

Royal Portrush and Ardglass go



This is the famous 5th green on the Dunluce links at Royal Portrush, with the equally famous White Rocks providing a dramatic backdrop...

Golf in Ireland has long been exploiting the power of effective marketing, and recent comments from Colin Montgomerie and others reinforce this reality.

But when it came to tee time booking, the upsurge in local and international interest in golf in Ireland meant a lot more pressure on clubs' administrative staff to handle 'phone calls and deal with manual tee time booking systems.

Even then, payment was only when the visitors arrived – no shows meant no money. Deriving meaningful management information such as the money being made, forecasts, profitability and course usage was challenging and very time consuming.

The solution: BRS Tee Time Manager

However, as we've seen with the GUI's centralised handicapping system at the AGCS Conference at Market Bosworth in 2003, golf clubs in Ireland have also been shining examples of exploiting technology very effectively. Now, BRS Golf, the Belfast-based online software consultancy, has developed what many are saying is probably the most sophisticated online tee time booking system available.

Tee Time Manager is designed to work at a discreet level for members, for visitors looking for the tee times allocated (at times and rates set by the club), and via global Internet search engines. It can also handle competitions; Irish clubs have a wonderful tradition of mid-week Open competitions for members and visitors.

But best of all, it's very easy to use for golfer and club secretary alike. Golfers just go onto the club's website, select the course (if there's a choice), the day and tee time, perhaps book a caddy and a meal, and then pay via a secure online payment system – and all in a few minutes, without the club needing to lift a finger. And being online it's working 24/7, which golfing parties making bookings from the States find particularly convenient.

So far, some 70 clubs in Ireland are using the system, and amongst them are the internationally famous Royal Portrush GC, venue of the British Seniors, and Ardglass GC, a spectacular and long established course on the County Down coastline.

Royal Portrush – from paper to online

Wilma Erskine, the Club Secretary at Royal Portrush, is particularly pleased with the BRS Tee Time Manager. The Club still likes to handle calls and e-mails for visitor tee bookings, with the online booking system as a management tool. 'We used to have a purely manual system comprising a tee time sheet for every day, for both courses.' While it worked well, it was inevitably very labour intensive, and very challenging for generating revenue reports. Wilma continues: 'All that information was loaded on to the new online system. It's speeded things up significantly for the office and the golfers, and

people can now book caddies and meals as well, which is a great advantage.' In other words, minimal paperwork, more revenue.

'The great thing about the new BRS system is the reports I can get from it. I can check the revenues for the month ahead, and the deposits we've taken. All this sort of thing is an enormous help to the Committee members as well, of course. As we build up the usage and the records, we will start to compare year-on-year, and month-on-month. As the system captures the visitors' e-mail addresses, so we're also building a valuable database for future marketing.'

'We resisted computerised tee time booking for a long time, but BRS has done a great job, tailoring their system to give us all the things we want. And now when I get asked, 'What are the bookings looking like?', I can give the answer quite easily with the click of a mouse. We're also getting a much clearer picture of the courses' usage. Best of all, the Committee members love it!'

Ardglass – easy for everyone to use

Debbie Polly is the Club Secretary at the scenic and challenging Ardglass GC (www.ardglassgolfclub.com), a regular destination in County Down for those who like great golf that's a little off the beaten track. The club used to run a very similar manual system of tee time booking for members, casual visitors and societies. Again, all the data was loaded by BRS on to the Club's new online system, and from the start

for online tee times with BRS Golf



on the other hand, for those who like even more of a challenge, here's the 12th at Ardglass, a Par 3 measuring 198 yards...

it has proved genuinely easy to use for the Club's manager, staff and visiting golfers.

Debbie saw the benefits almost immediately: 'It's reduced significantly the 20-30 e-mails we used to get everyday asking if this day or that time was available - which of course we then had to respond to, check, and so on. Now, people just select the times we decide to make available at the green fees we set, and they pay online there and then.' So no worries about no shows. 'We also enable players to book caddies via the system, and one day we may also include buggies as well. The system's very user-friendly, both for us on the administrative side, and more importantly, for the golfers, whether regulars or new visitors to Ardglass.'

The BRS Tee Time Manager also takes care of Ardglass's international marketing needs; by being online via the Club's website and promoted via the global search engines, the Club's already seeing a steady flow of bookings from far a field: 'With the website and the online tee time booking system within it, it's certainly boosted green fees. It's an excellent system, and I'd strongly recommend it to any golf club.'

The brains behind BRS

Dr Brian Smith and his brother Rory are the brains behind BRS Golf. Both worked on high end networking systems for Nortel and BT before setting up BRS to explore their own online opportunities. Besides installing their Tee Time Manager in 70 odd golf clubs in 18 months, they've also worked with the Junior Golf initiative, and the AGCSI organisation on online projects of their own.

'We were initially asked to develop a tee time booking system for Belvoir Park, then Ardglass and Malone GCs. Being enthusiastic golfers, we couldn't resist the challenge. It's now turned into a full time business, and we're delighted with the progress to date.'

'But we're even more pleased that our club clients and their members and visitors are finding it so easy to use. We spent a lot of time and effort to design it from the user's perspective, and making it as simple as the EasyJet ticket booking system was our goal. Because of that, the training is very simple as well;

online training videos are available for people to learn the Tee Time Manager in their own time, and we also do training over the 'phone, with the user at their own PC and the system on-screen. Some haven't even needed that input, so it's our clients who are proving it's genuinely user-friendly!'

The BRS Tee Time Manager will be launching in England, Wales and Scotland in October 2005. In the meanwhile, literature is available from BRS Golf, and you can check out their website at www.brsgolf.com



Name	Society	Income
AGC Sports	Society - 10 tees	424 24 24 476.00
AGC Club	Society - 10 tees	424 24 24 476.00
AGC Building Society	Society - 10 tees	424 24 24 476.00
AGC Bank	Society - 10 tees	424 24 24 476.00
Total		161 728.00



a - the whole month-to-view of all tee times
 b - the society income report
 c - the course usage report

