



Staff News

Issue 22 - October 2019

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BGL Academy Launches!



The soft dulcet tones of the alarm intrude upon my dreams as the sun begins to greet the day. I pull the duvet higher over my head, beginning the well-rehearsed game of "5 more minutes". With great indignation, the alarm reacts by vocalising itself with force this time. The covers are pulled back and the day begins. With the morning routine well underway, my mind wanders to the *Blinks that I have been listening to in the car as a reprieve from Brexit (*Blinkest.com).

Yesterday I was listening to one about 'grit' and how high levels of grit is a proven trait of the most successful people. After chatting to Clair Roberts from Abbey Hill about how she is using The Academy, I think she would score highly on the grit scale.



"Once you stop learning, you start dying"
- Albert Einstein -

Clair heard that The Academy isn't just the place for compliance training, she explored the COURSE LIBRARY, and to date, Clair tops the leaderboard when it comes to the number of non-compliance courses that she has done (2nd place goes to Connor Kingsley from Mr Mulligan's Birmingham – well done Connor!).

Clair made a commitment to herself to learn 3 new things a week, and come rain or shine, she stuck to it. THAT'S grit! When I asked her about her experience of The Academy, here's what she said: "I think on-going learning is critical for career development and life in general, so I have embraced The Academy and really appreciate this resource being made available to us. I have loved exploring topics that specifically relate to my current role as Wedding and Events Co-ordinator, but I've also taken quite a few courses that I wouldn't have considered previously. I would definitely say that I feel more confident tackling certain work situations because of what I have learnt from the courses. I find the videos make the information very easy to consume, and as I learn by listening, it works brilliantly for me.

Apprenticeships – not just for youngsters!

- Does having a nationally recognised professional qualification appeal to you?
- Are you ready to take your role to the next level by developing your skills and knowledge further?
- Is it time to blow off the cobwebs and light up that grey matter with some new learning?

The credibility that comes from having an NVQ is worth having, and we have funds available to support you in your studies. We have 15 apprentices across the business, with 5 others in the process of sign-up. Are you ready to join the learning revolution?



Colin Mayes
Chief Executive

We are now into autumn and the summer has flown by, thankfully the weather has been kind to our business for the majority of the summer. I know many of our greenkeeping teams are almost praying for some more rain to help our golf courses recover from some of the driest conditions we have experienced over recent years. Because of these dry conditions we have been discussing what else we can do to protect our water resources and where necessary build new water storage lakes / reservoirs and replace old and inefficient irrigation systems on our golf courses.

You will all recognise that the business of golf is complex producing a first-class product where so many external factors like climatic conditions can have such a big influence on what we can and cannot do. As a result of these discussions and meetings we have now created a 5-year water resource plan which will result in a capital spend in excess of £2m into our golf courses to ensure that we use this valuable resource very carefully.

Clearly the excellent weather throughout the summer has been a major bonus for all our golf operations, rounds of golf played by both our members and visitors alike are significantly up on the previous year. As of the end of September the company was on plan to deliver another record trading year as long as the important December period delivers to our budget plan.

I know all the business units are busy preparing and making sales calls to ensure we fill all our function space in the busy festive period. Then we will be into 2020 before we know it.

I am delighted that we have made solid progress in launching our new Learning and Development Policy throughout the business and have been particularly impressed with the capability of our new online learning platform. We now have over 947 users registered on the system which is there to help us all develop our skills at work and hopefully in life as well. Of the 947 users registered 835 of our people are using the system to help them keep up with legal compliance training and their own self development, so those that have not started to use it, I would encourage you to do so ASAP.

I have also recently completed 4 of the online modules myself and found them to be very useful reminders of my responsibilities within the workplace. I really enjoyed the sessions and am personally looking forward to completing a few more in the coming months, hopefully you will all be doing the same.

In August we opened our 7th new indoor Mr Mulligans adventure golf site at Festival Leisure Park on the outskirts of Basildon. Our new team, led by our General Manager Sam Muirhead, have got off to a tremendous start with trading ahead of our plan. Our customers have been giving us some excellent reviews so a big thank you to everyone involved. We are also on site in Swansea for our next opening and our contractors are working hard to deliver the business to us by the end of November so we can get open by December ready for what we hope will be a bumper Christmas trading period.

Our business is in very good shape with nearly all units growing sales versus last year, we all need to stay focussed on making sure our customers enjoy their visit to our businesses and that way they will keep coming back and importantly recommending us to their friends and family.

