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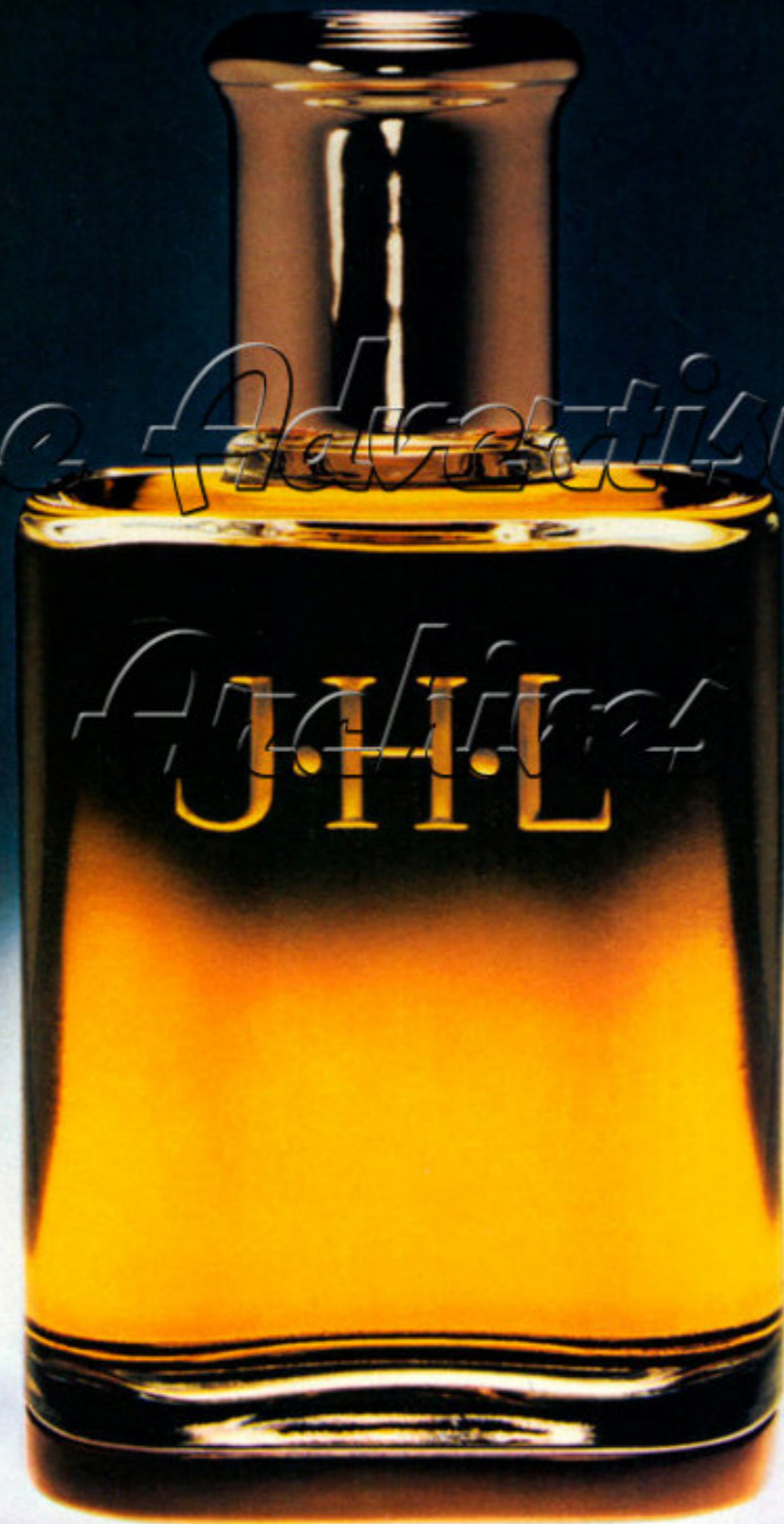
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IDENTITY

HOWARD CLARK

Ryder Cup legend gives his thoughts on the modern game



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● FROM THE EDITOR

Golf is changing fast and in so many ways. So why should we care, and is it good for the game?



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In recent years, golf has been making headlines for all sorts of different reasons, some more controversial than others. Investment, content and audience have been diversifying and expanding at a rapid rate. For a sport almost uniquely attached to its traditions, are these transformations forcing the game to drift away from its magical essence, or is it a balancing act that the sport is currently getting right?

Spring is the season of change and so, for this month's edition, we have decided to take a deep-dive into the key areas of evolution with a three-part feature series called, 'Changing Course'. Alongside our usual content, these features look directly at the emergence of new media - including an exclusive interview with YouTube creators Fore Bros; golf's identity - featuring the thoughts of Ryder Cup legend Howard Clark and the BBC's lead golf reporter Iain Carter; and whether participation is becoming more diverse - with a case study

of women at Knaresborough Golf Club, the views from the PGA Professional and an ex-England Women's golfer.

In my view, one of golf's most intoxicating traits is the thread of history that runs through its fabric. A sport that formed on the coast of Scotland, crafted over hundreds of years. The respect, etiquette and well-mannered ethos defines it as an anomaly when compared to most other sports and hobbies. Changes that have already occurred, or that are yet to come, must be handled with great care if we are to ensure the values and the foundations that define our sport are to remain.

