



News - January 2021



About Blind Golf Scotland

BGS (the Scottish Blind Golf Society) is a registered charity whose purpose is to provide access to training, support and competitions to **registered blind** and **visually impaired** people across Scotland. Recognised as a governing body by The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews we offer access to local, national and international competitions. We are an associate member country of the International Blind Golf Association (IBGA) which oversees international golf competitions for blind golfers. BGS members have access to discounted green fees, the chance to travel and meet new people.

We welcome people from all backgrounds, genders and age groups from around Scotland whether you have played golf before or not. Why not browse through our website?

www.scottishblindgolf.com



Get in Touch

To discuss a group taster session, please contact the Development Officer: developmentofficer@scottishblindgolf.com

News

See our news section to read about our activities and learn about some of our members' extraordinary achievements, such as a hole-in-one!

Videos

Check out some of our videos showing blind golfers in action.

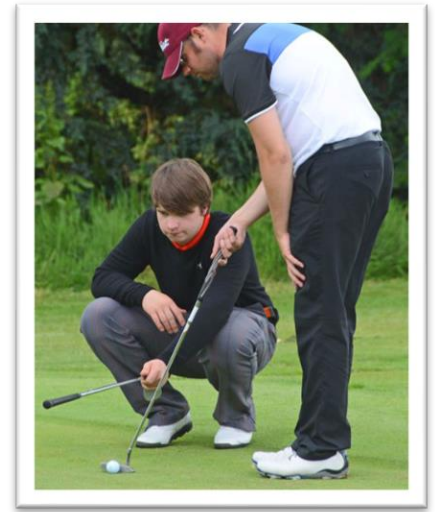
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter



Social and Health Benefits of Golf

Golf is great exercise, there's plenty of fresh air and the social benefits are massive. Most of our members have formed great friendships through golf, and there are matches as well as social events to keep your calendar full!

You can ask friends and family members to be your sighted guides, and we'll help you with the training so that you and your guides know how to line you up and spot the ball for you. Even the guides have found not only the health benefits of golf, but the social benefits too. Partners often accompany our golfers to events, at home and away, there's loads of fun to be had and the gang is always up for a good laugh.



Blind Golfer & Guide

2021 Events, Taster Sessions & Lockdown

Normally, we would be telling you about all our events and taster sessions you could attend this year. However, just as our 2020 events have been postponed until after lockdowns, our 2021 events are also on hold. Please check our website for updates.

Updates

Nonetheless, we are still here and working hard to welcome you as soon as it is safe to do so. Why not get in touch with us to find out about BGS members living in your area, guides who would be more than happy to join you for a round of golf and help you find the ball, as well as just taking that first step towards a potential new hobby and fulfilling social life.

Tier 4 Guidelines

Thankfully, golf is allowed in Tier 4, with a maximum of two people from two different households.

Support System

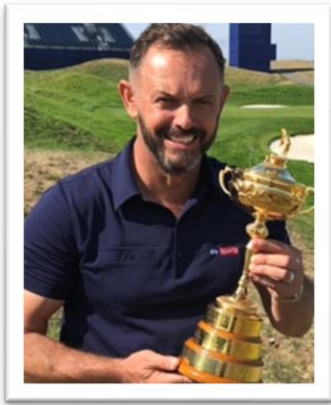
There is also a support system attached to blind golf. You will meet up with others coping with sight loss, they're open to sharing their experiences, offer advice and it can make sight loss less isolating. Read about some of our members' experiences in this newsletter, under 'Meet some of our members'.

Never Golfed Before?

Don't worry if you've never tried golf before as we have everything you need until you decide whether or not it's your 'cup of tee'. Many golf clubs offer discounted green fees and thanks to generous patrons there is help with the cost of attending tournaments should you wish to compete. You have nothing to lose by just getting in touch first. The first year's membership is free, thereafter it's £30 per year.

Come on, give golf a go!

Meet our Patrons – We are proud to count these extraordinary people among our patrons:



Andrew Coltart

Andrew, a world-renowned PGA Pro, was a Ryder Cup player in the infamous Battle of Brookline 1999, where he played Tiger Woods on that fateful Sunday. He was also a member of Scotland's Dunhill Cup winning team in 1995 and won the Australian PGA Championship for the second time on his way to the Australasian Order of Merit in 1997/98. The 1994 Scottish and Australian PGA Champion has won twice on the European Tour, the 1998 Qatar Masters and the 2001 Great North Open.