Thank you all for your hard work and efforts during the busy summer months and I look forward to updating you all on our business performance at the end of the year.

Warmest regards
Colin



Jim Conlan
Group Finance Director

Golf Division

As we approach the end of the main golf season, like for many other golf course operators, the dryer weather this year has lifted our business performance tremendously. A dry spring meant we had had a strong beginning to the year and consequently were ahead of financial budget. This continued in the second quarter with the exception of June when revenue growth slowed down and we were caught out on our cost management which meant results were below last year. Improved results over the July and August period ensured our revenue growth for the 8 months increased to +8% with improvement in our operating profit cash contribution.

September results are positive so far and the forward book for the final quarter is building. Reduced golf activity in October and November and the influx of food and beverage business in December will mean the final quarter is a challenge. Based on current trends, we are however confident that the Golf Division financial targets can be achieved in 2019 which will be a credit to all.

A high level of investment has again been maintained in our golf business with over £1m having been spent on product improvements, with more to come in the final quarter. This all adds up to good news all round for the Golf Division teams with 2019 success clearly on the horizon.

Adventure Leisure Division

Adventure Leisure continues to go from strength to strength. With the August opening of the new site in Basildon we have 10 quality, fun adventure

golf locations. The new “Bunkers” adventure golf concept is now full developed, work is in progress in Swansea for December opening and we hope to commence development at a new site in Cardiff before the end of the year. Existing adventure golf units continued to perform well overall with excellent revenue growth above last year and our operating profit cash contribution for the 8 months to August is healthily above target. It is anticipated that 2019 financial targets will be achieved which is a great credit to the whole Adventure Leisure team. The Board is committed to continued investment to secure ongoing growth.

Investment in 2019 is expected to exceed £3m and an exciting programme is planned for next year. It is very important that this ambitious business expansion is managed in an orderly manner, so we continue to strive for the highest levels of financial and administrative support.

Estates and Property

Our Estates and Property business is also having a good trading year. A key activity in this area has been to progress a number of the strategic land assets towards development or disposal. We expect to secure significant additional success before the end of the year and the good news is that surplus funds generated will be available to reinvest in our trading businesses.

It all adds up to Burhill Group’s success.....

The teams within the Burhill Group are certainly delivering a successful year in 2019. Despite the continuing Brexit debate our customers seem determined to continue in the pursuit of their preferred leisure activities. We have three more months to consolidate on our success to date and deliver our 2019 financial objectives. Good luck with your efforts, I am looking forward to reporting the success next time.

Kind regards
Jim Conlan

David Armor Golf Day

Abbey Hill Golf Centre in Milton Keynes raised more than £3,500 in memory of David Armor, who tragically passed away in September last year. A charity golf day was set up to honour David, who worked at Abbey Hill for 12 years as a PGA Professional and was a much-loved and well-known figure in the home counties golf teaching community.

Taking place on Father's Day - Sunday 16th June, the golf day raised money for the British Heart Foundation and Thames Valley Air Ambulance; two charities close to David's family's heart.

The day consisted of breakfast followed by an 18-hole team stableford competition in which 58 golfers took part, as well as an evening BBQ and charity raffle for families and friends to join in the fun. The golf also featured a particularly poignant 'Beat the Pro' challenge against PGA Teaching Professional, Greg Tilbury on the par 3 8th hole which has been re-named 'The David Armor Signature Hole' in memory of his favourite hole on the course. "It was a fantastic day and a great way to celebrate David's life and impact on Abbey Hill," commented Kath Cloughton, Events and Marketing Manager at Abbey Hill.



Burhill Captains Ball

On Saturday 8th September over 270 people including Guy Riggott, Jim Conlan and GM Dubravka Griffiths attended Burhill's Captains Ball.

Part of the evening included a raffle to raise money for the Shooting Stars charity & we are pleased to report that during the evening over £10,000 was raised!



It's in the water at Redbourn

Hannah Smith, Food and Beverage Assistant gave birth to her first child, a girl named Naia in early August.

Robert Emery, Retail Assistant Manager got engaged to his girlfriend, Kerry.

BGL in Bloom

Congratulations to Aldwickbury Park, Ramsdale Park & Wycombe Heights who have been shortlisted for winning BGL in Bloom 2019.

The winner will be announced at the BGL Awards in February 2020.

