

# PGA NATIONAL GOLF ACADEMY

## At Gleneagles

The PGA National Golf Academy features a brand new holistic approach to improving the game and, in many instances, life itself. WORDS AND PICTURES BY

DAVID J. WHYTE



OPENING PICTURE:  
The renowned 'Palace  
in the Hills'.

Adjustable drivers and putters, laser-milled wedge faces, solid core multi-layered balls; the advancements in equipment technology can make your head spin, if not the ball. The new TaylorMade R1 for instance offers a total of 168 unique settings available at address. While there is logic to the advantages of a professional fitter and a battery of launch monitoring radars, does this mechanical maelstrom of technical tweaks really make that much of a difference in the quest to maximise golf performance?

There is actually more to game improvement than mere physics. While equipment unquestionably plays a crucial role, it is the golfer that is and always will be the single most significant influence on a golf swing and its results. So how do we adjust a golfer? How can we fine-tune a person to enable them to maximise their performance.

With these questions in mind, the "UltraFit for Golf" programme will be launched at Gleneagles Hotel, Spa & Golf Resort this spring featuring 3, 5 or 7-day programmes. The renowned 'Palace in the Hills' will play host to the 2014 Ryder Cup and is no ordinary location to start. The setting alone, its luxuriously appointed hotel and three magnificent championship courses serenely nestled within the breathtaking Perthshire Hills will inspire Ryder Cup viewers around the world.

The PGA National Golf Academy is a busy place. In spite of its prestigious status, Gleneagles is very much part of the local golf scene with local lads honing their skills along with hotel guests and day-golf visitors. The teaching centre actively participates with Scotland's aspiring players who come from all over the country to use its fine facilities that includes a 320-yard double-ended driving range, undercover pitching bays, a short game pitching area, three short game practice greens with five large bunkers and two full-sized putting greens.

Andrew Jowett, Gleneagles PGA Head Golf Professional is one of the most experienced coaches around and has a keen eye for idiosyncrasies. "Your posture



TOP LEFT PAGE: Outdoor personal training.  
TOP RIGHT PAGE: Louise Westra, Naturopath & Nutritionalist.  
BOTTOM: Bradley Blair, Osteopath.

and swing are excellent," he advises on a frosty-cold Scottish morning, but he did note an obstinate inclination to pull left. "Let's take a closer look on video."

## ULTRAFIT FOR GOLF

The first part of Gleneagles' UltraFit for Golf makes an overall appraisal of your game through an interview, pre-set skills tests covering the long game, short game and putting, and then video analysis. Slow-motion video revealed my proclivity to rise up at impact causing my arms to swing left to compensate. Who would have known?

"Try this," Jowett says, placing a golf bag at my left hip. "Knock it over with your hip as you swing through." After a few tries, I registered the move and was soon striking the ball more solidly and straight.

It was too frosty to conduct the short game skills tests so we proceeded to a darkened room to 'go deeper' with a preliminary Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or NLP, session - a form of sports psychology that has found favour with golf coaches over the past two decades.

"Golf isn't all about technique," says Jowett. "The inner game is such a vast area. With the new UltraFit for Golf programme, we generally do two-to-three hour sessions finding out which modality the guest learns best in before establishing the correct inner dialogue." In the limited time I had to experience this area of learning, he took me through a discussion on 'Neutral Thinking' as opposed to 'Positive' or 'Negative' thinking.

"If you keep telling yourself you are going to succeed, score or sink a putt, and you don't, it can have a detrimental effect. There has to be an element of honesty in your internal dialogue. Frame the question differently. Is it possible that I can hit this fairway? You can say with honesty, yes, it is possible. What we're trying to do with NLP is to free the mind up. Being too positive or indeed too negative can get in your way. NLP gives you a better framework for the mental approach to golf."

And how did the UltraFit for Golf programme come about I asked Andrew? "We were aware of what tour players were doing these days. Looking at the entourage culture that they have adopted - swing coach, psychologist, fitness coach, physiotherapist, equipment experts, our goal with this new programme is to provide all of these services in one, complete experience."

At the same time, we were getting lots of requests from members and guests asking how they can improve their golf performance beyond technique. We were already working with NLP, custom-fitting and TPI (Titleist Performance Institute) so diving deeper into fitness and overall health was the last piece of the puzzle. Besides that, we already have these wonderful facilities and highly-trained people so it made great sense to bring this programme together."

## NATUROPATHY

The Spa at Gleneagles encompasses ESPA

Life, a new approach to health and well-being staffed with a team of specialists including a naturopathic practitioner along with osteopaths, physiotherapists, acupuncturists and a herbalist. The UltraFit for Golf programme brings these disciplines together with the PGA golf instruction team to offer a truly holistic approach to both golf and health.

Louise Westra, a naturopathic practitioner who worked in Australia for 10 years and now heads up Gleneagles' Ultrafit team tells me as I started my session with her, "I understand there's an issue with your digestion." I had mentioned to Andrew during my initial interview that I had some minor gastric issue passed off by the medical profession as irritable bowel syndrome. Over too many years to mention, I had no success in either pinpointing the problem or finding a remedy.

