

## **EAST LOTHIAN JUNIOR GOLF LEAGUE - SECRETARY'S REPORT 2016-2017**

The numbers of Clubs in the League has reduced over the years from 12 to 9 despite Musselburgh's welcome move from the Edinburgh League in 2014. Tantallon and North Berwick Juniors merged and became "West Links" in 2016. Gullane are now able to field two Teams, the U18s and U14s, so there were 10 Teams in 2017. However, we are more fortunate than some other Junior Leagues in Scotland which have folded!

In past years we have lost Winterfield, Musselburgh Old, and Royal Musselburgh from our League. It is hoped that these Clubs, and perhaps Castle Park, could take part again in some way, in our events.

Some of our Clubs are consistently short of the numbers required to take part in Match Days. (MDs) There were 7 "walkover" wins in 2017, and one further occasion when both opposing Teams scratched! Some Clubs were having to work with a very small pool of Players and quite often could not raise a Team of 4. If Teams are short of Players, the management of the League becomes extremely difficult, and shortages prohibit any form of meaningful direct Match Play. On average, only 50 Players, out of a possible 60, turned out on the 9 MDs. The lowest turnout was 46, and the highest 56. It may be of interest that 113 different Players competed in the 9 MDs over the season. On one or two occasions, if a Player's Club could not raise a Team of 4, the Secretary allowed the few Players who were available, to take part as individuals, but only for the Order Of Merit (OOM). On one or two occasions, if there was space in the draw, a 7th Player from a Club also took part, but their score did not count for their Team score, only for the OOM. There were 30 Boys in the U12 age group, and 10 Girls, who took part in at least 1 MD in 2017. Both of these trends are to be encouraged!

Clubs therefore need to work hard to increase the numbers of participating Juniors at Club level and feed these Players into the League system, as this can provide players with lots of competition experience, with the challenge of a variety of good courses, with the chance to win excellent prizes and be considered for an overseas tour, and with many opportunities for handicap reductions.

The Team Stableford format of the 2017 League is under review for change in 2018, there having been an excellent suggestion to improve it, and this will be decided at the upcoming AGM.

Our League was won by a strong Craighielaw Team who only lost one Match. Congratulations to them. The "surprise packages" in our League were the Gullane U14s Team who, despite their youthfulness and higher handicaps, finished second! Perhaps other Clubs could emulate this youthful approach? There are so many other playing demands on our really low handicap Players that they, not unnaturally, are often unavailable to represent their Junior Teams at League Match Days.

However, the new OOM seems to have been an incentive to play for other Juniors with handicaps of 4 or higher, and the great majority of all the Players who played in 5 MDs or more had their handicaps reduced over the season. One Player who played well in all 9 MDs, went from 12 handicap to 7, and there are many more examples of handicap reductions with the greatest being from 36 to 23! Our Scratch OOM was won by Lewis Hannah of Musselburgh and the Handicap OOM by Lewis Irvine. Both played in all 9 MDs! The receipt of many "Open Championship" prizes from the R&A and other prizes from Grant Forrest, Professional Golfer, were most welcome. So even if a Team could only raise 3 Players or less, those Players were still incentivised to turn up and play in MDs to improve their OOM positions.

The advent of a generous donation to the League from the Founder of US Kids Golf has meant that the League has been able to invite, and to subsidise, a Team of 10 Players (all Boys\*) to travel and compete in a Junior Competition in Pinehurst in February 2018. They were selected through their commitment to, and performances in, the League, or by doing well in our Championships. Some other donations have also been received. It is hoped that such trips to Pinehurst will be an annual event, as long as the funding continues, and on one trip, \*a Team of Girls will take part.

Our Champions Craigiellaw went on to represent our League in the inaugural Scottish Junior Team Championship (SJTC) at Glenbervie where they finished T3. The event finally came about in 2017 after several years of persistence by a Committee including the League Secretary, Ric Foulner of Tantallon, and several others. The event was won by Craigmillar Park who had three of our League Players, Sam Hall, Lucy Morrison and Connor O'Toole playing for them. The League Secretary was the Tournament Director for the event, and feedback suggests that the SJTC will become an annual event, in which our League winners will always compete. The League will cease to support a similar event called the Junior Home Nations Championship.

The Team Strokeplay at The Glen was abandoned due to appalling weather and there was no opportunity to replay it. Only 7 Teams out of 9 took part, so there were only 25 Players from a possible 36 participating. The few Players who completed their rounds, each received a prize!

The County Cup Foursomes was won by Kilspindie who beat Gullane in the Final at Longniddry. Aaron Hall and Connor Currie won the Scratch match and then the 11 year old twins Oliver and Sam Mukherjee won the Handicap match convincingly. Only 6 Teams took part. A change of format and date will be in place in 2018 to try and encourage more Competitors.

Our Championships at Gullane No. 2, in which 60 Players took part, was won by 10 shots by Gullane's Liam Currid with great rounds of 68 and 67 (135 - 7 under par). Fraser Leonard of Haddington won the Handicap Championship after a tie on 139 with fellow Club member Harry Rogan. Our Girls Champions were Lucy Morrison and Abercrombie Nisbet both representing Gullane. There were 10 Trophy winners in all, in various age groups, and lots of prize vouchers were issued, due to the generous sponsorship by East Lothian Council, who have supported this event for many years. The League was also able to donate some prizes to a "clubgolf" competition held on the same day on the Children's course.

In wider County events, Liam won the Lothians Boys U16s title at The Braids. Sam Hall, a Glen Member, lost narrowly in the Lothians U14s final. Aaron Hall of Kilspindie, led the qualifiers there with a superb 67. Not to be outdone, Jack McDonald of Haddington GC, finished top of the Lothians Boys Order of Merit. Both Jack and Sam finished off their seasons in grand fashion by jointly winning the Lothians Junior Champion of Champions. There were no significant performances at National level this year by our League Players, Boys or Girls.

Our funds for coaching, kindly donated by Cruden Investments Ltd., were much appreciated as usual, and at the Archerfield facility, 20 of our Juniors received some quality coaching from Paul Wardell and Gary Nicol, including "Trackman" sessions.

The Secretary would like to thank Members and Staff at those Courses which hosted our events in 2017, and in particular the Juniors Convenors, Kate Green - Golf Development Officer ELC, Club and Match Secretaries, Professionals, Coaches, Sponsors, Webmaster, and all the Parents and Volunteers for all their assistance in sustaining our League through a difficult period, as participation of Juniors in Scottish Golf in general, appears to be in decline. Hopefully, East Lothian Junior Golf League can reverse this trend by increasing participation in 2018.

Please keep an eye on our website at [eastlothianjuniorgolf.org.uk](http://eastlothianjuniorgolf.org.uk) for news, results, and where an extensive events calendar can also be seen.

David Warren, League Secretary. 4th November 2017.