars of the future.

After such unbelievable scoring by Shoer on Saturday afternoon the senior gents were up against it to try an equal what would be a score worthy of a senior title any day. The senior competitors teed off on a very warm and sunny Sunday morning. Offaly had a 7 strong contingent competing for honours and no other than William Buckley Jnr. from Clara was amongst the bookies favourites for the title. He was a worthy and obvious favourite with everyone not only on his present form but also because the last time the championship was held in 2003 at Tullamore Buckley won in dramatic fashion in a 9 hole playoff with Cork's Frank Dineen, who had lost in a playoff in 2002. Other contenders to the crown for Offaly were Tullamore's Anthony Galvin, Michael Byrne, Paul O'Gorman, Erry's Joseph McGrath Jnr., Larry Maher Jnr., and Ferbane's Patsy Reams, all of whom were capable of shooting low figures on the course at Arden. Unfortunately only two players made it through to the playoff. Paul O'Gorman added a brilliant second score of 42 to his first round of 47 to find himself as joint leader with Frank Dineen of Cork on 89 after 36 holes. The cut fell at 97 and only one person on 97 made the playoff and that was Ferbane's Patsy Reams who had just come off a double win at the Offaly Matchplay Finals and Offaly Masters. William Buckley Jnr. also finished on 97 but was beaten on the back 18 to claim a precious spot on the playoff. Anthony Galvin finished one shot further on 98 (49 & 49), Joseph McGrath Jnr. was next best of our Offaly players on 100 (52 & 48). Larry Maher Jnr. couldn't find his good form of late and finished on 103 (52 & 51) while Michael Byrne finished a shot better on 102 (49 & 53).

There was only 4 shots between the top 7 players and 8 between the top 20 players who qualified for the final 18 hole playoff. It was all set up for a classic for a second day in a row and a large crowd gathered in high expectation. Could Paul O'Gorman pull off a well deserved shock and upset the bookies?! Well nothing would come easy and at times it looked as if there might another emotional playoff in store for the joint leader Frank Dineen. Thoughts of losing a third National title in the playoff must certainly have gone through his mind as he found his way around the front 9 holes. Dineen played as if every hole were his last he displayed his worthiness to the crown and this was only equalled by O'Gorman. It wasn't long before O'Gorman but his missed birdie chances on the first 5 holes to bed as he fired some great pitches into the hearts of the greens to stay within distance of a rampant Dineen. Both picked up impressive birdies at the 8th to leave Dineen on 24 under and O'Gorman on 22 under, O'Gorman saving his par after a difficult chip on the 9th to stay in the hunt. News quickly spread amongst the crowd that Cork's John Cahill shot a final round of 42 to finish on a total of 25 under to take the clubhouse lead. The pressure was now on the players remaining on the course who had now heard of the clubhouse target set. The crowd did everything to get behind the local O'Gorman but he failed to convert two 'must get' putts for birdies and the dream was quickly slipping away from him as Dineen extended his lead to 25 joining Cahill and fellow Cork man John Walsh as leaders of the championship. Not for the first or second time in the day but for a third successive time in three rounds Dineen held the 13th shot in 1, he had previously held for a hole in one in round one and two on the 13th and 15th. It really looked as if it was Dineen's day he now found himself at 27 under. O'Gorman needed to do something to keep his hopes of a medal alive and what a reply he almost followed Dineen in for

a hole in one but had to be content with a short birdie putt. He followed this superb shot with another close pitch at 14th to the delight of the crowd and he narrowed the gap to three shots with four to play, was it possible?! The tension was unbearable in the crowd and the players were surely feeling the pressure and nerves. Both pitched with a few feet of the treacherous 15th, bad memories were forgotten this time around for Dineen as he maintained a three shot lead with three to play, both players securing birdies. Something special was needed to catch Dineen with only 3 shots left. O’Gorman took the honour on the 16th tee and eyed the flag stick, from tee to green the ball was going no where but directly at the flag and with one bounce and a half foot of back spin O’Gorman’s ball finished in the hole for a outrageous hole in one that sent the crowd wild. What thoughts could have been running through both players minds at that stage nobody will know and how Dineen stepped on to the tee box to produce a response as he did was only fitting of a National champion. With nerves of steel the smiley faced assassin fired his pitch within two feet to maintain a two shot lead with two to play. O’Gorman birdied the 17th to reduce the lead to one shot but a disappointing tee shot to the final hole left the opening that Dineen would not neglect and he left himself a long uphill putt for birdie. O’Gorman’s efforts just ran short on the final hole as Dineen secured a par and the championship O’Gorman finished off a long putt for par to secure a brilliant second place finish. An amazing championship with amazing performances by a number of players including Tullamore’s Paul O’Gorman who finished proudly on 28 under just one shot behind the new champ Cork’s Frank Dineen on 29 under. O’Gorman has now made a deserved break through into the top ten ranked gents in the country. Cork dominated the top four positions with John Cahill finishing in third on 25 under beating John Walsh, who had to be happy with fourth on 25 under also to automatically qualify for next year’s finals.