Enjoy the April 2026 edition of GolfMonthly, with a combination of instructional tips, opinion pieces and equipment reviews. With our feature series special in mind, what do you think? Are golf's great traditions at risk, or are we welcoming a new era of modernisation that the game desperately needs?

Next month's edition will include a review of the upcoming Masters tournament, and look ahead to predict who might be in contention for the biggest tournaments of the year. Could Rory McIlroy add to his majors haul?



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CHANGING COURSE: 3-PART MINI FEATURE SERIES



THE YOUTUBE EFFECT

— FEATURING —

FORE BROS

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PATRICK

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YouTube creators, relatable content and a new generation of players are reshaping how golf is discovered. *Fore Bros* Patrick Moloney talks about the impact on the game

EMERGING MEDIA

From clothing to etiquette, golf is a sport uniquely steeped in tradition. A game sculpted on the coast of Scotland hundreds of years ago, in some ways, hasn't changed much. The clubs, the balls, and the courses may have improved, but the essence of the sport has remained the same. In recent years, however, one emerging media platform has shone a new type of spotlight on golf, and that is YouTube.

As the deep claws of winter begin to loosen, golfers of all levels are redescending on driving ranges. Instead of copying a professional swing that they might have seen on TV, amateurs are now honing their craft with instructional videos from their favourite YouTube creators.

The streaming platform is bringing with it new eyes. With a focus on instruction through entertainment, the growing depth of YouTube golf content is driving a new generation of budding amateurs. For 28-year-old Jack Campbell, this avenue was the reason for his late entry into the sport. "Golf was never really a thing for me growing up," Campbell says. "My Dad was very negative towards it. He just saw it as a rich man's sport, and coming from a working-class family, it was never really something that appealed to me."

This attitude of golf being for the elite was once widely held. But YouTube is helping to smash through some of those long-held stereotypes.

"It was only really when I started watching stuff online, and I played one game with my best friend, that's when I first really got hooked."

No one embodies that ethos more than creators Fore Bros.

The channel, made up of four competitive brothers, built their initial success as a channel with short comedy videos, and now focus on showcasing the fun they have as rivals on the golf course. As part of a thriving ecosystem of content producers, Fore Bros are just a small part of a new era for both content and audience in golf.



Jack Campbell playing at his home course, Aldwark Manor Golf Club

MAKING IT RELATABLE

Watching the pinnacle of professional golf is exhilarating. The shot shaping, the calmness under pressure, the moments in history. A major tournament is unparalleled for the genius on display. For most viewers, the skill and nerve are impossible to replicate, but YouTube golf offers something very different. Yes, you've still got the creators like two-time major winner Bryson DeChambeau, but for the most part, it is about amateurs, sharing real-life experiences, both good and bad.

Campbell sums up this contrast perfectly. "With professionals, they're doing things you could only dream of doing, whereas with YouTube golf, it's completely different. It's more relatable," Campbell continues. "You don't see professionals shanking it into the trees. You see that all the time on YouTube."

It's fun and relatable. That's what avid viewers of golf content crave. These channels are not trying to compete with professionals in terms of ability, but in terms of relatability, they have a different kind of appeal. Patrick Moloney is the oldest Fore Bros sibling and runs the channel. He is very aware of their connection to this audience of new golfers. "We're just normal golfers," Moloney states. "That's the whole point. People can watch us and see themselves in it." He says the goal of their content is to entertain, and by

showing the worst shots and blunders, it makes what they produce authentic.

"People message us saying it's exactly like their rounds with their mates and that's what we're trying to capture.

"It's not polished like TV, it's more real."

For Campbell and many others like him starting in the game, seeing mistakes makes the sport less intimidating.

"I enjoy seeing someone going through the same ordeal as I go through when I play. Hitting terrible shots in front of the clubhouse on the first tee or missing a three-foot putt.

"It's what I do on a Sunday with my mates."

YouTube golf has the relatability factor. It is reframing a game once labelled as exclusive and helping to draw new faces into the sport.

IN THE NAME OF ENTERTAINMENT

For creators like Fore Bros, the structure of their content is simple. Entertainment is at the centre of everything they do. From course vlogs to their own majors amongst themselves, all their videos rely on moments of hilarious mishaps or fiery arguments about the rules. Where the professional game and traditional golf coverage focus almost exclusively on skill and performance, YouTube golf allows for more in-depth, personality-driven narratives.



Fore Bros play some of the world's best courses

NEW MEDIA



"PEOPLE MESSAGE US SAYING IT'S EXACTLY LIKE THEIR ROUNDS WITH THEIR MATES AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO CAPTURE"

"You've got to give people a reason to stay," Moloney explains. "Whether that's personality, competition, or just having a laugh. "The audience are watching us for an hour and a half every week, so they really get to know our personalities."

For the viewers, the characters and their journey harness a very different type of engagement. "One of the reasons I watch it is because it's entertaining," Campbell says. "But also, because it's relatable."

These two factors are key to the growing popularity and community of YouTube golf. It reflects a wider movement of engagement with sports more generally. Fans want more access and crave narratives that make them feel more involved in their sport of choice.

This shift in what the audience wants has already had an impact on golf, with a growing number of tour professionals, such as Phil Mickleson and Tommy Fleetwood, building their own YouTube presence to connect with their audiences in a different way.