Westra fastidiously went over my medical history as well as nutritional, emotional and physical well-being. At the end she advises, "I'd recommend having two tests done. We could quite probably get to the bottom of your digestive issue and then recommend the right course of action." Which she did.

Louise would normally review a client's information in detail and during a second appointment, outline a path to wellness, which includes dietary advice, recommended supplements, suitable lifestyle programmes or referrals to the



appropriate complementary and alternative medicine, fitness or spa professionals - all with the simple and singular aim to help you feel good inside and out.

## OSTEOPATH

Bradley Blair, an Osteopath and Personal

Trainer is the final piece of the puzzle. Blair is a big man, imposing, jovial and very likeable. His role is to identify any physical limitations you might have and to work on or manipulate problem areas in order to restore correct function. He put me through some basic bends and stretches to

determine any range-of-motion issues, or areas for fitness or strength development. He will then tailor an exercise regime to meet the individual's needs. Bradley identified my several areas of 'tightness' and offered a series of exercises that I should do at least 5 times a week in order to improve my overall fitness.

## SUMMARY

A few weeks have gone by before meeting once again with Louise and following her recommendations; nothing too difficult, just one or two supplements added as my food regime was already good. More crucially, my digestion has gotten better as has my golf swing. I am now more flexible and stronger thanks to Bradley's simple daily exercises and the digestive bouts seem to be lessening.

I believe Gleneagles is onto something here. Golf pros can point out things about your swing you were not conscious of and suggest changes but the most important element to deal with is yourself, the physical and mental being who tries so hard to hit that little white ball perfectly and yet is completely unaware of an array of issues that could be hindering it. Tight calf muscles, glutes or shoulder muscles can markedly affect your golf swing. 🍷

## This innovative programme

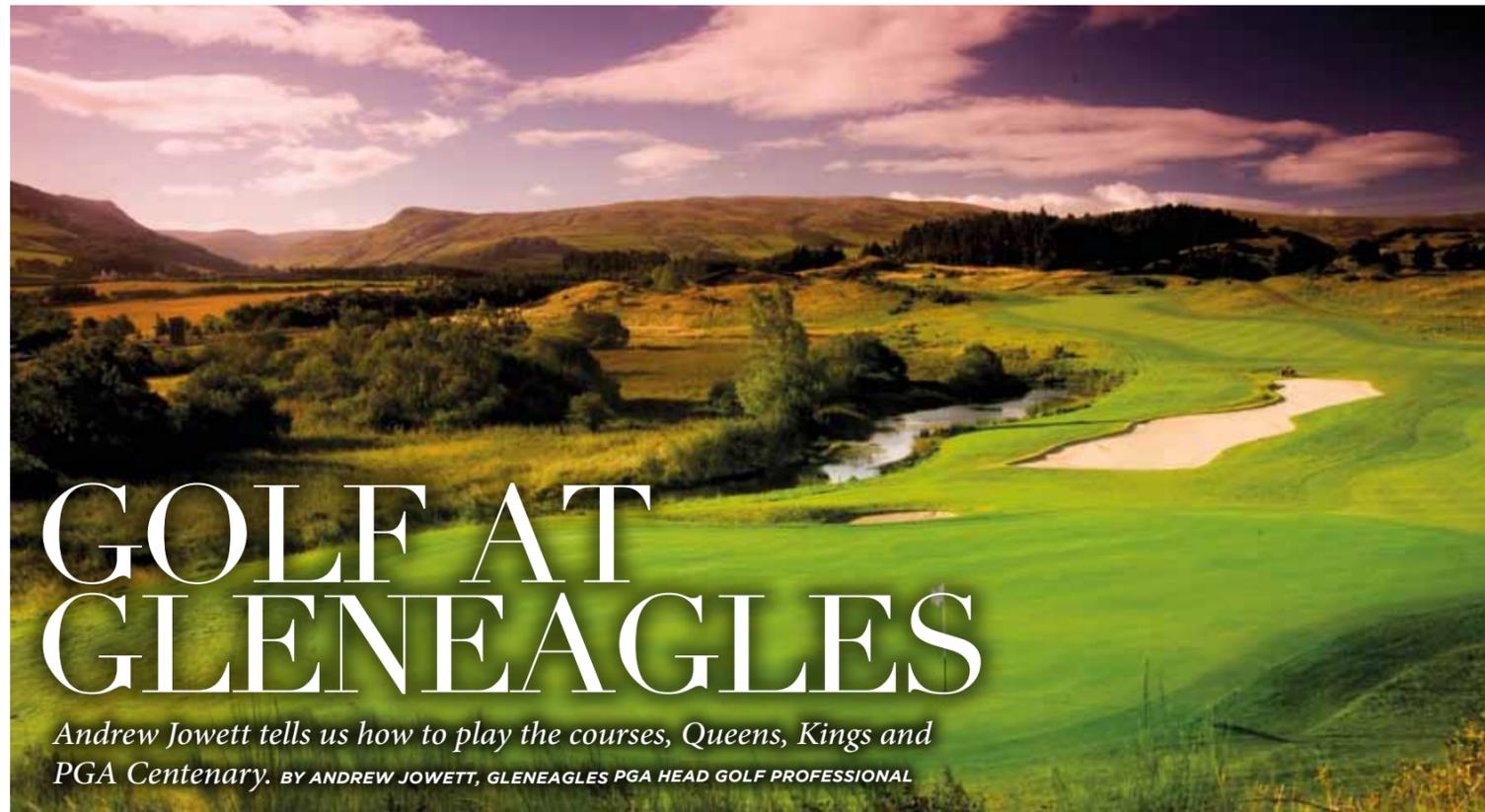
is another reason why Gleneagles was recently voted the Best Golf Resort in the World 2012 in the Daily Telegraph ULTRAs awards.

