

The year has been overshadowed by the impacts of Covid-19 for all of us. Golf was a minor consideration in comparison but nevertheless returning to play under social distancing restrictions in June was very welcome. The Club was also able to resume some competitions from June. The support from the membership has been fantastic with the vast majority renewing memberships on time despite uncertainty when play would resume.

Having proudly assumed the Captaincy in January, little did I think that day would be one of the last mass gatherings in the clubhouse that year. We'd never heard of social distancing and Covid-19 seemed to be something which was only a problem in Asia. 12 months on, the world has changed dramatically, and it certainly wasn't the first year of Captaincy I had envisaged, nor did I expect to be attending committee meetings on Zoom. Fortunately, the game of golf has been one of the positives to emerge from the pandemic with increased participation across the country and thankfully that has also been the case at Durham City Golf Club. Collectively, we have turned around a very challenging year into one which we can reflect on with great pride, with a cautious but healthy outlook.

Among the many positive aspects has been the volunteering effort undertaken by members of the club, with individuals stepping up to the plate and going the extra mile when it really mattered. I would like to thank Peter Toole and his company, The Great British Ground Screw for supplying and erecting the decking outside the clubhouse, I think this will be an asset for the club for many years to come. Also, the initial support provided by our greenkeeping team during lockdown to keep the course and its surrounds maintained, to preparing the club for reopening after lockdown.

Throughout the season, committee members and sub-committee volunteers have worked hard behind the scenes on a variety of important projects and activities, with a real sense of community spirit emerging. This is hugely significant for a club like ours and while we have a great team of staff, there is never enough resource to fulfil the many tasks that are required to run a busy golf club. I would like to thank everyone involved for giving up their time during this most challenging of years and I'm confident that ethos will continue into 2021 with the 'can do' culture that has undoubtedly developed.

As highlighted in our communications, the golf course has been in excellent condition throughout the year and the durability of our greens has never been better, testament to the work of our greenkeepers. The greens staff have again presented the course in exceptional condition. This is a notable achievement given the changeable weather conditions over the last twelve months and the very high course usage during the pandemic. Without compromising their day-to-day course maintenance activities, they have also been able to complete a few major projects. The first weekend of reopening presented a number of challenges with the volume of players coupled with the lack of water, but the greens recovered well in time for the delayed start to our season. It was sad to see that no team matches would take place during 2020, hopefully we will have a much better 2021. We continue to invest in new machinery to improve the condition of the course which is our number one asset, and the committee are placing increased emphasis on this to ensure we maintain it to the highest standards possible. The golf course being full all day, every day when not in lockdown did create increase wear and tear around the course.

The area of our business hardest hit by the pandemic was undoubtedly the clubhouse, with the bar and catering significantly impacted by the restrictions. Financially, the impact was negated by the furlough scheme and various grants but we are likely to face challenges well into this year. Hopefully come the start of the new season, there will be light at the end of the tunnel and we can start to see a busy and thriving clubhouse. As we stared into lockdown on what was supposed to be the opening weekend of the season last March, little did we think we would see much competitive golf but that was turned on its head when we did restart. Huge credit must go to Ian Harries, Pro Tom and the office team for facilitating all the competitions we enjoyed between July and November. Congratulations to all golfers who won silverware last season, albeit with no presentation night to celebrate your achievements.

We had record numbers playing, which was fantastic to witness – the only issue was trying to get a tee-time! With golf one of the few sports people could participate in – which is indeed still very much the case at present – demand for play reached unprecedented levels, with the tee booked all day, every day for the most part. Indeed, data from our online BRS booking system indicates a significant increase from 2019 to 2020. Another hugely pleasing aspect of 2020 was the number of new members joining the club and hopefully you have all enjoyed your first-year experience. It was evident that many of you got the 'golfing bug' almost immediately, particularly some of the younger members who certainly made the most of the long summer nights. Golf has proved to be one of the safest and healthiest sports during the pandemic.

As everyone should know by now that World Handicap System replaced our current system on 2nd November. This will be used by all clubs around the world and should make playing across different courses fairer for all players. Full details of the WHS are available on our website or from England Golf. If players wish to gain/maintain handicaps they MUST sign up to the WHS. We do this for all members, if you haven't already

done so, please let us know your full name, date of birth and email address. We can then upload these details to the WHS.

2020 has been an extraordinary year with the COVID-19 pandemic causing profound impacts upon all of our lives. Despite the disruption this has caused at Durham City Golf Club, I am pleased to report that the Club has responded favourably to the challenges associated with the pandemic. Our first priority at all times during the pandemic has been the health and safety of our staff, members and guests. Your Committee is fully committed to health practices at your club. This approach has received an overwhelmingly positive response from members and visitors. I particularly thank our staff, whose support of these safety practices has enabled us to execute this important policy.

I wish to give my own personal thanks to the many people who have worked so hard to enable all the club members to get the most of any golfing opportunities that we have had during the past year. This long list includes all the staff and the committee members. I have no doubt that their hard work and dedication is appreciated by all the members. Also, I think it is true to say that we have all worked very well together to play safely whenever given the opportunity, and eventually we will see the day when our club returns to the strong and vibrant community that we have always been proud to be associated with.

Finally, my sincerest thanks go to our outgoing Chairman Keven Sample, who worked tirelessly, without complaint and always focussed on the clubs best interests. His leadership and dedication will be difficult to replace as he approaches the final few weeks of his tenure.

I extend my best wishes to the new Committee and staff, safe in the knowledge that the future of our Club rests in their safe hands.

Dave Liddell
Captain 2020