FLIPPING PERCEPTIONS

For many decades, one of golf's biggest challenges has been the labels that have been attached to it. The sport has long been seen as a game for the elite, exclusively for the richer echelons of society. That can make it quite intimidating to newcomers, something Campbell points to.

"I didn't think golf was a sport for people like me. Honestly, I thought it was a game for old rich men. I probably turned my nose up at it."

YouTube is certainly one of the catalysts for the breakdown of that traditional view of the sport. Creators come in all shapes and sizes. At varying

The brothers recently played in the annual BMW PGA Celebrity Pro-Am at Wentworth Club

levels of ability and from very different backgrounds. They carry a more diverse appeal. "There are loads of creators now," Campbell says. "All with slightly different styles." Some tap into instruction, while others lean towards entertainment. The result is a platform that caters to a broad spectrum of viewers, from beginners looking for advice, to regular players searching for content that reflects their own level of ability.

This diversity is crucial. It helps the sport shake off the labels that have long plagued its popularity. The influx of creators manifests a kaleidoscopic view of a game that was once seen through a very binary lens.

WATCH THEN PLAY

YouTube golf isn't just about bringing new eyes to the sport. The platform is grabbing a new, growing audience and encouraging them to go out and play.

Particularly for younger viewers, who may not have engaged with golf through traditional means, content creators play a huge role in strengthening the future of the game. Campbell suggests YouTube was part of the reason he first ventured onto the fairways.

"I had a couple of mates who played already, but I had always turned them down when they asked if I wanted to join in. "When I started to watch channels like Fore Bros and Rick Shiels, I saw that you didn't have to be amazing to give it a go."

Fore Bros are more than aware of that impact. With nearly 300,000 subscribers to their channel, the number of views they get for each video continues to grow.

"If people watch our videos and then go and play, that's the biggest win for us," Moloney says.

Younger audiences are accustomed to navigating online platforms to supplement their

interests and golf is no different. Creators are plugging that gap in traditional content and reaping the rewards.

COMPLEMENTING THE PROFESSIONALS

One thing is important to note: it's never going to replace the professional game or traditional broadcasting of events. The professional tour events, particularly the majors, stand alone as the very pinnacle of the sport. The dedication and skill of the best players from around the world, competing for the biggest prizes, remains the lifeblood of golf viewing. YouTube golf will



The brothers began their YouTube journey by creating short comedy sketches

GROWTH OF THE SPACE

The wealth of golf channels on YouTube is vast. Rather than a space where rival channels are competing to grab new subscribers or views, the community of creators seem more than happy to split and share attention.

"The space has grown massively," Moloney explains. "There are so many creators now, all doing slightly different things.

"There's a lot more room for golf creators, particularly in the UK. It has exploded in America but personally I think it's still in its early stages here." The growth of YouTube golf is part of a wider move away from traditional broadcasting platforms.

According to the latest Ofcom figures, YouTube has overtaken the BBC for monthly viewers to become the most-watched platform in the UK.

The streaming platform is clearly a thriving space, especially for younger audiences. Campbell thinks that age plays a part in why YouTube golf has seen such a meteoric rise.

"For people my age, it's what you've grown up on. It's a really good platform for sport because it can cater to everyone. "You would think that watching one golf channel would be enough, but actually, I enjoy

watching a lot of different creators because they all offer something different."

Campbell also watches Fore Bros and says he particularly enjoys it when tempers flare. "Some of the funniest moments are when you can tell one of them really doesn't want to lose, so they start trying to get into the head of the one that's winning. That's exactly what I do with my friends when we play."

For Fore Bros and all the other major golf influencers, their audience may not have taken to the game through traditional routes, but they are now firmly entrenched in the fabric of the sport.

THE YOUTUBE EFFECT

This new phenomenon of creator content and YouTube golf is not about replacing the more traditional broadcasting of the game.

Creators won't ever overshadow the talents and reputations of the world's best players. This is about a natural evolution. A game heavily rooted in history and tradition, branching off into a more modern era of media.

To enjoy the fruits of the future, any sport must be able to indulge new audiences and the upcoming generations of the game. Having a wider reach and appeal can only bolster golf's future, but the creators still value the traditions of the sport.

It is not about moving away from the past, but about opening a new pathway for people to engage with the game they love. "We just want to keep pushing the boundaries," Moloney says to finish. "We want to explore new ways to connect with and grow our audience."

For a new audience, the first steps into the game are no longer fraught with fear about not fitting a stereotype.

As a wave of aspiring golfers flocks to their local courses, the sport can be grateful for the growing success of YouTube golf.