He represented Scotland in five World Cups and coached the winning European Palmer Cup team in 2014. Today, Andrew works with SKY Sports as an on-course commentator and analyst, and as Co-Founder and Playing Director at Tour Pro Experience Golf Schools (TPEGS).

George McCluskey

George is a celebrated former footballer, well-known for his career with Celtic, Leeds United, Hibernian, Hamilton Academical, Kilmarnock and Clyde. He also represented Scotland up to the under-21 level. In the 1980 Scottish Cup Final, he scored the winning goal and won three Scottish League titles between 1978 and 1982.



In later years, he played for Kilmarnock helping the team reach the First Division where they remain still. George is now a coach at Celtic's Youth Academy and can often be found out on the golf course with his son, BGS champ Barry McCluskey.



Scott Wilson

Scott hardly needs an introduction. His voice is one of the most well-known around the country. Presenting on radio since 1988, Scott has done countless voiceovers and is the stadium announcer for Heart of Midlothian FC. Scott is a true sports fan who has also worked with Edinburgh Capitals Ice Hockey, Edinburgh Monarchs Speedway, The Scottish Claymores American Football team, and Scotland's National women's football and rugby teams.

Scott's interviewed the biggest names in music, politics and film, and is highly respected throughout the media industry. He's been an exemplary campaigner for many charities over the years.

Meet Some of our Members

Read here about some of our members, who are registered blind or visually impaired. They have families, a great social life and some have continued to work with sight loss. They all love being a part of Blind Golf Scotland:



Cameron & Family

Cameron - 2009 & 2015 British Blind Open Champion and 5x Winner Blind Golf Scotland Order of Merit!

At just 18 months old, Cameron lost his sight due to Bilateral Retinoblastoma. He is registered blind, with no sight in his left eye and only a small percentage in his right eye. Despite this, he always knew he wanted a career in sport. Now 34 years old, Cameron has been an active member of Blind Golf Scotland for 20 years and works at a renowned Scottish golf club.

Cameron says *“the biggest challenge was to adapt and find my own way in life. With sight loss, simple tasks might just take a little bit longer to master but whether it is with the help of friends, family or technology you can do it”*.

He continues, *“I have been very lucky as my family have supported me in all my life choices. I am now a father myself and the support of my family and partner has got me through anxious moments”*.

He was already a golfer before BGS but a social worker made him aware of the society and he never looked back. Although he doesn't play as much as he used to, Cameron is one of the best visually impaired golfers in the world. Thanks to blind golf, he has been able to travel the world and the society has helped him gain social skills and confidence.

“The best thing about golf is the enjoyment it brings; from the company of your friends or family, the weather (when it's fine!), the beauty of the golf course and other surroundings, and knowing life is good”.

Cameron



*We would love to welcome more ladies and youths to
Blind Golf Scotland – as players or guides.
Please get in touch to ask about trying blind golf.*

www.scottishblindgolf.com

www.facebook.com/BlindGolfScotland

twitter.com/BlindGolfScot



Barry – B3 US Open Blind Golf Champion and Ranked Top 10 Blind Golfer in the World!

Barry took up blind golf in 2018 after suffering sight loss from a disease called Keratoconus, brought on by eczema irritation. Suffering the illness in his eyes since he was 18 years old, it slowly got to the stage where he was registered blind.

Barry on a Tee Break

Barry had played golf from age 14 and thought that his golfing days were over until he heard about Blind Golf Scotland through the hospital. He got in touch with BGS and soon went along to play in his first tournament in April 2018 at Stirling Golf Club. He never looked back! Barry went on to represent Scotland in the 2019 Vision Cup 'Rest of the World' team versus North America, winning the final point and securing a victory for his team.

"The guys were so welcoming and blind golf has been a great thing for me. It's given me confidence to play the game I love against other blind golfers".

Barry

Following his sight loss, Barry studied Health and Physical Education and also completed a training course in Golf Psychology. Today, at 38 years old, Barry is a proud father who works as at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall staffing events and spends much of his free time on the golf course.

