

Challenge to raise cash for Marymount

LATER this month Kinsale will host the second edition of their Pro-Shop Challenge.

Following a successful staging last year, Kinsale immediately decided the event would have to be repeated.

The event will see a rematch between Kinsale's PGA professionals Ger Broderick and Ian Stafford and Kinsale's elite amateurs Cathal Butler and John Murphy.

Last year the event raised over €3,000 for local Special Olympics clubs and this year the organisers are hoping to raise a similar amount for Marymount.

Kinsale's Ian Stafford came up with the idea after his nephew asked him to help out with fundraising for a team to go to the Special Olympic World Winter Games.

It was also a novel opportunity for the PGA professionals to take on the two amateurs who had come up through the coaching structures in Kinsale Golf Club.

Both Butler and Murphy have moved into the senior ranks now but they started golfing through the progressive coaching programmes that were set up by Kinsale and delivered by Ger and Ian.

While the idea immediately sparked a large amount of interest, the pros then had the daunting task of taking on Butler and Murphy.

“Our target last year initially was to raise around €800 and we were absolutely delighted to raise over three times that amount.”

SEVERAL improvements have taken place in Killeen over the last 18 months following floods that severely impacted the course and clubhouse.

While remedial work took place in 2016, further works were carried out in early 2017 to enhance the playing experience of the lakeside course.

Killarney's GM Cormac Flannery is delighted with the work, and that it has led to increased numbers visiting.

“Thankfully it has been a

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■ Niall O'Shea

Between them, the amateurs had won six events that season and both went to be named on Munster and Irish panels.

Stafford and Broderick have very busy coaching schedules and are not regular players on the PGA Irish Region Tour.

Taking on the two prolific amateur winners was going to be a challenge, especially with a large number of Kinsale members looking on.

In the end though all four golfers played very well, both teams had scores in the mid-60s with the amateurs claiming victory.

Although they lost out to their proteges, the pros had the consolation of playing some very good golf themselves.

“If someone had of told us that we would shoot 68 better ball before we started we would have been pretty happy given the lack of play we had in the run up,” said Stafford.

“I think that John and Cathal were pretty happy with their 64 also!”

In addition to the good golf, the event also attracted a large number to Kinsale which boosted the fundraising side of the initiative.

“Going into it we didn't know what sort of reaction we would get,” said Ian Stafford, “we hoped some people would come and watch and it was not until just before we teed off and saw the crowd that had gathered did we know that we had really grabbed people's attention.”

“At its peak last year there was over 100 people watching.”

As a result of the large number of spectators, and pledges from many more who couldn't make it the golfers raised far more than planned for the charity partners.

“Our target last year initially was to raise around €800 and we were absolutely delighted to raise over three times that amount,” said Stafford.

“The proceeds were split between



the Special Olympics World Winter Games Volunteer fund and three local Special Olympics Clubs.”

This year the four golfers have selected Marymount University Hospital & Hospice will as their charity partner and Stafford explained why they chose the Cork based beneficiary.

“I think you will find it hard to find anyone who does not have a link in some way to the wonderful work that is done in very difficult circumstances in Marymount and it is vital for us to try and help in any way possible to maintain the excellent standard of service and care that is provided by Marymount.”

“We were astounded by the generosity of people last year, and we are hoping to surpass our total raised last year for this worthy cause.”

The event will move to a weekend slot this year following requests from members who couldn't make the

Monday afternoon last year.

The Saturday afternoon should see a far bigger crowd attend this year.

The event will take place on July 22 and is open to everyone.

There's no admission charge but anyone who is attending is asked to make a donation to the fundraising efforts.

Anyone interested in supporting the event can sign up to the birdie pledge, and given the calibre of the golfers there's sure to be plenty.

Donations can be made via the Pro-Shop in Kinsale or on the day of the event.

Kinsale have worked hard on their junior golf structures.

Both Ger and Ian are involved with both induction and ongoing coaching for young golfers when they join the club.

They have seen great success with a large number of golfers entering



Butler and Murphy enjoying a laugh at the 2016 Kinsale Pro Shop Challenge.

Kinsale's PGA professionals Ger Broderick and Ian Stafford who took on Munster Champions John Murphy and Cathal Butler last year. The club will host another challenge on July 22nd.

Pictures: Niall O'Shea

category one status and while club success has eluded them so far, there have been a large number of individual successes.

Gary Ward recently won in Cobh and there have been successes too for Mark Healy, Eric Rumley and others.

It's been a busy time for the four golfers.

The professionals are busy dealing with the rush of peak season on the course, Ger and Ian have both seen a big jump in the demand for golf this year.

Butler and Murphy are also busy with a full schedule of amateur competitions stretching from April right through to September.

Murphy was in action at the senior interprovincials in Carlow this week and both amateurs are off to the North of Ireland and the South of Ireland before the Pro-Shop Challenge later this month.

Flannery hails 'fantastic season' as Killarney goes from strength to strength

GOLF

■ Niall O'Shea

fantastic season so far for us.

“Both member and visitor rounds are nicely ahead of last year, and bookings are looking good. We're delighted to see both courses in incredible condition and feedback from players has been great all summer.”

“We've tweaked little bits on both courses over the winter and we're constantly review-

ing our agronomic programme. It is great to see the benefits actually surpass our expectations.”

Flannery, a PGA professional joined as general manager in 2013. He had worked as an assistant pro with David Keating up to 2011. After two years working in the Royal Golf club Bahrain, he returned to Killarney.

“Our head greenkeeper Enda Murphy and his team are doing outstanding.”

“On Mahony's Point we've

really tried to embrace the old school traditional style in which the course was designed.

“We have two toned fairways and tees, lovely fescue rough and those huge greens to keep players on their toes while they enjoy their surroundings.”

“Mahony's actually has the better ground and plays very linky in the summer months.”

“We really want to show off the difference in character of both courses, and have them

complement each.

“We've already started a plan to re-do all tee complexes and bunkers, and hopefully over the coming years we'll get this done.”

The courses in Killarney are still a popular destination for Cork golfers.

“The open day competitions every second Wednesday and every Bank Holiday Monday have been hugely popular this year” reported Flannery.

“And at €30 for Mahony's and €40 for Killeen it's great

value for money.

“We also have discounted rates for all GUI and ILGU card holders starting from as little as €45 on Mahony's on weekdays. The open competition on Killeen for the Munster Final Sunday was a great success and we've seen plenty Cork Golfers taking advantage of the Open Days.”

“We've also seen the reciprocal membership deal with Fota and we hope that this can only continue to grow over time.”