It was an unforgettable championship weekend that left the crowd in awe of the pitch and putt and sportsmanship that was displayed from juniors inters and senior gents alike. Tribute must be paid to the Tullamore pitch and putt club on a great weekend from the standard of the course to the committee serving every need of the players and spectators. Andy Boland and his team must take great credit in their care and commitment that they have put into the course. Well done to all who competed and supported our players over the two days.

National Ladies & Gents Matchplay Finals at Glenville

On the June Bank Holiday, Glenville Pitch & Putt Club Dublin was the place to be as the National Ladies and Gents Matchplay Championships took centre stage. The combination of great weather and fantastic playing conditions in Glenville set the stage for three days of excellent pitch and putt and what turned out to be a historic weekend for the 2008 crowned champions.

Beginning the championship on Saturday Offaly hopes were high of a finalist, unfortunately this did not materialise with our final hopes dashed at the semi-final stages. The Gents started off well with a majority of impressive wins in round one; Billy Buckley Snr (Erry) overcame Liam McMahon (Cloghogue), Joseph McGrath Jnr (Erry) overcame Michael Herlihy (E.S.B.), and Paul O’Gorman (Tullamore) overcame Gerard McGuirk (Cement) and William Buckley Jnr. (Erry) overcame Darren Goodall (Tralee). Defeat came early in the first round for Tullamore’s John Fleming who got a tough draw against Jim Judge (Cement) who on the day played excellent pitch and putt to get the better of John on the final 9 holes. The second round started bright and early on Sunday morning and those still in the hunt for a finalist position faced a possible 3 rounds of matchplay (each round over 36 holes). All our representatives started out brightly however only one Offaly man successfully got through to the next stage. Previous National Strokeplay champion William Buckley Jnr., was up against one of Cork and Ireland’s top players John Walsh (Collins), despite suffering from a back injury fought a brave battle but came up short

against Walsh who was on fire and eventually reached the final of the Gents on Monday afternoon. William's father Billy Snr. also came up against a tough opposition in Frank O'Donoghue, another highly ranked Cork and Irish player from Templebreedy. Billy was ahead of O'Donoghue for the most part of the first 18 holes but O'Donoghue turned on his class and overcame the Clara man's challenge. Joseph McGrath Jnr. faced another tough Munster opposition in John O'Meara (Riversdale), in a game that was nip and tuck and displays of splendid pitching, there was nothing to separate them after 36 holes and it took extra holes to decide the victor of this match. Both aiming to secure the victory attacked the first extra hole and both left long putts for par. It was O'Meara that held the shorter of the two putts to scrap through and eventually reach the quarter-final stage. The only Offaly man, a Dublin exile, to get through round two and set up a clash with last year's matchplay runner-up Paul O'Brien (Lakeside) was Paul O'Gorman. Paul defeated a Dublin counterpart John Hoey (Erin's Isle) impressively. However, Paul's run came to an end when he met O'Brien who was determined to go one better than last year and claim the title.

The Gents Semi-Finals on Monday morning were dominated by Munster players, three of whom were from Cork. Defending champion Ray Murphy (Templebreedy), in a repeat of last year's final pairing, overcame Paul O'Brien to set up an all Cork final with John Walsh (Collins) who defeated Frank O'Donoghue (Templebreedy). The stage was set for a local Cork battle and the possibility of a historic three in a row for Murphy was on everyone's minds. Unfortunately the battle did not live up to the spectators expectations, it was a match of two 18 holes. Walsh dominated the first 13 holes and Murphy laid his claim strongly on the match in the following holes with impressive pitching to come out a historic champion on the 33rd hole. Murphy's impressive consecutive wins can only be compared to MJ O'Brien (Collins) who won four in a row in the late 1940's, the question now forms, can he surmount this achievement?? We look forward to another exciting Gents Matchplay in 2008, in which we hope that Murphy may be halted by an Offaly challenger, maybe it's turn to stop a Cork four in a row not unlike our Offaly footballer's preventing the Kerry five in a row in '82!!