"I ENJOY SEEING SOMEONE GOING THROUGH THE SAME ORDEAL AS I GO THROUGH WHEN I PLAY. HITTING TERRIBLE SHOTS INFRONT OF THE CLUBHOUSE ON THE FIRST TEE OR MISSING A THREE-FOOT PUTT"



Patrick Maloney runs the Fore Bros channel

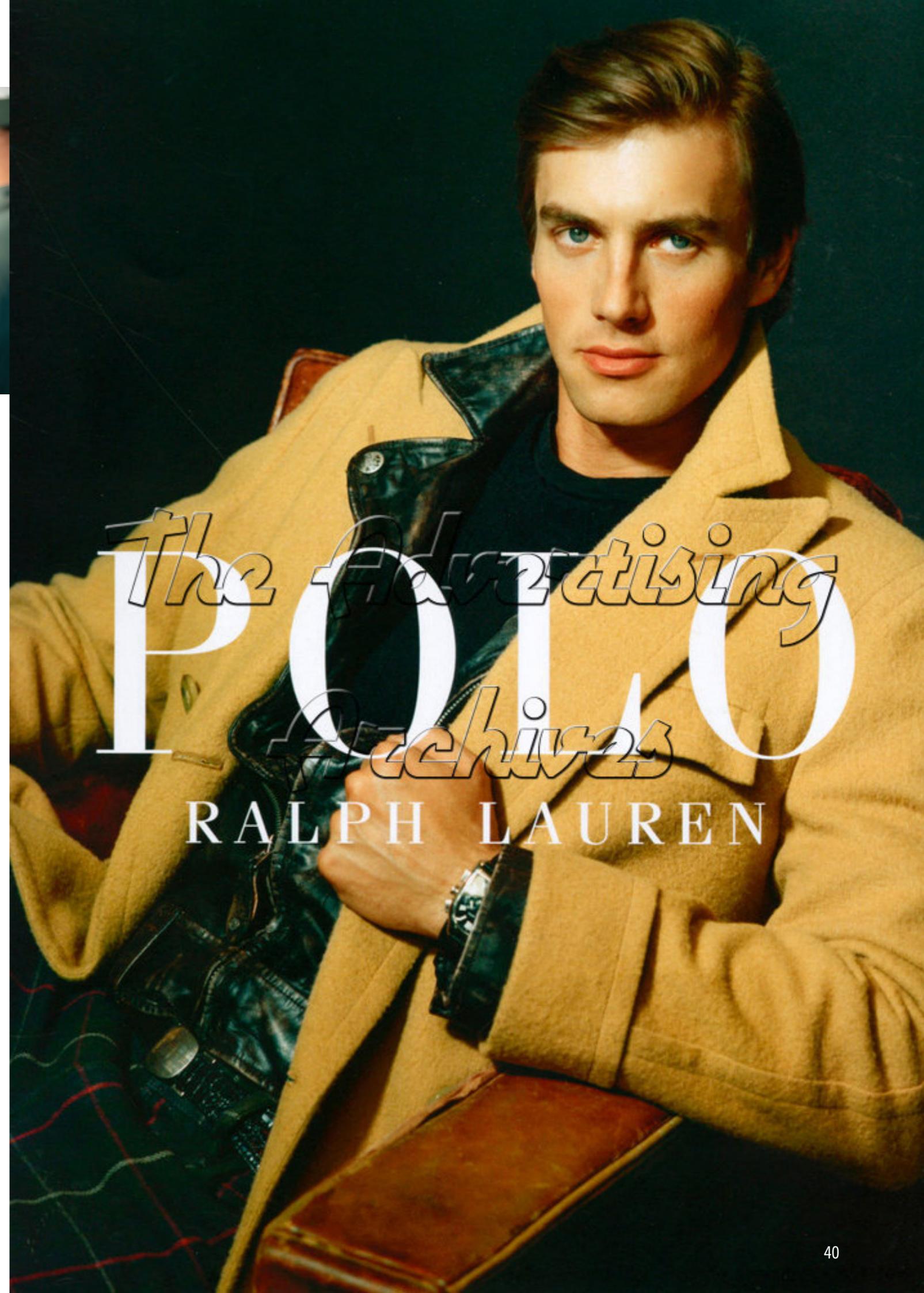
never compete with that. "With professional golf, you don't really watch it and think, 'I can do that,'" Campbell adds.

YouTube offers a different product.

"It's more what you can actually expect to experience with your friends."

That is a very important distinction and comfort for those of a more traditional view. YouTube is supplementary to what already exists, not a competing force.

Golf is a particularly hard sport, with so many moving parts to a swing. When you watch the professionals, the difficulty can easily be forgotten. Creators are often just regular golfers, and showing their struggles helps to make a very difficult sport feel far more attainable.



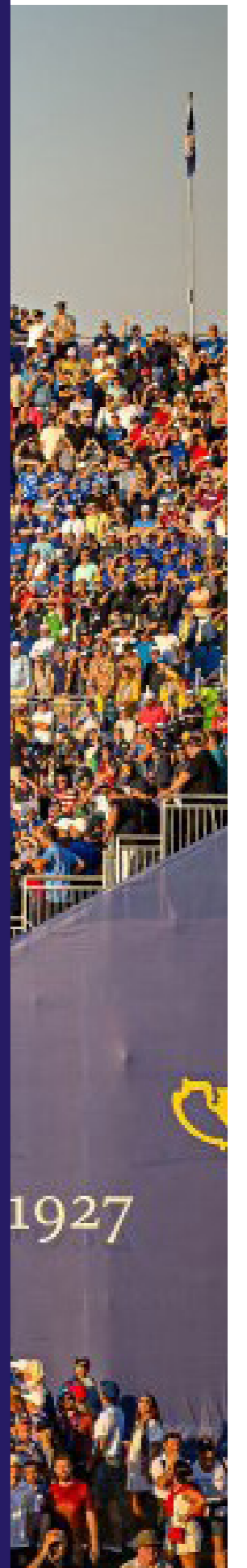
CHANGING COURSE: 3-PART
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GOLF'S IDENTITY DILEMMA

From Ryder Cup chaos, to the creation of LIV Golf and the Tiger Woods revolution, golf is evolving fast, but can it retain the values that make it unique?

