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WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR



A big opportunity for golf

By the time you read this the dust will have settled on the 37th Ryder Cup and either Colin Montgomerie or Corey Pavin will be lauded as a hero.

Weather and any other possible outside influences aside, the preparation work that Jim McKenzie and his Celtic Manor team, carried out in the years, months, weeks, days and hours prior to the Cup meant that no stone was left unturned in ensuring a successful week.

Putting that aside though, I would hope, and expect, that golf, and its overall profile will have come out of what is the third biggest sporting event on the planet - after the Olympics and the World Cup - on the up because the game is certainly in need of a boost.

It has come in for a real battering this year. Golf clubs are feeling the squeeze at the rank and file end while in the professional game Tiger Woods has been forced, by virtue of his performances both on and off the course, to hand over the crown of "Greatest Sportsman in the World" to Usain Bolt. Whether he will ever win it back is very much open to conjecture.

The perfect showcase of a thrill-packed Ryder Cup would do wonders for the game, whetting the appetite of occasional players to play more often; getting the juices flowing of young aspiring Rorys, Martins and Edoardos to take up the game, and, perhaps, cement the desire of nomad golfers into taking out a membership at a good local club and putting down some roots.

I keep coming back to the virtues of golf as a game and I am continually frustrated by the portrayal of it in certain quarters as a joke pastime, undertaken by checked trouser-wearing gin swilling old buffers.

Granted, the age profile of the game could be a little more youthful, and I do baulk at the garish colour combinations so beloved by Ian Poulter and his followers, but, in general, golf offers so much to those who take part.

At my club, it is great to see young boys and girls receiving coaching on a Saturday morning. They are all well presented, often wearing smart branded clothing (and no doubt badgering their parents for just the sort of Ian Poulter inspired clobber I so detest); well mannered and keen to learn.

And that's not just the ability to swing the club on a consistent plane and turn three shots into two around the green, it's the etiquette that teaches them how to conduct themselves in any company, and it any facet of their young lives.

Golf more than any other sport instils values into those people who play it and while we can't hide from the flaws, and should work hard to remove them, we must try and make sure that our positive pronouncements drown out the often snide comments of the critics.

Without wishing to tempt fate, having written this before the start of this year's Ryder Cup, I'd like to congratulate Jim McKenzie, his team and the many volunteer greenkeepers on a successful week.

Scott MacCallum
Editor