The Ladies Matchplay Championship commenced on Saturday afternoon without the defending champion Ger Ward, who would have been a strong contender to retain her crown. She unfortunately had to withdraw due to an ongoing injury. This gave the first walkover of the day to St. Bridget's Tara Dillon. The second match saw Helen Wynne of Erry take on a local Dubliner from Shandon, Dolores Monaghan. In a highly entertaining match Helen found herself 4 holes down with 6 to play against former Intercounty champion but she showed huge resilience and determination to fight back and claim a win on the 36th hole to set up a second round match with Tara Dillon (St. Bridget's) and a possible quarter-final place. However, it was not to be as Dillon played superbly to claim the match from a strong and brave challenge from Helen. The next Offaly competitor to play was Tullamore's Intercounty veteran Annie Galvin. Annie had the experience to overcome another of Dublin's Intercounty stalwarts Sheelagh Elmes, but fell short of Elmes vital local course knowledge and exited the championship. Tullamore's Margaret Hogan shared a familiar match against Glenville and Dublin local Betty Smith but overcame her challenge with ease. Margaret also won her next match with Ger Holland (RGSC) to set up a quarter-final match with another Dub Maree O'Toole (Shandon). Our final competitor Tracey McGrath, a hot favourite for the title after her Leinster win in McDonagh, overcame Kildare's Mary Donnelly (Ryston) to set up a second round match with Meath's Kathleen Heary which she also won. Following the second round of matches on Sunday morning the quarter-finals matches were decided which saw some big players come head to head. Tara Dillon faced Tipperary's Margaret Webster, Dillon came out on top to book a semi-finalist position. Maree O'Toole faced a tough task against former National holder Margert Hogan, Maree found herself 5 holes up at one stage but Margaret never gave up and fought back impressively in the final 9 holes to force force extra holes, and won on the 38th to book her semi-final clash with Tara Dillon.

Tracey McGrath faced St. Bridgets Marian Byrne, who she beat narrowly two weeks prior in a dramatic 9 hole playoff to win the Leinster Strokeplay. It was a game with little between the two and some excellent play displayed but it was Tracey who forged ahead in the last 10 holes to win on the 32nd hole. The final quarter-final was an all Kildare affair between Rose Kelly (Ryston) and St. Bridgets Chrissie Byrne who had been tipped as a favourite to lift the title. Chrissie's experience came out on top and booked her place in the second semi-final with Erry's Tracey McGrath. This was a highly anticipated semi-final with Tracey overcoming the challenge of Marian had to face the prospects of her sister's challenge seeking another appearance in a National final. Despite Tracey's good form this year Chrissie's experience at Matchplay shone through. Tara Dillon opened the final day of the National Matchplay Championships with a hole in one on the first hole of her semi-final match against Margaret Hogan. Her impressive display of pitching continued through the match helping her to numerous birdies that in the end Tullamore's Margaret Hogan could not find an answer to match, making it two Offaly player's falling at the final hurdle of the championship leaving it an all Kildare affair. The final saw both club mates share the lead at different stages with Chrissie, the favourite one up turning 18 holes. However, in the momentum changed in Tara's favour in the closing holes and she chipped in on the 33rd hole to claim her first National title in style.

Congratulations to all who competed over the weekend all those who travelled to support, it must be remembered that everyone qualified through the preliminary county stages which was in itself an achievement, as standards in Offaly Pitch & Putt are at a high. We hope next year brings greater success to all those involved.

National P.J. Bell Mixed Team Event at Ryston

The National PJ Bell mixed team competition took place last weekend at Ryston Pitch and Putt club, Newbridge. 32 teams of 4 players took part in the tournament including 1 team from (Erry) Offaly of Ger Ryan, Matthew King, Tracey and Joe McGrath Jr. The pace was set at an early stage by the St Bridgets A team consisting of recent ladies National Matchplay champion Tara Dillon, Chrissie Byrne, Ian Dillon and Paul Byrne who posted an excellent score of 90 points leaders by a 7 shot margin after round 1 over the St Bridgets B team of Christy Hannon, Paddy Logan, Martina Loakman and Bridge Logan who posted an 83. Only 3 other teams scored in the 80s including the Erry team that left them 8 shots behind the leaders. The first round leaders St Bridgets A team struggled over the last 9 holes but added a score of 78 to their first round of 90, which was enough to retain a 7 shot lead to become National mixed team champions for 2008.