Exclusive interviews with a Ryder Cup winner and the voice of the BBC's golf coverage



“USA,”

USA, USA.” The chant is as synonymous with the Ryder Cup as the yellow flags at Augusta National. At Bethpage Black last year, however, that familiar echo took on a much sharper, vitriolic tone.

Players were subjected to torrents of abuse, and their families became walking targets. At times, a sport long associated with etiquette and restraint was more like the tribal intensity expected at a football derby. For most it was shocking, but for some it was inevitable. So was the 45th Ryder Cup an anomaly, or a sign of something deeper within the modern game?

Howard Clark, who represented Europe six times between 1977 and 1995, has experienced the competition firsthand across different eras. His memories of the event paint a stark contrast to what transpired in New York. “There was respect for players

Howard Clark sits with his Ryder Cup trophies and shares his views on the modern game



IDENTITY

on both sides when I played,” Clark recalls. “You’d get the shouts, but both sets of fans seemed to respect the players when they were hitting shots. Watching it now, it seems to have got a lot worse.”

Clark believes the origins of that atmospheric shift stretch back more than three decades. “It set a bad, bad tone,” he says of the 1991 contest at Kiawah Island, often labelled the ‘War on the Shore.’ “It has just progressed from there.”

Iain Carter has led the BBC’s golf coverage for over 20 years. He has witnessed the same trend but suggests that change is part of a much broader societal shift.

“I think there’s been a rise in anti-social behaviour across the board, and golf is not immune to it,” he explains. “Particularly after COVID, I think we have seen a worsening of behaviour. I think people have less inhibitions now, and that is made worse by alcohol and betting at these live events.”

He points to recent tournaments as evidence that the Ryder Cup was not an isolated case. “My mind goes back to the Irish Open last year, when Rory McIlroy was in a playoff with Joakim Lagergren and people were shouting for his ball to go in the water. When it did, you heard the biggest roar. So, what happened in New York wasn’t a surprise. It was horrible, but as always, it was a minority.”

Golf has always prided itself on its values of respect, integrity, and self-regulation. As the sport grows and reaches new audiences, the tension between tradition and modern culture is becoming harder to balance.

The Ryder Cup is still the crown jewel of competitive rivalry, but after last year’s controversies, it now resides at the very centre of that debate.

THE TIGER EFFECT

If the modern game feels different, much of that transformation can be traced back to one man. “Tiger Woods suddenly became arguably the most famous sportsman in the world, and he was playing golf,” Carter says.

His rise at the turn of the century not only elevated the sport, it revolutionised



Tiger Woods won his most recent major at the 2019 Masters

every aspect of the game. Woods brought a level of global attention that golf had never enjoyed, transcending its traditional image and resculpting its appeal. Carter believes his influence extended even as far as the structures of the sport. “The fact golf even bid for the Olympics was off the back of Woods,” he says, referencing the sport’s return at Rio 2016 after more than a century in the dark.

His most obvious impact was on how the game was played. “Before Tiger, golfers weren’t really seen as athletes in the same way,” Clark explains. “He brought fitness, power and a completely different level of professionalism.”

That shift has proven to be irreversible. Where golf was once defined by finesse, today’s game remains the endless pursuit of power. Professionals focus on swing speed and gym work far more now than in any generation before. That is one of the legacies left by Woods. “The emphasis on distance now, that really comes from Tiger,” Clark adds. “Players saw what he could do and realised that was the future. They are hitting wedges and nine irons into greens that I

was taking four or five irons for. In that sense, it is almost unrecognisable from the game I played.”

Change is visible across every level of the sport. Courses have had to lengthen to retain the challenge. Equipment has developed to support rapidly increasing swing speeds and distances. Coaching has become increasingly data-led, as both professionals and amateurs seek any means to hit

Iain Carter has been part of the BBC’s Golf coverage for over 20 years



the ball further. In many ways, Woods took the game golf on his back and carried it through to the modern era.

His physical superiority was not his only gift to the game. The legacy of Woods was also to expand the game’s appeal. “He was the best golfer by far, and he was black,” Clark says. “There hadn’t been too many black players at that level, and I think he opened the game up to

a whole new audience.”

Woods’ presence challenged age-old perceptions about who golf was supposed to be for. He helped build the foundations for golf to pursue a much wider audience. Growing its diversity is still a challenge that faces the sport today, but he was a pioneer and one of

IDENTITY

LIV Golf was formed in 2021 with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) financing the new tour



“THEY ARE MANAGING TO TAKE SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN GOLF TO PLACES THAT DON'T TRADITIONALLY GET THE BIGGEST NAMES”

in the professional game, opening itself to new audiences and bringing with it major investment. The established order might not like it, but it has had to adapt. It's now up to them to decide how long the current fragmentation exists and whether those divisions can finally be erased.

THE IDENTITY QUESTION

Despite all the structural controversies of recent years, golf's identity is still rooted in something far more distinctive and enduring. "There's a family dynamic in golf that you don't really get in other sports," Carter reflects. "One of my most poignant rounds was of my life was playing with my dad, my wife and my son. You couldn't do that in most sports but in golf, you can."