Emily Gammon at The Shropshire talks about her role



What is your role?

I'm currently a greenkeeper at the Shropshire. I joined the Shropshire as an apprentice & I've passed my NVQ level 3 in sports turf management with South Staffs College.

Why did you want to become a greenkeeper?

I was working in a secondary school as a TA & I just thought one day I wanted a change. I like being outdoors & wanted a physical job. Google did the rest! I found the advert on Indeed for the Shropshire so I applied & the rest is history. I wanted something completely different. I played golf a couple of times so had an interest in the sport and it just sounded interesting!

What does your role entail?

Now I'm qualified, pretty much everything. I started mainly on the range such as picking up balls and strimming the targets & then bunkers. Now I can do pretty much all the tasks. I've been given more responsibility which is great as I've progressed through my NVQ.

What's your least and favourite part of the job?

My favourite task is the approaches because I like to work on things where you can say at the end "I did that" seeing what you have done and feeling proud. I really like being part of a team, not just the greenkeepers but the team as a whole. Also the free golf membership is great, I don't have an official handicap but I'm around 54. The staff v's members match was great last year where we won! My least favourite is strimming the range targets! Winter months can be tough but I don't mind the early mornings.

What does the future hold for Emily?

I'd love to progress through my NVQ level 4 & I have already been speaking to Ivan (Course Manager) about that. It would be great to become Deputy Course Manager and maybe eventually Course Manager someday.

BUNKERS!

CRAZY GOLF & DRINKS

Bunkers is the new kid on the block. This crazy fun, spanking new brand will be joining the Adventure Leisure family this year. Unlike its older siblings, Mr Mulligans and Sidcup Family Golf, Bunkers is most definitely the cheeky, youngest child!

The aim is that Bunkers will allow us to be free from the "child friendly" constraints of Mr Mulligans and to allow us to have brand freedom when it comes to promoting more adult themed content.

The first Bunkers opens its doors in Little Wind Street, Swansea this December. Known as the Magaluf of Wales, we are expecting some fun times to be had. The city is the second largest in Wales with a population of just under 250,000 people.

With further Bunkers planned for 2020, golf will obviously feature but get ready for some other great activities to be at the heart of what we do.... creating memories & a lifetime of fun!

GOLFERS, BOOZERS, WINNERS, LOSERS!



Mr Mulligans comes to Essex

An Un'fore'gettable new Mr Mulligans just opened in BASVEGAS! August saw the opening of the 10th Mr Mulligans location.

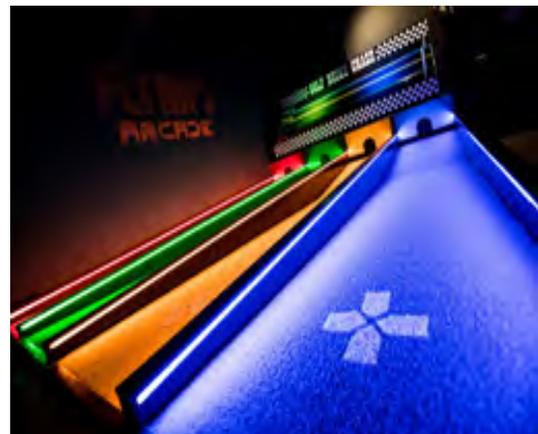
Basildon kicked things off in style with the biggest ever VIP Launch party seeing over 250 VIP's descend on the crazy golf venue for a night of putterly ridiculous fun. VIP's included, our Chairman Teddy Clive, Andy Scholey & some famous Hollyoaks actors too!

What great feedback we recieved with the best quote coming from Jo-Anne Rowan on Facebook: *"5 stars for everything! Golf was fun, staff were friendly & food was delicious!"*

Basildon continues to buck the trend with the best-ever takings for the first month of any site! They didn't stop there, Basildon dazzled TV screens in September on TOWIE, with some of the cast visiting the venue & even discussing working for Mr Mulligans (wonder if they'll send in their CV?).

We can't wait to see what Basildon has up its sleeve next!

With two spectacular Fairground and Arcade themed courses & an incredible bar it is one of our best venues yet! Well done to Sam & her team for all of their hard work!



Employee Spotlight

Welcome to the Employee Spotlight section. In this edition we talked to Stephen Norton, General Manager of Ramsdale Park Golf Centre.



BGL: What's your current title & how long have you been with the BGL?