Barry believes talking about his disability with others is beneficial, stating *"It's great to share stories about our eyesight and it really helps me with day-to-day life dealing with sight loss"*.



John - Winner of both Matchplay and Strokeplay Championships and a BGS member since 2000!

"It was a great thrill and honour to represent Scotland in the Internationals and experience the pressure of the first tee and the closing holes of a team match".

John

John at Tee Time

John was 26 when the centre vision in his left eye became obscured – the same had happened to his right eye previously – and he was registered blind.

He had a reasonable amount of peripheral vision but could not make out detail nor read eyesight test cards. No longer able to drive and, as an addictive reader and English teacher,

John was also now unable to read for pleasure. In the last few years audio books have become a great pleasure and he shares this interest with other Blind Golf members.

John was a secondary school English teacher, and with support and adjustments, he was able to continue teaching and progress in his career. A keen golfer who had given up golf when his sight deteriorated, John took up dinghy sailing and qualified as an RYA instructor. He only took up golf again when a colleague fancied trying it and John realised that, with a bit of help spotting the ball, he could manage a game. The golf bug struck again!

John joined a golf club, later becoming Captain, and the members were incredibly helpful as they watched the ball for John in competitions. A considerable circle of friendship has come with golf. He went on to qualify for the international team and has played in the Auld Enemies Cup matches with England and Wales.

“Lasting friendships are formed, and blind golf offers a wide network of friendship and support. This is borne out in my thoughts on the reasons I have enjoyed golf so much over the years. The reasons are as follows:

- 1. The people I have met through golf and the friendships that have developed,*
- 2. The wonderful places it has taken me,*
- 3. The occasional physical pleasure of hitting a good shot,*
- 4. The chance, with the help of the handicap system, to enjoy real competition”.*

John



*Ally at the 2019
Vision Cup*

Ally – BGS Handicap Secretary and former International Blind Golf Association Board Member!

*“Blind golf brings you the sense of everything coming back to you”.
If others can do it, I can do it”.*

Ally

Ally was about 50 years old when he first lost his sight, diagnosed with Optic Neuritis, likely caused by a virus. At the time, he was still working offshore and overseas as an engineer.

No longer able to see things at his feet, he just thought he needed glasses. Following a routine trip to the optician, Ally was registered blind. Having lost his driving licence, independence and career, Ally also lost his self-belief and confidence. No longer able to hop in the car and go where he wanted, when he wanted, Ally had to learn bus routes and timetables.

Ally hit a low point, full of self-pity and he didn't socialise for months, until a social worker dragged him along to a blind bowling league. He soon realised that if others could bowl, so

could he. As a former golfer, he was intrigued to learn about BGS and found out that all he needed was a guide, so he asked his old golf buddies to lend a hand spotting the ball for him. Soon after, Ally was back to his old self.

The best thing about BGS for Ally is the social interaction. Up until recently, he played every week with his friends, and also with his nephew. Since joining BGS, Ally has played all over the country, as well as in Japan three times, Canada, Italy, Ireland and England. He was also on the 'Rest of the World' team versus North America.

For ten years, Ally served on the IBGA Board of Directors as Financial Director and says that *"you can do anything you want to do, with limitations". I would never have travelled to Japan to play golf before, nor would I have had the chance to play on immaculate courses for free. I've done a fair bit of travelling thanks to blind golf".*

Aged 64, years after losing both his sight and job, he was asked to join another company where his expertise was highly valued. Ally was tasked with writing procedures for chemical testing and advising his colleagues when required. Following this contract, he was invited to interview for another employer, where he remained for a further three years.

Ally urges others with sight loss to fight for their careers, opportunities and ambitions, saying *"use your skills – don't sell yourself short! The technology is there now so blind people can do more jobs. As long as there are willing employers, you can transfer your skills".*

If you know somebody who might like to get involved in Blind Golf Scotland, please ask them to contact us, or direct them to our website/social media pages:

www.scottishblindgolf.com

developmentofficer@scottishblindgolf.com

www.facebook.com/BlindGolfScotland

<https://twitter.com/BlindGolfScot>

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