



THE SLEAFORD FLAGSTICK

SLEAFORD GOLF CLUB MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

News and Developments concerning YOUR Golf Club

EDITED BY GERRY WALSH
10/7/2018

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

It was always our intention to 'widen our net' for contributions to our Newsletter and in this edition we welcome submissions from our House Manager Crispian Van Den Eenden and the Senior and Junior Sections of the Club. My thanks to those who also responded with their views, mostly positive and welcoming, about our first edition. Some of you will also notice that we have reacted to your comments and suggestions in our second issue. The most popular name for our Newsletter was 'Flagstick' and some of you suggested that it ought to include our local town 'Sleaford' in the title. So there we have it – 'The Sleaford Flagstick.'

Last month I attended the launch event of Chair/Network Golf at Beeston Fields GC in Nottingham. Chair/Network is a new networking group established for 'Chairs' of Golf Clubs to foster the aims of sharing knowledge, best practice and to increase the awareness of the challenges influencing the golf industry. It is supported by England Golf and the PGA. Many of the problems we are experiencing are felt across the whole of the UK and some Clubs, identified by Chair/Network as 'Progressive,' were coping with the pressures of falling memberships and ageing demographics (*in between 2009 and 2014 the average age of Club Golfers rose from 48 to 63!*) better than others by introducing initiatives such as increasing the range of memberships they offer and using more creative methods of marketing. The 'experts' say the problem of falling memberships is unlikely to improve in the next 10 years. We at Sleaford have introduced our 'New to Golf' and 'Flexible' Membership categories but there still remains much more to do to offset the falling numbers of members due mainly to our ageing membership and the increase in the numbers of 'time poor' golfers. We had budgeted for a net loss of 20 playing members this year but, after the renewal period, we are down by 50+ which, unless we can recruit well for the rest of this year, will reduce our income by over £20K. Have we identified why people leave the Club? Having managed the Club during the renewal period there are two main ones. Firstly, older golfers becoming unable to continue through age, injury or illness and secondly players who have not enough available time to devote to the game because of work and family commitments and therefore see no value in full membership anymore.

So what, you might ask, are these 'Progressive Clubs' doing that we are not and can we embrace 'change' to improve our income? Our Ladies' Section now has less than 60 playing members and our Ladies Committee are taking on the challenge of recruiting more golfers. Most ladies join us or play because their husbands play but we need to develop strategies to attract ladies to the Club for social activities and subtly introduce some 'fun golf' and hope some take to it. Similarly, many of our Club golfers like competing and playing in matches and events and trying to improve their game, myself included, but it is not everyone who wants to play for those reasons. We need to introduce more fun type competitions and strive to become a more 'family friendly' Club. Some of these initiatives might not sit comfortably with our more seasoned and conservative golfers as they feel their preserve coming under threat and do not wish to be affected by any changes. But if we are to survive with our current expenditure we must attract more members. I recently played in an Invitation Day at a local 18 hole Club that's membership has fallen to 200, have no juniors and are managing with just 2 green-keepers.

Members of the Management Committee will know that I am always 'banging on' about 'making membership valuable.' There are many 'nomadic' golfers out there who choose not to join a Club and instead join a Pub or Company Society or just go around in groups hoping for 'deals' and two for ones etc. They need to know what they are missing by not joining us – unlimited golf in most categories, matches with local Clubs for the price of a meal, discounted drink and food prices, Social Membership for their family, making new friends and social activities - and they can pay monthly too if they wish.

Our other main source of income is green fees. Should we consider introducing starting times during quieter periods of the week? Research shows that Clubs that introduced times for all visitors instead of just Societies improved their income by 14-20%. Yes, we can still have our ball chute as well. We simply do not make available to visitors the times that are popular for our members. The ability to book and pay for your group's time online is a feature that many golfers today expect to be offered as it fits in with their 'time poor' situation. We must adapt and not be afraid to embrace change. There is no magic bullet.

That's it from me. I will leave the pleasant stuff to others! If you have ideas about improving our income tell us about them. We are ready to listen. Don't forget the member's incentive! Introduce a new member and get £50 on your bar card.

Kind regards,

Gerry Walsh
Chairman
Management Committee (gerrywalsh6996@yahoo.co.uk)

The Captain's Round (3)!

Dear Members and friends,

Welcome to month 3 of the Captain's round, and I can't believe we are into month 3 already. The time seems to be whizzing along so quickly.

Firstly, I would like to thank all who attended and supported my Captain's Day. This was truly a memorable highlight of my captaincy year, not least for all the fine golf played during the day which was evident with the scores.

Now on to the Golf.

Unfortunately, Sleaford have now been eliminated from the Elsham Trophy due to a defeat by Woodhall Spa.

We remain in the Bramley Trophy and have a home match against Woodhall Spa on 17th July. Good luck to the team!

I have been asked to give my view on the role of being Club Captain, especially for the new members.

I was extremely honoured to be asked to be the Club Captain, and to date it is a role that I relish, thoroughly enjoy, and remain enthusiastic. This is despite the fact that I still work full time, and then spend the remainder of the day at the Golf Club.

