



2010 RYDER CUP

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME



EUROPE VS. UNITED STATES
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Wales can be proud of its great golfers past and present who have brought glory to the nation, writes MITCHELL PLATTS

WOOSIE – THE FINEST GOLFER FROM WALES

When Harold Woosnam joined the Llanymynech Hill Golf Club at the age of 30, paying his £4 subscription, little did he know he was laying the foundation for his son, Ian, to become the best golfer in Welsh history.

"I hit my first shot when I was seven," said Ian. "But I didn't really play much until I was about 11. I taught myself, playing alongside Dad."

Woosnam made the Shropshire team at 14. He played for Wales at 18 and turned professional in 1976. He showed promise, losing a play-off for the Welsh Professional Championship to Brian Huggett in 1978 and winning the Under-23 Match Play Championship a year later. Nevertheless, progress was slow. He went to the Tour School three times. He drove around The European Tour in a battered Volkswagen caravanette which doubled as a hotel room and laundry room while living on a diet of baked beans and soup. But he was fortified by the encouraging words of his father who insisted his son was simply serving his apprenticeship. It was still a gypsy's existence though and he was 104th on the 1981 Order of Merit.

Life changed, however, on the practice ground at Port Harcourt in Nigeria in 1982. Woosnam recalled: "I was hitting the ball as well as anyone. I wondered why the other guys were all beating me. Then it struck me: I was chasing perfection. I was too serious. I vowed to start enjoying myself."

Back from Africa, Woosnam played in the Northern Open in Inverness. Then he took three days to drive to the Italian Open at Is Molas in Sardinia. On the way the van slowed to almost a halt. Out of petrol, Woosnam was next seen returning from a garage on the handlebars of an Italian's push bike with a petrol can in his hands. Five days later he had a cheque for £4,272 in his hands – his share of a tie for second place behind Mark James.

That performance produced a U-turn in his fortunes. Woosnam failed by only one shot to catch Greg Norman in a race for the Benson and Hedges International Open, earned himself a place in the Great Britain and Ireland Hennessy Cognac Cup team and then captured his first European Tour title with a play-off victory over Bill Longmuir in the Swiss Open at Crans-sur-Sierre high in the Alps.

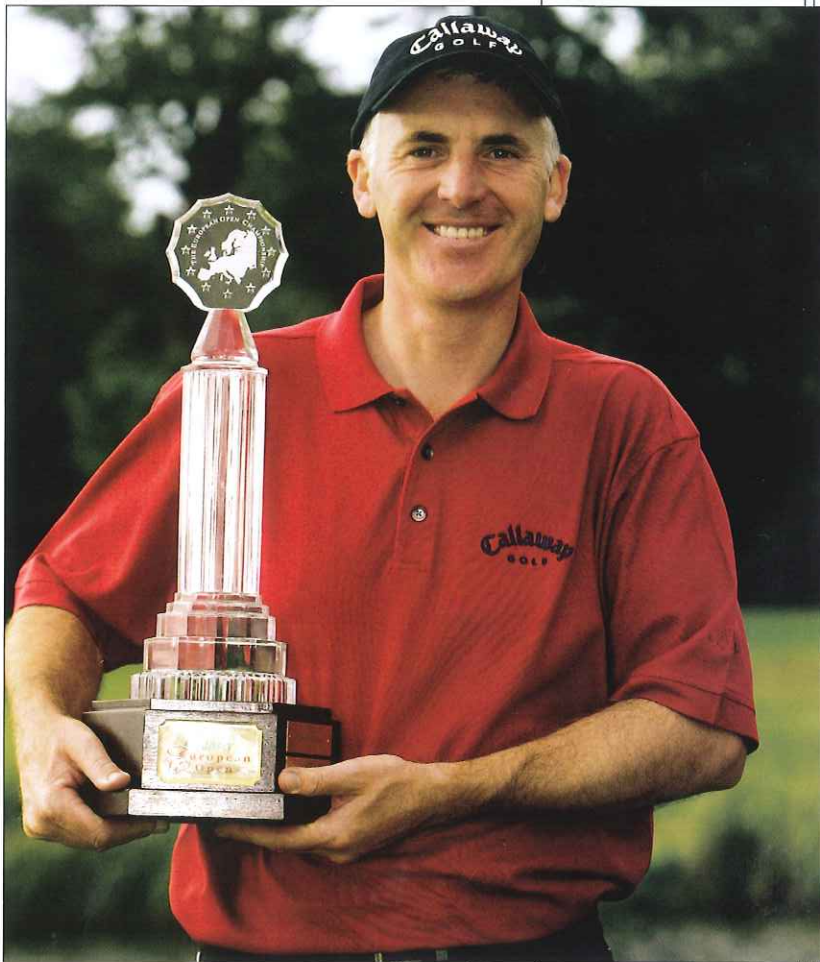
Woosnam had endured six years of hard labour as a professional. Now his career blossomed with

win after win – including seven worldwide individual victories in 1987, as well as the World Cup of Golf in partnership with David Llewellyn and topping the Order of Merit – and it truly bloomed in April 1991, among the azaleas and dogwood at Augusta National. There he stood over a seven foot putt on the 18th green, holed, punched the air and slipped into the Green Jacket that confirmed his place in Masters Tournament history. He had holed with the minimum of fuss; and in the process had become the first Welshman to win a Major Championship.

