

St Etienne Symposium Report

The French “Pitch and Putt Open” was an opportunity to organize a symposium on the theme: “Collaboration Strategies between Golf and Pitch and Putt”. Twenty or so participants from ten countries took part, initially by mail, then by round tables during the Open, and by videoconference on Sunday morning.

Three themes were addressed:

1. Building a small golf facility

The discussions were led by Scott Macpherson, an experienced and respected golf course architect, who outlined the themes of a guide that he is preparing with and for The R&A, a governing body in the world of golf. Once validated, the guide will be available worldwide. The R&A's belief is that golf remains golf in all its forms and that Pitch and Putt, for example, could become an important vector in development. Exchanges with interested parties in several countries, often with very different needs and views, such as the USA and Albania, were revealing and stimulating. It was stressed that this guide will be helpful in conceiving a project, but that prospective builders will then need to consult local experts, administrators, architects, lawyers, etc., before progressing through to construction.

Phil Anderton, Chief Development Officer at The R&A, stated recently:

*“Golf’s popularity has surged in recent years, with a significant increase in the number of people playing the sport in both traditional on-course and alternative formats. “It is important that current and prospective golfers continue to be engaged in golf through these different formats, **such as pitch and putt**, which are so vital to the growth of the sport. “Pitch and putt is an excellent short-form activity which is fun, affordable, time friendly and a great way to encourage newcomers into golf of all ages and abilities. We hope this area of the sport continues to thrive.”*

From WHS:

The overall length requirements for Course Rating in the WHS will be significantly reduced. A set of tees on an 18-hole course may be as short as 1,500 yards [1,370 metres] to be eligible for a Course Rating and Slope Rating, and a set of tees on a 9-hole course may be as short as 750 yards [685 metres]. This change is intended to expand the WHS to thousands of shorter length courses, including par-3 courses, and enable more golfers to obtain and use a Handicap Index. <https://www.randa.org/en/>

Golf is taking a growing interest in short course versions; IPPA must seize this opportunity to make the sport of “International Pitch & Putt” better known and respected. An important factor will be the collecting of data on current activity in this sector, in order to make the best decisions for further development.

2. Golf/P&P Relations

SWOT analyses were discussed and met with almost unanimous agreement:

Strengths: golf - an established, global, well-structured sport; wide fan-base; brand name; good finances, especially in the professional sector. P&P – more affordable; easier and faster; smaller footprint, less land and maintenance; ideal socially.

Weaknesses: golf – expensive; time-consuming; intimidating; environmental impact P&P – less prestigious & competitive; lower revenue; fewer jobs; negative or non-existent brand image

Opportunities: golf – growing interest, LIV, Olympics, etc.; peaceful, outdoor activity; attractive to women. P&P – general sport tendency towards shorter, faster versions; land rehabilitation and ‘greening’ close to urban areas; appeal to all ages and genders; friendly, outdoor socializing.

Threats: competition from other sports; rising land & building costs; vandalism; availability of volunteers.

Joint opportunities:

So why, and how can the two versions of the same sport best work together, for their common good. P&P needs golf more than golf needs P&P, and P&P has developed very unevenly in golf countries; by associating with golf, P&P will gain in legitimacy and prestige. From a golf point of view, given the natural synergy of same balls, clubs, greens, holes, etc., P&P can bring more money, more interest, and more players to golf. It can be seen as a quick-play option for busy lifestyles; an excellent introduction to the long game; a means for expanding its customer base.

Failure to collaborate could lead to disruption, as in other sports such as surfing, darts, and rugby.

FFGolf representatives were able to exchange views with local and national P&P officials on the possibilities of improving our relations. We will request a working meeting with FFGolf on this theme and invite corporate golf, which is also interested in P&P. We should work together to promote and develop the short game version, both as a gateway to the big game and as a fine competitive sport. The vertical structure of golf – player/club/regional body/national body/international organisations – implies that P&P bodies need to work at both ends of the scale.

One contributor summed it all up with “Find a sexier name; move under the golf umbrella and get on with it!”

3. IPPA and international development

The president of the international federation led the discussions, specifying that Saint Etienne was a first step in a major overhaul that will take place at our next meeting in September during the world championship in Milan. In the meantime, we will work on projects to encourage the practice of the sport, while collecting as much data as possible on its current practice; data that is totally lacking now. Thus, we will be better equipped to enter world sports organizations, such as Sport Accord, where our admission is already well on the way.

In May, we are launching the experimental WIPP project which, if successful, will provide important data on how P&P is developing throughout the world. We will encourage golf federations to help us communicate with their clubs to ensure a rapid snowball effect to provide a large and significant base. Watch this space.

Conclusion

The weekend in St Etienne has shown that there is a real and growing interest in the development of P&P and this symposium will play a role in the movement. We thank the organizers, and especially Patrick GIRAUD, who made great efforts for its success. We hope to come back in the not-too-distant future to celebrate the implementation of some of the things we have envisaged here.

Participants

In-person

Carlo FARIOLI	President IPPA
Scott MACPHERSON	Architect ; Director SMGD
Dominique TARERIAT	President Comité Haute-Loire, FFGolf
Jean-Luc PANNETIER	President F.P.P.
Patrick GIRAUD	Vice-president F.P.P. & organizer of the event
John HUDSON	Former president EPPA and IPPA

Alan HANLON Prominent member PPUI Ireland

Damien DUCEPT Representing CFPP

Thierry GENDREAU Representing CFPP

Virtual participation

Jonathan CALHOUN PitchPutt USA

Karen HOVHANNISYAN Armenia

Jesus BARRERA RFEG Spain

Stella COPPI FIG Italy

Contributors

Phil SHAW-DENNIS Waverley P&P, Australia

Tunisia, Albania, and Zambia have been involved and several others who prefer to remain anonymous