2 days - from £570  
4 days - from £1,195  
7 days - from £1,795

Subject to availability. Valid from 1 October 2012 to 30 April 2013.

If you wish to combine your treatments with a stay, call Resort Sales at 0800 704 705 or email [resort.sales@gleneagles.com](mailto:resort.sales@gleneagles.com). To book your Ultra Fit stand-alone package call The Spa on 01764 694332

[www.gleneagles.com/golf/pga-national-golf-academy](http://www.gleneagles.com/golf/pga-national-golf-academy)



# GOLF AT GLENEAGLES

Andrew Jowett tells us how to play the courses, Queens, Kings and PGA Centenary. BY ANDREW JOWETT, GLENEAGLES PGA HEAD GOLF PROFESSIONAL



TOP PICTURES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: The PGA Centenary; The Queens Course - 9th Hole. BOTTOM CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Kings Course; The PGA Centenary - 5th Hole; The Kings Course; The Halfway House.

of them in a stunning setting - the 4th is a great example and a test!

The Kings plays longer so long hitters will have an advantage but you also have to be accurate. If you're looking to make a good score, you need to hold your game together through the first 11 holes. That's where all the challenge is! There's the opportunity down the inward stretch to make a few birdies but you need to be in a good frame of mind as the first half will have tested you. The Kings is tough, and especially so at the back tees.

## THE PGA CENTENARY

Designed by Jack Nicklaus in the late 1990's, the PGA Centenary is more contemporary than the Kings and Queens. An inland links style course, Nicklaus commented at the time that it was the finest parcel of land that he's ever had the opportunity to work with.

The course has been designed with an eye to hosting major championships so you'll find natural amphitheatres and well routed walkways to get crowds around. The course has undergone some significant changes recently in preparation for the Ryder Cup. The par 5, 9th changed dramatically, the pond comes further out and into play more. And there are more strategically placed pot-bunkers. It looks a bit more Scottish. There was criticism that this course was an American-style design but these changes make it more in tune with the local environment and weather conditions. The changes have been universally approved. The 18th lacked the spark of the rest of the golf course but now it has the 'Wow' factor - It used to be a long par 5 with the green sitting across the fairway offering a tight finish. Now, there's a completely new green complex running long ways. The hole plays slightly shorter as the tee has been raised. The green complex has numerous run-offs and so, although it's reachable in two, it is a genuine risk-and-reward hole with testing chip shots if you miss the green. 

[www.gleneagles.com/golf](http://www.gleneagles.com/golf)



## THE RESORT

Gleneagles need little introduction as one of the world's longstanding, premier golf destinations. Since the 1920's, Gleneagles has

occupied a prominent position in the game as a wonderful retreat secluded amidst some of Scotland's most splendid scenery. Its original two courses were designed by the late, great James Braid, a five-time Open champion and prolific golf course architect.

## QUEENS COURSE

The Kings and Queens are two of James Braid's first and many would say, his finest designs. A lot of people when they look at its yardage (just under 6,000 yards) underestimate the Queens and think it is not going to pose much challenge. But the first six holes, generally playing into the prevailing wind are as tough a stretch as you will find on any of the three Gleneagles courses. It eases off a bit as you head towards the turn at the Par 5, 7th.



But this course is not just about challenge. If you catch the Queens on a long, Scottish summer's evening for instance, the views especially around the turn are quite stunning, absolutely breathtaking. It is useful that the halfway house is placed there for more reasons than one. For a social round, the Queens is hard to beat.

## THE KINGS COURSE

What would I say about the Kings? It's got a heritage and history all of its own. From the Bells Scottish Open to the Ladies Weetabix Championship it has been a stalwart test. It's an iconic Scottish golf course.

The 1st hole gives you a similar kind of experience as you get on the 1st or 18th at St Andrews. It is a bit of rush knowing that you're about to take on such a highly respected challenge. All the holes are well laid out in front of you. It is interesting to think that the course was made without any modern machinery. The way Braid has sculpted the golf course through this fairly undulating heathland is phenomenal. That's a big part of the charm. There are some genuinely great golf holes out there, all