

# clubgolf – producing future golf stars

✘ A sports initiative aimed at giving thousands of children in Scotland the chance to play golf has more than exceeded its target.

During 2010, clubgolf expects to have 12,000 youngsters in coaching programmes in 322 clubs – well above target.

Speaking at the 2010 Ryder Cup at Celtic Manor in Wales, First Minister Alex Salmond said:

“Scotland’s future golfing prowess will owe much to getting young people interested in the sport as early as possible. clubgolf was launched in 2003, following our successful bid to host the 2014 Ryder Cup, with the aim of every nine-year-old child being introduced to the sport.

“It is doing just that – giving primary school youngsters the chance to pick up some clubs, gain some confidence and then go on to be coached at clubs by qualified volunteers and pros. We are introducing record numbers of young people to the game. Since clubgolf began, 180,000 children in P5 have picked up a set of clubs under the initiative which receives £500,000 Government funding annually. Just this year, 37,000 P5 children have been introduced to golf.

“In some cases, youngsters who began clubgolf a few years ago have progressed through to the Scottish Golf Academy programme and well as our national squads. And who knows – some of those young sportsmen and women could go on to become this country’s golf stars of the future – perhaps even turning out for the European Ryder Cup team.”

George O’Grady CBE, Chief Executive of The European Tour, said:

“This is a tremendous achievement by the Scottish Government and we salute the superb vision of this initiative in introducing so many youngsters to golf – the game of a lifetime.

“You are never too young to take up golf and, in fact, many of our current crop of European Tour stars learned the rudiments at an early age and came through school and golf club junior programmes. We are delighted that Scotland, the Home of Golf, has enjoyed such success with this initiative and we look forward to watching today’s planning bear fruit in the future.

Bill Miller, Chairman of clubgolf, said:

“We are working hard to bring forward the next generation of talent and ensure that Scottish golfers regularly feature at the top of the leader board at future events. Just as importantly, in doing so we are producing the next generation of golf members.”

The FM said:

“We are also investing £1 million to support Scotland’s most talented amateur players make the transition to the professional game.

“Golf is a vital part of the fabric of our nation, and we will continue to capitalise on the benefits of the game for years to come. It is essential that we build on this support past school age to ensure young talent is nurtured right through to possible professional level.

“That is why in March this year, I announced an additional £1m in investment to golf over five years to support the transition of golfers from the amateur to professional game. We are looking to support players as they make the step up until they are established on Tour across a number of key areas including provision of sports science and warm weather training opportunities.

“There is no doubt this is a long-term project but our goal is to have a player in the top 15 in the world for both the men’s and ladies games, to guarantee involvement in Majors, the Ryder and Solheim Cups and the Olympics. Golf as a sport is continuing to grow in Scotland and we in Scotland need to continue to grow our players.”

clubgolf emerged as part of Scotland’s successful bid to host the Ryder Cup in 2014 and has been developed under a partnership between the Scottish Golf Union, Scottish Ladies’ Golfing Association, the Professional Golfers’ Association, the Golf Foundation and sportscotland.

With core funding from the Scottish Government, and additional input from the strategic partners, clubgolf is also supported by many of Scotland’s leading golfers including Alastair Forsyth, Colin Montgomerie, Paul Lawrie, Kathryn Imrie, Catriona Matthew and Clare Queen.

The 2010 Junior Ryder Cup took place earlier this week at Gleneagles Hotel between 12 European youngsters and their American counterparts. They then took part in a ‘Friendship Match’ on The Twenty Ten Course ahead of The 2010 Ryder Cup and met the players from Colin Montgomerie’s European Team and Corey Pavin’s American Team.