The runners up position went to the Erry team of Matthew King, Joe McGrath Jr, Geraldine Ryan and Tracey McGrath who overtook the St Bridgets B team who were in second place following round 1. The Erry team bettered their first round 80 to add 81 for a 161 total and they finished 3 shots clear of 3rd place winners Bellewstown D team of Tom Costello, Tom Kennedy, Cathy Richardson and Mary Kennedy. The gross prize was won by the Glenville B team of George Whiye, Frank Connolly, Geraldine O'Connor and Stella Sheridan on the back 3 hole countback. Congratulations to the Erry team on a fine and fighting effort.



National Ladies Strokeplay Finals 2008



National Ladies Strokeplay Finals 2008



National Gents Strokeplay Finals 2008



National Gents Strokeplay Finals 2008



National Matchplay Finals 2008



National P.J. Bell Team Event 2008

On the Leinster Stage Part 2

Leinster Mixed Foursomes Finals at Tullamore

The Tullamore Club played hosted to the Leinster doubles event in late August. Defending champions, brother and sister combination Tracey and Joseph McGrath were hotly tipped to once again in contention. They were joined with a strong host of local pairings, any one of which were capable of claiming an Offaly victory also. The morning session teed off at 9a.m. and only featured two Offaly pairings; Erry's Ger Ryan and Matt King, and Tracey McGrath and Joseph McGrath Jr. The McGrath's certainly helped their title retention hopes alive with a first round 10up and added a second round of 7up to become the clubhouse leaders following the first session. It was now a matter of waiting for the pair as they set the score for the second section competitors to beat. Among the second session of pairings were local Tullamore favourites Zita Glavin and Mark Hogan, Margaret Hogan and Vinny Murphy, Lucey Galvin and Brendan Galvin and also Ferbane favourites Deirdre McCabe and Tom Egan, Ann-Marie McCabe and Patsy Reams, Mary Connelly and Noel Duffy. It proved to be a nail biting affair as one of the final pairings of the day, not an Offaly duo, but Westmeath's Liz Quinn and Alan Hanlon created the most impressive challenge of the day as they lay on 17up with 3 holes to play. A slight and uncharacteristic lapse in concentration by the pair led them to drop shots at 16 and 17 (their 34th and 35th holes) to finish on 15up. This meant that the McGrath's successfully defended their Leinster Mixed Foursomes title and are now on track for a possible hat-trick in 2009. The McGrath's were disappointed two weeks later as they fell 2 shots short of retaining their National Mixed title at Castletown (See Results). Best of the Offaly challenge mounted in the second session came from the Ferbane stalwart Tom Egan who partnered Deirdre McCabe. They carded a second round 8up to claim the best second 18 prize of the championship. For full list of winners see results section.

Our Offaly Inter-County Teams

Leinster Inter-County Finals at Bagnelstown

National Inter-County Finals at Larkspur Park, Cashel

The gents 2008 trials were dominated by consistent high scoring with 7 from 9 trials to count the following made the team: William Buckley Jr. (-108), Joe McGrath Jr. (-98), Larry Maher Jr. (-95), Mick Hogan (-72), Mark Hogan (-71) and Darren O'Connell (-67). Such qualifying scores certainly supported our anticipation and hopes of strong performances at the Leinster and National Championships. In the Leinster first round doubles the pairings performed well and put themselves into third position and a realistic chance of contending for a top finishing position. However, introducing new blood to a team can be a determining factor in singles and come the second round of singles in Bagnelstown it was stalwarts William Buckley and Joe McGrath were best scorers for the team while the two youngsters finished over par. The team finished 5th overall. A similar story held true for the team at National level as they underperformed on the day. The young debutants will have gotten some valuable lessons and a rude awakening playing on the big stage of the inter county, but this will be the experience that will stand to them in the future as Offaly battle for a long awaited medal position.

The ladies team was formed through 6 trials with the best 3 to count. The team consisted of the following: Tracey McGrath, Helen Wynne, Linda Flanagan, Ann-Marie McCabe, Deirdre Byrne and Ger Ryan. The Offaly ladies produced a fine performance in Bagnelstown to finish third for the second year in succession behind Dublin. After missing out on third by 7 shots in 2007 at National level hopes were high that they could mount a credible threat. However, the course proved too difficult for many of the ladies on the day and scoring was unpredictable due mainly to the finishing hole that sits on a moate. The Offaly ladies had to be happy with fourth place once again. Hopefully 2009 will prove to be the breakthrough year for our teams!



Offaly Ladies & Gents Inter-County Teams 2008



Offaly/Westmeath Challenge 2008



Offaly Captains & Sponsor Michael Egan

Inter-County Action



Action from 2008