Therefore, the role does require time and commitment, which I would have been unable to provide when my daughters were younger. I am fortunate to have an understanding wife, who is extremely supportive of both myself and the Club (although I now note this is quite costly!!).

Seriously though I have found that being the Club Captain has enabled me to both make new friends and enhance existing friendships with all the numerous golf matches and post-game socialising.

So, put quite simply, that whilst acknowledging the responsibilities this role brings, I am having a wonderful time and hope this brief insight may encourage others to take on the role.

Dates for the diary:

Heckington Show 28th and 29th July.

The Club and Pro Shop will be holding a stand at the show with a net etc, with a view to promoting the club and the game to young and old. I wish those helping to stage this good luck.

Saturday 18th August

Summer Ball (Black Tie).

Tickets are on sale behind the bar at a cost of £37.50. This includes a top rate meal, followed by dancing into the night with a live band.

Thursday 23rd to Tuesday 28th August.

Festival Week.

This is a golf festival for all. Entry forms remain available in both the clubhouse and on the website.

Happy golfing, and don't forget to pray for rain!

Ian Addlesee
Club Captain.

Ladies' Captain's Report

On Saturday 2nd June I held my charity auction, together with the club social event. It was a fantastic evening. The singer/comedienne was very good and Terry was an excellent auctioneer. I am extremely pleased to announce that we raised **£2,000** for LIVES. I would like to give thanks to those who made donations and who came and bought items and also to my helpers Terry Marshall and Nick Musson.

On Sunday 24th June I had my Ladies' Captain's Day which was a great success. Beautiful weather and an excellent half-way house run by my family. I would like to thank everyone who helped make it such a memorable day and thank you, Ladies, for the beautiful bouquet of flowers you gave me.



Congratulations to Val Fleming on winning the Martin Cup and to all the other prize winners pictured above.

Kind regards,

Shirley Elliott
Ladies' Captain

From our Seniors' Section

This is the first contribution to the Newsletter from the Seniors' section. I was honoured to be elected as Seniors Captain in February. We are a buoyant sociable section of the club with about 125 members playing with us. We welcome any Gents who have reached the age of 55, (contrary to some rumours you need not be retired), on occasions I wish that I had no work commitments and could spend more time on the course. We are always delighted to welcome new members.

Our main time to meet to play is Thursday mornings, when we run about 30 competitions a year, some being held in conjunction with the Ladies' section but on any non-competition days or match days there is always a morning 'spin-up.' In the spring and summer season we have sociable matches against 15 other clubs mostly on a home and away basis. We encourage as many members to play in these as they give the players a chance to have a good day out and play other courses in the area. Although it is nice to win the games, we select on the basis of giving all a chance to play rather than just on golfing ability.

The Seniors' matches are very well supported with home matches being a great means of promoting the club and we invariably find that our visitors are very complimentary about the course, catering and facilities.

We run a successful Seniors' Open each year, which brings in many visitors, and have two exchange days every year with other clubs. We visited Market Rasen and will also go to Tydd St Giles this year.

We also have a strong social side where we have four formal dinners a year, which are extremely popular and usually oversubscribed.

Kind regards,

Graham Anderson
Seniors' Captain

From our Junior Section

It is with great pleasure that I have taken on the role of Junior Organiser. I was delighted to have been asked by the Management Committee to do this and it is a role that I am certainly looking forward to, not just this season, but hopefully over the next few years. I will be working closely alongside James our Professional and already we have been very proactive in moving the Junior Section forward, not just within the Club, but also around the County.

We have appointed Michael Baines as the Junior Captain for 2018/2019. Congratulations to Michael on his appointment and he will be an excellent ambassador for the Junior Section of Sleaford Golf Club.

James already runs his very popular Junior clinics on a Saturday morning but more are welcome so if there are any budding boys and girls within the family or friends and they would like to have a go at golf bring them down on a Saturday morning between 9.00-11.00. We are hoping to run a Junior Open on the 17th August and have organised a roll up on a Wednesday evening for the established junior golfers and a Junior Section get together on a couple of Friday evenings for the promising juniors from James's Saturday classes to give them some experience of playing the golf course.

Congratulations to Michael Baines and Jake Craddock who were selected for the Lincolnshire Team at the Midland County qualifier at Ludlow Golf Club that won the competition and have qualified for the English County finals. Well done boys.

Future developments we have in mind include developing the game of golf for junior golfers within our local schools and some clearing out on the short course to make it a playable course for golfers new to the game.

Here's to a great summer ahead not just for the weather but for the Junior Section of Sleaford Golf Club.

Kind regards,

Nick Musson
Junior Organiser

From our Course Development Member

Dear Member,

BROWN IS NOT DEAD!

Although the fairways are very dry and brown they are not dead. They are mainly made up of fine grasses which are very drought resistant and will green up again once it rains again. The only parts that may struggle to regenerate are the areas of meadow grasses which require a lot more water. As these die off they are reseeded with the fine grasses.

