

# Ryder Cup team joins Dungannon Golf Club

EXCLUSIVE:

By SIMON CUNNINGHAM

DUNGANNON Golf Club has struck a major coup with the team behind the Ryder Cup course at the K Club set to join the Club.

Golf Course Maintenance Services Ltd has commenced managing the maintenance operations at Dungannon Golf Club. Gerry Byrne, Director of agronomy, will develop a detailed works programme and introduce international best practices to the operation which will significantly enhance the maintenance standards and importantly, course presentation.

Dungannon Golf Club honorary secretary Sean T Hughes said it is an exciting prospect for the club.

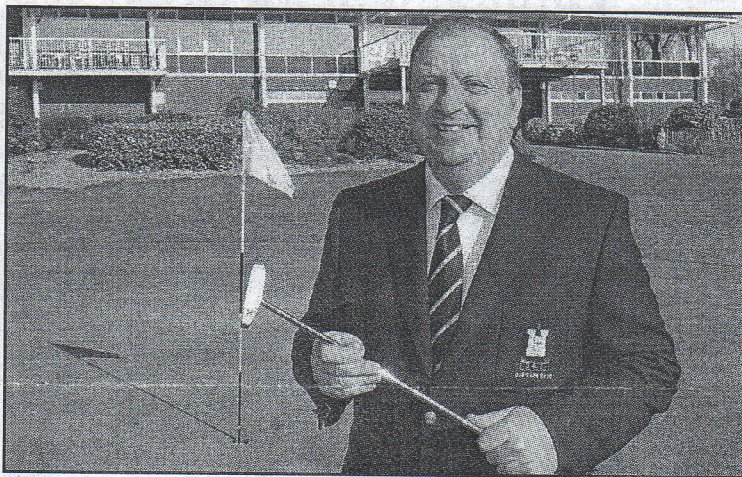
"This will bring an expertise here that we haven't had before," he said.

"It means that Dungannon Golf Club, the home of Darren Clarke, will become one of the best maintained courses in Ireland.

"It is an unbelievable opportunity for us and it's great news not just for the club but for the whole town."

Members, guests and visitors to Dungannon Golf Club will benefit from the year round improvements to the course and the attention to detail that Mr Byrne will provide in conjunction with the team.

Mr Byrne is regarded as one of the leading golf course superintendents in the world, the highlight of his career being responsibility for course maintenance at the 2006 Ryder Cup matches at the K Club. At Dungannon Golf Club, Golf Course Maintenance Services will use the same quality materials, machines and standard operating procedures as were used during the hugely success-



Dungannon Golf Club Captain Keith Willis.dd1615

ful staging of golf's most famous biennial event. Mr Byrne will pay regular visits to Dungannon Golf Club to access progress and work. The highly regarded and experienced superintendent Frank Ainsworth is also part of the Golf Course Maintenance Services' team and together they will work with the existing maintenance staff, augmented with their own staff, to enhance the course.

Keith Willis, captain of the club this year said that bringing the company on board was important to help move Dungannon Golf Club forward.

"The facts are that Dungannon Golf Club has for a long time been standing still," he said. "We could have kept the status quo or move the club forward.

"The first contact with the company as made in late 2009 and they came out to assess the course. We've also

had an opportunity to visit their facilities at the K Club which we were able to inspect."

Not only will two full-time members of staff from Golf Course Maintenance Services be working at Dungannon Golf Club, but the club will also have full use of machinery and equipment which will be based there on a permanent basis.

Among the jobs that will be undertaken by the new company will be the reshaping of fairways and improvement of the greens.

Said Keith: "Last year, we installed six new sand-based greens here but it is something new so we don't have the expertise to maintain them. But this is where Gerry Byrne is a specialist so to have him on board will be a tremendous help.

"We hope that the work will help us attract more members and encourage members already on the

books to play more often."

And while competitions at the course are generally for members-only, Keith hopes that in the future more open championships could take place to further increase the usage of the course.

"The new staff have already started and are working alongside our current ground staff so they are all one team. One of the first jobs was to plan a schedule of works as to what can be done of the coming months. One thing you know with Gerry Bryne is that his schedule of works will be carried out.

"This is just an addition to the already excellent ground staff that we employ here.

"I am very excited and enthusiastic to have Gerry Byrne and his team on board. We hope that this will lead to a very bright future here at Dungannon Golf Club as we try to move forward."

Mr Bryne added: "I am thrilled to be here in Dungannon Golf Club, working with the course convenor Thomas McCausland, Committee, Head Greenkeeper Paddy McAleer and his maintenance team to put the Club top of the golfing map. It's a great golf course and with the works programme we have planned and expert team at our disposal, we will certainly achieve our goals".

Dungannon Golf Club will be the first Club Golf Course Maintenance Services will be working with in Northern Ireland.

Ed Pettit, Managing Director said: "Our immediate focus is on taking what is a great golf course at Dungannon Golf Club and adding tournament standard playing conditions year round."