It is a magic ingredient of the game. Golf's handicap system allows for players of all ages and abilities to compete and experience the game together. "I think it's an amazing calling card for the sport," Carter adds. "But it doesn't make enough of it."

That sense of identity extends beyond participation and into its values. There remains an expectation that players will call penalties on themselves, follow codes of etiquette, and respect their opponents and the course. "If you had the same attitude to golf as you have in football where they try to get away with everything, it just wouldn't work," Carter says. "Golf's ethos of fair play makes it special. Without that, the game is nothing."

Clark agrees with that sentiment, even though he acknowledges certain changes are inevitable. "It's always going to be 18 holes," he says. "Some traditions like dress codes might go, but that's no bad thing."

This is the balance modern golf must strike. Evolution is

inevitable, but it cannot lose sight of what makes it special.

A BROADER GAME

Beyond the professional tours, the sport is transforming in ways that would have seemed hard to even imagine in decades gone by.

Driving ranges have evolved into social hotspots. Simulators have made the game accessible all year-round. Venues like Topgolf have introduced golf to new audiences who may never have stepped foot on a traditional course otherwise.

At the same time, digital platforms are reshaping how people engage with the sport. "Young people are taking up the game without being nudged there by their parents," Carter says.

"More are coming in through YouTube, learning the game from influencers. They've acted as a conduit between recreational golf and the professional game."

These new technologies at the centre of this renaissance highlight how the game is adapting to stay relevant. A recent study carried out by England Golf found that participation is growing year on year. The most dramatic rise was in junior membership, which increased by 34% from the previous year. Golf's rebranding is working. Yet accessibility remains a challenge. "It's still a wealthy person's game," Clark admits. "The poorer in society cannot afford to play, and finding a good course that isn't expensive is very difficult." That rift between growth and

accessibility poses a question for golf's modern identity. The sport may be reaching more people than ever before, but the pathway to equal opportunity for all has yet to be achieved.

A GAME AT A CROSSROADS

Golf is evolving at pace. Technology is redefining performance, investment is reshaping its hierarchy, and new audiences are changing its culture. And yet, at its core, the game remains anchored in values that have endured for centuries.

"The game is in good shape," Carter concludes. "It's pretty healthy, but it has to be careful not to become irrelevant to normal fans because of the amount of money involved."

Growth alone is not enough. The sport must remain connected to its traditions whilst embracing the changes to come.

"It needs to harness the energy from YouTubers, from new audiences, from everything that's come in since COVID," Carter says. "And it needs to keep finding ways to make itself accessible."

The challenge now lies in managing that change, balancing innovation with tradition, and embracing new audiences without losing its unique fundamentals.

HOWARD CLARK'S CAREER IN NUMBERS:

EUROPEAN TOUR WINS: 11

RYDER CUP APPEARANCES: 6

RYDER CUP WINS: 3

PORTUGUESE OPEN: 1978

WORLD CUP OF GOLF: 1985

SPANISH OPEN: 1987

ENGLISH OPEN: 1988

MAJOR APPEARANCES: 27

BEST MAJOR FINISH: T-8th

ORDER OF MERIT TOP TEN: 4

the single biggest catalysts for change.

Thanks in a large part to Tiger Woods, the game has become more powerful and more athletic. Some suggest that this has contributed to the game drifting away from its traditional roots, but there is no doubt, the Woods period of domination changed the game of golf forever.

MONEY TALKS

If Woods reshaped golf's identity, the headline-grabbing LIV Golf tour has reshaped its

structure. Launched in 2021 and backed by Saudi investment, the breakaway tour disrupted the established order of professional golf in an unprecedented way. The game's hierarchy became fragmented as some players defected and others denounced. Institutions that had remained unchallenged throughout their existence were now facing an existential threat, and the sport itself was scattered and divided. "Players went there for the

money and there's no getting away from that," Carter says. "If they weren't being paid those sums, they would never have gone."

That view reflects the sentiment at the time and the scale of the financial incentive. Prize funds skyrocketed, as professionals were lured away from the more established tours. For many of the players, they saw an opportunity to secure their future and that of many generations to follow.

"There was a lot of disquiet about where the money was coming from," Carter adds. "It was seen as part of a sportswashing process."

The morality was a question that cast a shadow over the tour's early events, raising ethical questions that became more political than sport related.

Despite the sizeable backlash, it is unquestionable that the tour has had far reaching rewards for the game.

"It has brought huge investment into the sport," Carter explains. "It's forced the PGA Tour to increase prize money."

Since its controversial inception, LIV Golf has brought with it new audiences from places that had yet to experience live professional events.

"They're taking the biggest names to places that traditionally wouldn't get them," Carter says. "They've had huge success in places like Australia and South Africa, and they are managing to take some of the biggest names in golf to places that don't usually get them."

For Clark, the motivation for players to join the new tour is understandable.

"The financial side of it was obviously a huge factor," he says. "It's difficult for players to turn down that level of money."

His perspective reflects an often overlooked fact. Professional golfers are their own business. They have a short career and are all seeking to maximise their earnings.

Whatever their motivations, enough players decided to join LIV to make it a viable product, and it now seems that it is here to stay. "The game has had to adapt to it, whether people like it or not," Clark adds.

