



GOLF TO SCHOOLS III

MALTA GOLF ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

The Golf to Schools programme was initially launched in 2015 within the colleges of St Margaret and St George Preca as well as the National Sports School, and then extended it in 2016 to the colleges of St Benedict and St Ignatius. According to the wishes from the Ministry of Education and Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, this year was the turn of the colleges in Gozo.

To maximize the effect of the week, Golf Malta also decided to make the first steps with Special Olympics and to crown the two year activities with a competition between the children that attend the two colleges that were initially involved in 2015.

The R&A, in St Andrews, once again shored our initiatives by funding us through the dispatch of six golf kits as well as to ensure that we could meet the expenses of the development officer in charge of the programme – Chris Smith. Due to the intense schedule for the week Chris was this time joined by Tony Howarth who runs the same activity at his home Club in Leeds.

Monday 3rd April



The first day activities started in a similar pattern as in previous years with Chris meeting 9 (physical education) teachers from the Gozo College plus another that travelled to the sister island from the college of St George Preca. After the welcome, Chris introduced the ShortGolf programme taking the teachers through its history; product knowledge; methodology; ethos and safety aspects.

The main items for the day dealt with the fundamentals of ShortGolf including the grip; ready position; and techniques to putt; chip; pitch and hitting the full shot with the ShortGolf equipment. The afternoon dealt with drills and games followed by ideas how to plan lessons.

At the end of the day, the golf kits were distributed to the respective teachers who also received their Level 1 certificates.

The teachers receiving their certificates were: Jason Vassallo, Simon Pace, Kevin Cassar, Ruben Mercieca, Sonya Zammit, Deborah Saliba, Christopher Fava, Mario Azzopardi, Sarah Clair Saliba and Christian Borg.



Tuesday 4th April

Today, we met four teachers during the sport classes at their respective schools and spent multiple sessions with them and their children experiencing for the first time golf on their “home” ground. The schools involved were the primaries of Xaghra; Sannat; and Victoria. The first two schools have excellent facilities both indoor and outdoor. The Victoria primary however do not have an indoor facility which would make it difficult for the programme to be run in inclement weather.

The teachers involved showed that they had grasped the fundamentals conveyed the previous day and the children that came forward quickly got into the “games” that were prepared for them by Chris, Tony as well as their respective teachers.



Sannat Primary



Xaghra Primary

Wednesday 5th April



Eleven teachers that had experienced Level 1 from last year met at the Bocci Drome within the complex of SportMalta in Cottonera so that they could be upgraded to Level 2 to allow them to progress their students from playing the golf based games learned at Level 1 to the real golf skills required to play ShortGolf.

Ahead of the practical session the teachers expressed their thoughts from their initial experiences with the programme. The comments varied from the suitability of the equipment, the enjoyment of the games, the innovation and intrigue of the sport, concern on safety issues when numbers are high, excellent tools to play inside in inclement weather; difficulty to extend the games and thus could become boring; children did not like the technical aspects etc.

The Level 2 training programme focused on developing the skills of the coaches with emphasis on increasing their knowledge of the more technical aspects of the game and thus allowing them to extend the possibilities and scope of the programme. Again, these teachers seemed to embrace the techniques really well albeit their enthusiasm was dampened slightly when they realized that they had to undergo a theoretical test the next day.

Thursday 6th April

The day's activities were immense with three separate things on the schedule all happening within the facilities of the Royal Malta Golf Club. The teachers from yesterday's (training) session got involved into the setting up of extended putting and different golf playing games' formats. At the same time the initial teachers from 2015 received a refresher course.

After lunch it was time for the theoretical examination composed of 50 questions on ShortGolf followed by a one-to-one practical session to ensure that everyone understood the basics involved with the programme.

The results were soon out with all teachers (bar one who could not undergo the test because he was unable to attend Wednesday's session) faring well especially with the practical aspects of the game.

The successful level 2 teachers were Dario Conti, Darren Farrugia, Zachary Mizzi, Kyle Cesare, Duncan Micallef, Shawn Schembri, Jeremy Fenech, Yvette Ebejer Bonello, Claudette Zahra, Henriette Saliba and Alan Ellul. Paul Calleja did not do test.



Chris Smith and Tony Howarth (middle back) with the successful Level 2 teachers

Friday 7th April

The highlight of the week was always going to be the first Golf to Schools “Festival” followed by the first experience with individuals within Special Olympics.



About 60 children descended with their teachers to the Bocci Drome and soon the hall became animated with children participating as a team identified by their different coloured caps and vying to do their best to achieve the highest scores according to the putting and chipping games that were set up for them.

The fun and the rationale behind the programme was enjoyed by the Hon Evarist Bartolo (the Minister of Education), the Hon Dr Luciano Busuttil (Chairman SportMalta), Mr Kevin Azzopardi (CEO for Physical Education), Mr Maurice Gruppetta (Chief of Staff Ministry of Education) and Mr Paul Stoner (Chairman Royal Malta Golf Club). Unfortunately the Hon Chris Agius (Parliamentary Secretary for Sports) and the person who kick started the programme in 2015 was unable to attend due to his hospitalization after being hit by a car a few days prior.

Towards the end of the activity the group was joined by Dr David Agius, Shadow Minister for Sports who also stayed to watch the Special Olympics input.



Special Olympics

Ten Special Olympians brought to an end a highly charged week. And the end proved to be just as exciting as the rest of the week. These challenged persons took their first experience with the game of golf as a duck takes to water. They managed to grasp the fundamentals quickly and were soon seen to be enjoying the games and endeavoring to hit the middle targets.

Their faces spoke volumes and for the first time in three years we had to accept the fact that we had to overrun the schedule as this group wanted to play more. It was great to witness this. Our resolve to be successful also here was strengthened.



Conclusions

Our appreciation and thanks is extended to all that assisted us to make this week possible. The R&A; the Ministry of Education; the Parliamentary Secretariat for Sport; SportMalta; the Royal Malta Golf Club; the PGA of Malta; the Marsa Sports Club; Special Olympics Malta; the CEO for Physical Education; the various colleges, teachers and of course Chris Smith and Tony Howarth. Most of all the participating children and Special Olympians whose enthusiasm encourages us to continue with this programme so that we have all the (primary) Colleges covered by 2020.