SN: I am General Manager at Ramsdale Park and I joined the company in May 2016.

BGL: How long have you been in the golf industry and what was the journey to where you are now?

SN: This role is my first in golf. Previously I worked in the fitness industry for over 12 years working for LA Fitness & then more recently for Pure Gym as a Regional Manager. I have always loved golf so it was great to move over when I got the chance.

BGL: In 3 words describe your job?

SN: People, enjoyable & challenging.

BGL: What's your favourite part about working in BGL Group?

SN: I enjoy the freedom to find 'your way' of doing your job whilst still having the support/guidance from Head Office & the wider team. I think it is easy to under value the amount of support we have within BGL with all the different departments, different clubs etc, I know my job would be so much harder without the help of those.

BGL: What's the best thing you have achieved since being here?

SN: I have to say winning the GM of the Year award for 2018 as I feel it recognises how far we have come as a club over the past few years. I am supported by a great team & I am really proud of the work they do.

BGL: Can you play golf?

SN: I try! I have a handicap of 7 although without the constant help from Matt, one of our Pro's my handicap would be higher. I try to play once a week but it's not always easy to do.

BGL: What is your dream car?

SN: I am not really big on cars but anything comfy with lots of gadgets & a big enough boot to put my golf clubs in!

BGL: What are your hobbies?

SN: As I mentioned I love playing golf. I am an Arsenal fan so I enjoy watching them although I can't remember the last time I actually got to a game. I have a 3 year old daughter so I also enjoy the chance to act like a big kid with her at playparks & softplay etc.

BGL: What would your "death row meal" be? Starter, Main and Dessert?

SN: Jeez – what did I do? I'm not a foodie so nice & simple. Skip starter & go for 2 desserts. For main it would have to be a nice Fillet Steak with peppercorn sauce & beer battered onion rings. For dessert, my Mum's Lemon Meringue Pie & my 2nd dessert would be something chocolatey.

BGL: What keeps you motivated?

SN: 'Success'. I am pretty self-motivated & I am also my biggest critic. I enjoy setting out a goal & then seeing that come into fruition.

BGL: Finally, what advice would you give to someone wanting to do your role?

SN: This will sound a little cliché however I think it comes down to making sure you succeed in your current role & having a clear vision on how you will get to your goal. Identify the areas you need to learn more and then find a way that you can do that. Some of the best things I've learnt are when I've worked/helped out in a new department/environment.

Ladies Golf - Did you know?

1. Congratulations to Team Europe at The Solheim Cup last month but did you know that the Solheim Cup is named after the club manufacturer Karsten Solheim in 1990.
2. The first golf course built in the UK was commissioned by Mary Queen of Scots. The Queen brought the sport of golf over to Scotland from France in the 1550s, building the first course at St. Andrews.
3. What we now know as mini golf was originally designed for women. As it was considered improper for ladies to hold the club past their shoulders, a putting course was created by the Ladies' Putting Club of St. Andrews in 1867 to allow them to enjoy a game without swinging the club too far.
4. The handicap system was invented by a woman. Isette Miller from London helped develop the early versions of the golf handicap system in 1893. Her system took in to account the different abilities and experience of the competitors.
5. Karrie Webb was the first female golfer to earn over \$1m in earnings in a single season. Furthermore, she did it as a rookie too!
6. The youngest person ever to play in a Professional Golf Association tour event was Michelle Wie of Hawaii. At the age of 14 she played in the 2004 Sony open.
7. The youngest player to actually win a professional golf tour event was 14 year old Lydia Ko. In 2012 Ko took the title at the New South Wales Open. The glove that she wore can be viewed in the World Golf Hall of Fame.

2019 New Golf Rules - Did you know?

1. You can now putt with the flag in - no need to ask playing partners to attend the flag
2. Golfers are now allowed to repair spike marks - hopefully no more bumpy rolls.
3. When dropping your ball, you have to drop at knee height - no more harsh lies hopefully.
4. You can now move loose impediments in a bunker, providing it is not to test the conditions - no more stone chips on precious wedges.
5. If you don't fancy your bunker shot, you can now drop outside of the bunker for a penalty of two shots - no more 5 hacks to get out.
6. The five minute rule has been replaced with the three minute rule - no more waiting around & lets hope it speeds up play.
7. You can now drop a ball in the vicinity of where your ball has gone out of bounds, providing the club has introduced this as a local rule - no more running back to the tee or teeing it up again.

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