Questions around sustainability, competitive balance and long-term structure remain unresolved. The proposed merger between the major tours has yet to be finalised, and the future of the professional game remains unclear.

In many ways, LIV has accelerated a necessary transformation



Clark won 11 professional tournaments including the 1985 World Cup individual title

A game for all...

Golf is evolving fast. But has a game long defined as exclusive, finally found a path to equality?

Interviews with the professional and members at Knaresborough Golf Club alongside the thoughts of BBC lead golf commentator Iain Carter



In many ways, golf is prospering. With the rapid expansion of content, the emergence of new formats of the game, and the increased investment in the professional game, the sport is successfully drawing interest from a more diverse audience. Women have been on the periphery in golf despite moves towards gender equality. Augusta National, home of the Masters, only accepted its first female member in 2012. So, have these

changes in the sport finally resulted in a game for all or is golf still playing catch-up to modern life?

Across England, participation has surged in recent years, with the post-COVID-19 boom allowing the game to consolidate a greater, more diverse audience. The growing presence of the professional women's game and the emergence of new digital content have helped to ensure that this growth has not been confined to the sport's traditional base. Women and girls are increasingly visible within the game, both on and off the course.

According to the R&A, the number of female full-course users in the UK increased from 15% of all golfers in 2019 to 20% in 2022, representing roughly 1.6 million new players. All the figures on female engagement in golf appear to suggest a healthy and continuous rise in popularity and a move towards equality between the genders.

On paper, golf appears to be evolving into a more inclusive, accessible sport for all, but it's the experiences of women on the course that can truly say whether golf has opened its doors. While more people are picking up clubs for the first time, do fairways and greens finally feel like home to everyone?



Turn over for
the full feature

A WELCOME SHIFT

For newcomers, the first time stepping onto a course often creates a feeling of nervousness and fear. Aayesha Kilmartin, 28, had not expected to feel as welcome as she did when she stepped onto the tee for the first time. "My experiences have been that it is quite inclusive. I



Aayesha Kilmartin has found golf welcoming

do see a lot of women and children on the golf course now, which I really didn't expect."

Courses throughout the country are no longer dominated by the same faces; the landscape is changing. Diversity is in a different place than it was in decades gone by. Yet the growth and expansion don't come without their challenges.

"When I go to the driving range, I feel like everybody's looking at me. It's probably more men that are there."

That feeling of being an outsider is hard to shake. Feeling uncomfortable and out of place is difficult to navigate, even in a place that seems on the surface, more welcoming than ever.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

For much of its history, golf

has been an exclusive entity. Cost, attitude and access narrowed entry into the game to a select group.

Maria Grayson, now in her 60s, has seen a process of evolution unfold over several decades.

"It used to be so much worse. The men didn't like women playing on their courses."

Her view reflects a once hostile arena, particularly for women. Golf clubs used to be places of severe exclusivity, where inclusion was sometimes not even a consideration.

"They are far more welcoming now. Men have actually started mixing with ladies to play in competitions."

That progress is great news for the health of golf, and a clear sign that some of the barriers to entry have been removed.

Despite all the positive steps that golf has taken towards equality, an attitude shift may take a little while longer.

CHALLENGING NORMS

For younger players especially, outdated attitudes can be a real challenge to overcome. Rachel Seal, 22, represented England and now plays college golf in America, but her relationship with the sport has not been without its challenges.

"I was judged the most in school from the stereotype of golf being an old man's sport."

That adage, a simplistic view of what a golfer should look like, continues to dominate how the sport is viewed from the outside. Even within golf itself, acceptance was not always a given.

"No one to start with would want to play with me. I was looked down at and sometimes judged just for what I was wearing."

Seal's experiences are a reminder that access is not the full story of inclusion. It is

just as crucial to be accepted. Those growing demographics in the game must now feel part of the fabric of golf, as equals on the course. Although she has seen the difficulties of being accepted, Seal was quick to point out that progress has been made.

"Times are extremely different and way more modern now. I think that golf is far more welcoming to girls now than when I first started." Seal's account of her experiences within the sport highlight that while the chasm is narrowing, there may still be a gap between the sport's transformation and equality for all.

GROWTH IN FEMALE GOLFERS

The growth of women's participation in golf is in no doubt, the figures and trends paint a clear picture of a flourishing sport. But where are the areas of highest growth? In some areas, the split between male and female participation is almost equal. The R&A statistics show that women make up 43% of off-course users (driving ranges, simulator venues, and social formats), signifying a much higher interest in the sport than in the years prior to the pandemic.

On traditional golf courses however, participation is not as close. This comparison is important.

It suggests that while golf is successfully attracting new audiences, particularly women, it is not always able to integrate them into its most fundamental arenas. The journey from casual engagement to club membership, from the freedom of driving ranges to the pressures of the fairways, is not necessarily guaranteed.

THE MONEY BARRIER

Part of the challenge is still a result of the cost. The expense has long been an issue for golf,

and while many clubs are working to address this through flexible packages and

Maria Grayson has seen a change in attitude towards female golfers



Gareth Murray is the PGA professional at Knaresborough Golf Club



offers, it remains an obstacle for those looking to find their place within the sport.

