

SOUTH AFRICANS CAN BE PROUD AS IRELAND CROWNED INTERNATIONAL PAIRS WORLD CHAMPIONS

It had to happen one of these years and oh boy, it certainly happened this year!! Since 2005 the weather has not had any significant impact on the International Pairs golf tournament World Finals; with one small exception in 2007 at St Andrews Bay when the second round was disrupted by a thunder storm. This year, however, it seemed that Mother Nature had decided to present a serious meteorological challenge to the golfers and it was tough – so very tough! This was without doubt the most difficult World Finals by a long way and when the players ventured out for the practice round it was cold, windy, rainy conditions that they faced on the Carrick course at Loch Lomond.

The golf course is a challenging layout that undulates its way up from the shore of the Loch into the hills and then wends its way back down to the links-like finishing holes and when completely dry it is not a simple stroll so with fairways sodden it was a hard walk. The South Africans all had a real practice round in that they not only got to know the course but also familiarised themselves with playing in layers of clothing whilst managing umbrellas and keeping clubs and gloves dry – and spirits high! Well if the competitors thought the practice round had been tough, then they would have a rude awakening on the first competition day when dawn broke grey, cold and rainy – with snow on the nearby Ben Lomond Mountain. In true South African spirit, however, the three pairs attacked the challenge before them with varying degrees of success.

As the round progressed so the conditions worsened until the Tournament Director took the decision to reduce the first round to 9 holes. This was absolutely the right decision considering that the last 5 holes were effectively unplayable and the players with late tee times would most certainly have been disadvantaged.

Day two dawned colder but with a glimpse of blue above and although the course was still sodden, it was fully playable thanks to the remarkable efforts of the green keeping staff who had been working since 4:00am. The rain did fall during the day and the wind did blow and the chill factor remained but with the World Championship title up for grabs, the teams persisted.

Melville Muir and Willie Stokes can be exceptionally proud of their 3rd place, which is the highest ever finishing position by a South African pair on the World Final leader board with the previous best having been 4th on three occasions. All three South African teams can be extremely proud of their performances and the way in which they represented all South African amateur club golfers!

In the end it was All-Ireland Gaelic football players Mick Galvin and Jason Sherlock who, having turned their hands to another sport, conquered the fairways in Scotland and claimed a dramatic victory at the 2011 International Pairs World Final. Galvin and Sherlock held their nerve under intense pressure to beat the Chilean pair of Gabriel Morgan Searle and Rodrigo San Martin Ribera at the second hole of a sudden death play-off and in doing so they became the first Irish players in the tournament's history to be crowned world champions. It was a close run thing as Searle and Ribera pushed them all the way after both teams had finished with 53 Stableford points after 27 holes and having halved the first hole of sudden death in par-fours, Galvin and Sherlock looked to be in pole position to close out victory as they played The Carrick's 407-yard 18th hole for a second time. With their opponents in trouble off the tee, Galvin, who is now manager of St Oliver Plunketts Gaelic football team with Sherlock one of his players, found the green in two but then proceeded to three-putt from 25 feet and their win was only confirmed when Searle's three-foot putt for a bogey lipped out.

“That is the most nervous I have ever been on a golf course,” said 11-handicapper Sherlock, who also played for Shamrock Rovers and the Republic of Ireland's under-21 football side.

“I have played in a lot of big sporting occasions but I preferred playing in front of 80,000 people at Croke Park than going through that.”

Galvin, who plays off six, added: “Jason and I have known each other for years and we played very well in the second round. We knew if we beat the Scottish guys we would stand a chance but the Chileans played some great golf and it was a bit of a struggle to finish things off at the end. It’s a humbling experience to play for your country on a world stage and it doesn’t get any bigger than this. It’s a great event and we have met some wonderful people from all over the world. We can’t celebrate too much, though, as we have a game at the weekend!”

2011 INTERNATIONAL PAIRS WORLD FINAL RESULT

INTERNATIONAL PAIRS WORLD FINAL 2011 THE CARRICK GOLF COURSE, SCOTLAND FINAL RESULTS

Competitors	Country	Day 1 (Reduced to 9 holes)	Day 2	27 Hole Total
Mick Galvin / Jason Sherlock	Ireland	17	36	53 – won play off
Gabriel Morgan Searle / Rodrigo San Martin Ribera	Chile	15	38	53 – lost play off
Melville Muir / Willie Stokes	South Africa 1	15	35	50 (On c/o day 2 score)
Michael Vandiver / George Baker	USA 1	16	34	50
Steven Hunter / Stephen Brown	Scotland	17	31	48
Manuel Fernadnez Bea / Jose Ferrin Gonzalez	Spain	10	36	46
Dan Beggs / Jamie Low	Canada 2	16	29	45
Felipe Frojmowicz / Denis Frojmowicz	Portugal	13	30	43
Dan Hayward / Alan Walker	England 1	12	30	42
Doug Baxter / Lou Laskis	Canada 1	9	32	41
Tuan Tran / Thanh Giang	Czech Republic	11	29	40
Lionel "Dougie" O'Brien / Avery Jonas	Antigua & Barbuda	9	31	40
Denver Farrell / Ian Kelly	UAE	11	28	39
Johan Lauren / Len Bester	South Africa 3	14	25	39
Stoia Calin / Mateiu Dorin	Romania	10	27	37
Yoav Shenav / Yehuda Levy	Israel	12	25	37
Paul Williams / Simon Harwin	England 2	9	27	36
Francois Izzi / Florian Noire	France	7	26	33
Cobus Niemand / Anton Spies	South Africa 2	6	26	32
Bobby Wallace / Charles Rowan	USA 2	6	25	31
Sumanth Hanumanthaiah / Prakash Keswani	Nigeria	6	23	29