We can water the greens and tee boxes with the irrigation system and carry out a very limited watering of the fairways with the water cannons but this is not very efficient during the day due to the heat. We cannot water them at night as we are watering the greens and tee boxes and we have only a limited supply of water.

You will know by now that our long serving Head Green-keeper Ian Batty has left the Club.



We made a presentation to Ian on behalf of the Club and wished him well in his new position with Tillers Turf.

Good luck to 'Jimmy' Smith on taking over as temporary Head Green-keeper. He could possibly have chosen a better time than this dry period but we are an inland links course and these are the sort of conditions we should expect at this time of year.

Regards,

Dr Peter Walker
Course Development Member

From our House Manager

Dear Members I would like to thank the Management committee for giving me the opportunity to tell one and all about ongoing and future events within the clubhouse.

If you are not yet aware, Mr Paul Marsden (Head Chef) has left us to further his career. I am sure you will wish him all the best in the future. He will be greatly missed. Interviews have been taking place over the last week and we hope to appoint a new Head Chef soon.

Meanwhile Sammy will take over. However, there will be a few dates where limited catering services will be available. These dates will be listed on the bar for your attention.

We as a team are asking all members what they would like to see NEW on the menu. We have had a couple of good ideas which we are trying on the Specials Board to see if they are popular. We welcome more.

Tickets for the Club Ball on Saturday 18th August are going very well. More than half have been sold already. The cost is £37.50 for a Champagne reception, 5 Course Banquet and Entertainment. More details can be found around the clubhouse.

It has been decided that our bar prices for non-members will be raised but the discounts on drinks for members will be increased to 20% by the 7th July, meaning that your drinks prices will remain the same if you use your bar card. This is great news for all that use the bar facilities. Remember that you can join your spouse or partner as a social member and she can obtain her own bar card too. Don't forget England are still in the World Cup (They were when I wrote this anyway.....) Come and support them. All matches will be shown and happy hour throughout all the England Matches.

Kind Regards

Crispian Van Den Enden
House Manager

Membership & Marketing

Membership renewals have been lower than anticipated this year which means less subscription income and knock on effect on lower bar and catering income over the coming year. Expenditure budgets will have to be reviewed accordingly.

The new flexible membership will help make up this shortfall and whilst this new initiative has got off to a good start many more are required.

If any of you do have any marketing ideas please do not hesitate to contact me.

nick.lawson@casfin.co.uk

As previously mentioned we have a stand at this year's Heckington Show on 28 & 29 July hopefully encouraging new members to come and have a look at what we can offer. Please pay us a visit and support us if you can.

Let's not kid ourselves many golf clubs are struggling to stay afloat as fewer people are attracted to golf. We cannot afford to get complacent, it's your club please ensure you use the facilities, buy a drink after your round of golf or have a sandwich. Even better bring a friend for a round of golf using your discounted rate and let them spend some money too!

This will definitely be a difficult year ahead financially and we need all the help we can get.

Wildlife

Just like us humans and the course the wildlife is struggling with the heat and dry weather. I have a number of watering holes around the course that are being well used. If you do see anything in distress on the course, especially any hedgehogs during daylight, please contact me asap. nick.lawson@casfin.co.uk

Kind regards,

Nick Lawson
Marketing and Membership Member

From our Professional Shop Manager

It has been an enjoyable busy few weeks for me at the club. It doesn't feel like last week that Gerry asked me to write a piece for the previous MC newsletter let alone over a month ago.

To have a golfing season with such good weather so far is brilliant however a little rain wouldn't go amiss to help the course out.

With the golfing season now in full swing leading up to the Open Championship it has been good to see so many members out playing matches, competitions/knockouts etc which has certainly kept me on my toes.

In between working the shop hours and teaching I have been venturing out to play in Lincolnshire PGA events. Dedicating a little more time to practice I have started to find a bit of form. Scheduled into the Diary Nigel and myself will be heading north to play in the PGA Better Ball at Woodsome Hall on July 20th. Any tips for the course would be appreciated.

Kind regards,
James Beinlich

More about Social and Golf

It will soon be Festival Week! So please don't leave your entries until the last minute or you may be disappointed. There are loads of wonderful golf comps going on through the August Bank holiday weekend and the entry forms, for members and visitors, are available in the clubhouse.

Just a reminder,

Thursday 23 rd August	Seniors & Veterans (Over 55)	Am -Am (Any comb.)
Friday 24 th	Captain's Invitation	
Saturday 25 th	All members team	Am-Am (Any comb.)
Sunday 26 th	Gents 4BBB	
Monday 27 th	Texas Scramble (Any comb.)	
Tuesday 28 th	Ladies 4BBB	

Can I ask you to please to get your entries in asap. I have an update meeting on July 12th and it would be nice to have a bit of a true reflection on how well each event is supported.

Also, please don't forget on the previous Saturday 18th - it's the Festival Ball. Tickets are already flying for this wonderful event. We do have a limited number though, so again, don't be late and get disappointed.

Please remember, these events are only as good as you make them. We need your participation to make them a success, so please join in and enjoy.

Cheers,

Terry Marshall
Finance Member (Festival & Social)