Gareth Murray, a PGA professional at Knaresborough Golf Club, outlines how clubs are trying to adapt to encourage a more diverse culture of membership. "We try to offer something for every type of golfer. We do an introductory membership which is quite a bit cheaper just to see if it's what you want."

Lowering the cost is an important step. It is only a small part of the answer. "There was real segregation in golf clubs previously," Murray explains. "Men and women had different days, different competitions, and in some cases, there were even segregated clubhouses. Ladies had small locker rooms and sometimes a separate dining room."

The shadows of segregation and inequality between the genders are shortening. Although far rarer now, there are still a few male-only golf

clubs in the UK. For golf to be seen in a new way by observers, it must continue its journey to making both genders equal players.

CONSTRAINTS OF MODERN LIFE

Aside from the cost, time is another answer as to why participation on the course is growing at a slower rate for women.

A traditional round of golf, 18 holes and the best part of four hours, does not always lend itself to a modern-day working lifestyle.

"I'm working full time, so it's quite difficult to dedicate myself to golf," Grayson says. "Sometimes all I can do is an hour of practice, but I try to make time to play every week, I squeeze it in around work whenever I can."

Golf has begun to evolve to cater for that reality. Shorter formats, nine-hole rounds and more informal alternatives are becoming commonplace.

The emergence of the

shorter forms of the game is not just a matter of convenience; they are a very powerful way to improve accessibility to everyone.

CULTURE AND ATTITUDE

With a new blend of generations, genders and backgrounds descending on the golf courses, attitudes seem to be progressing at a slower rate.



Rachel Seal grew up as a member of Knaresborough Golf Club

"LADIES IS AN OUTDATED TERM. YOU DON'T SEE THAT LABEL ANYWHERE OTHER THAN ON A TOILET DOOR OR IN A GOLF CLUB"

Rachel Seal represented England between 2015 and 2019, and played her golf at Odessa College in Texas America



"There's maybe still an element of poor tolerance levels on a golf course," Murray explains. "In terms of what they deem is a slower player. That's probably the only sticking point because you do still have people who want to fly through their round on a golf course. I think that's more of an individual's attitude rather than a wider view, but I do think women who experience that can be put off."

Murray believes that the attitudes of the few could be enough to discourage women who are new to the sport from continuing to take part.

"If you've got somebody constantly chasing you and hitting the ball up to you and then having a go at you because you're not letting them through, it can make you feel unwelcome. "I think it's better now, but there might still be elements of that going on today."

Golf is a sport built on etiquette, but those unwritten rules on things like speed of play can prove a challenge to navigate, especially for a sport trying to appeal to all levels.

IMPORTANCE OF RELATABILITY

The YouTube effect is having a real impact for women looking to golf for the first time.

New content creators have emerged, many catering to younger audiences. Female content creators in golf, such as Lucy Robson and Mia Baker, are becoming more prominent within the space.

Robson is one of the most prominent golf channels on YouTube. Her channel is recognisable for making golf feel more accessible to new female golfers, especially with her technique tips and fashion-led content. Baker's channel also focuses on welcoming young females to golf, documenting her journey from beginner to full-time golf content creator.

"There is a lot more women posting on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube," Kilmartin says. "It's definitely making golf feel more tailored to women now, not just for men anymore."

This evolution is key. Relatable content can drive equality. The equality represented by digital channels make the sport feel more inclusive. Thanks in part to these new influencers, golf is now at least more visual to young female audiences who might never have engaged with the sport previously.

That digital growth highlights broader changes explored earlier in this series and signifies a real shift in the image and relevance of the sport to emerging audiences.

A GAME IN TRANSITION

For the BBC's Iain Carter, the changes afoot reflect a sport that is certainly evolving, yet to reach its full transformation.

"I think it's moved, and I think it's still got a long way to go."

Carter points out the small areas that need tweaking within the game.

"Golf clubs changing their lady's section to women's section," he says. "Ladies is an outdated term. You don't see that label anywhere other than on a toilet door or in golf clubs."

He is clear that these details could be enough to deter young females from the game.

"When people say, 'Why won't young women take up golf?' Well, because they drive into a golf club car park, and they see signage, that instantly takes them into an era that they're not familiar with. They weren't even born when people spoke in those terms."

Small details matter in golf, and the language, the environment, and the atmosphere are no different. At the same time, Carter is clear that progress is being made.

"I think it has moved in the right direction. It's a lot less stuffy than it was, a lot less elitist."

FROM GROWTH TO BELONGING

Across this series, one theme has remained constant: golf is attracting new audiences. From YouTube to driving ranges and fresh formats, the sport is reaching a more diverse and ever-expanding fanbase.

Attracting new players seems to be working, but do they feel like they belong?

"It's a good way to meet people," Kilmartin says. That sense of community is one of golf's greatest strengths.

"Everyone that I have met through golf has been so encouraging and welcoming to me. You can play with anyone. It doesn't matter how good you are. That's probably my favourite thing about golf."

Both the statistics and stories show an expanding sport. Yet while the doors to golf are gradually opening, the sport must continue to find a space for newcomers to integrate.

CHANGING COURSE

Golf has to be for everyone. Making that a reality requires more than just an improvement in statistics. It's an attitude. A feeling that the fairways are there for all to enjoy.

The future of golf will not be secured by how many people try the game, but through how many feel they truly belong.




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