"I don't think anyone realises the pressure you are under at that moment," said Woosnam. "I knew I had holed that putt many times in the past. But I knew this was the time I had to make it. I knew it was the moment I had to show I had the bottle to win a Major, to win the Masters. I can't tell you how

Opposite: Ian Woosnam wearing the green jacket after winning the Masters Tournament in 1991.

Below: Phillip Price, winner of the Smurfit European Open in 2003, beat Phil Mickelson in the singles at The Belfry in 2002 when Europe regained The Ryder Cup.





Rhys Davies who won the 2010 Trophée Hassan II in Morocco. Below: Jamie Donaldson competing in The Celtic Manor Wales Open this year.

I felt when three feet from the hole I knew it was in. You dream of that moment.”

It had been a long and winding road from St Martins, where Shropshire marches with the Welsh border and where his father farmed. Woosnam initially wanted to be a professional footballer. He gained notoriety as a boxer on a family holiday camp trip when he thrashed a string of bigger opponents and even earned the nickname Tiger!

It is a fact that he was born on the English side of the border to Harold and Joan Woosnam – both Welsh – in the peaceful countryside near Oswestry, but he is Welsh through and through. Even when he was winning his 29 European Tour titles and 44 in all worldwide, and although he had moved from Oswestry to Jersey, he would return home to play Llanymynech and also the Aberdovey course of which he is a huge fan and of which the great golf essayist Bernard Darwin once wrote: “It is the course that my soul loves best in the world.”

By now he had climbed to Number One on the Official World Golf Ranking and on the way created a link between the great Welsh golfers of earlier times and a brave new world.

The Welsh had enjoyed the achievements over the years of players such as Newport’s Bert Hodson and Cardigan-born Sid Mouland, although it was the likes of Dai Rees and Dave Thomas who excelled before Huggett came along. Barry-born Rees was recognised by many observers in his time as the best British golfer never to win The Open Championship although Thomas, the longest driver in the world in the early 1960s, lost a play-off for that elusive title to Peter Thomson in 1958 and finished tied second, one behind Jack Nicklaus, in 1966. Rees, however, finished second on three occasions – to Ben Hogan in 1953, Peter Thomson

DID YOU KNOW...

- Sir Nick Faldo made his debut in The 1977 Ryder Cup and won all three of his matches despite suffering from glandular fever.

in 1954 and Arnold Palmer in 1961.

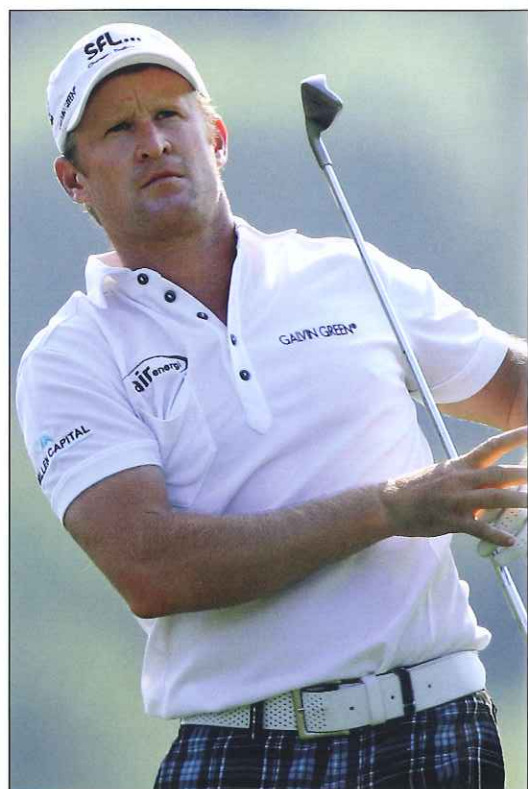
In 1971 – the year that marked the birth of The European Tour – Rees was still playing regularly at the age of 58 and he captained Wales that year in the Double Diamond Home Internationals in which he won one singles and two fourballs with Huggett.

In fact Huggett, born in Porthcawl, was already by that time well on his way to compiling an outstanding record following his breakthrough triumph in the Dutch Open in 1962. He had taken up golf at the age of ten because “there was nothing else to do living at the top of a mountain near Neath where my father was the pro.” He was still winning titles in 1978 – capturing the British Airways/Avis Open on the island of Jersey – when a young Woosnam was seeking to emerge himself.

Several other Welshmen had made a name for themselves without commanding the same success. Cardiff-born Kim Dabson won the Monmouth Junior and Senior Amateur Championship before turning professional in 1970. He played for Wales in the World Cup in 1972. David Vaughan, who came through the junior section of Llangollen Golf Club and joined Oswestry as an assistant, won Lord Derby’s Under-23 at Royal Lytham and St Annes in 1971 and finished 11th in The Open Championship the next year.

Craig DeFoy, encouraged by an uncle who lived in South Wales, took up the game at the age of 12. He enjoyed considerable success on the Safari circuit winning titles such as the Zambia Open in 1972 and 1973 and the Mufulira Open. In 1971, he finished fourth in The Open Championship at Royal Birkdale.

But it was not until Woosnam emerged that a true successor came along for Wales to follow in the footsteps of Thomas, Rees and Huggett. He took the country’s fortunes to a new level when he



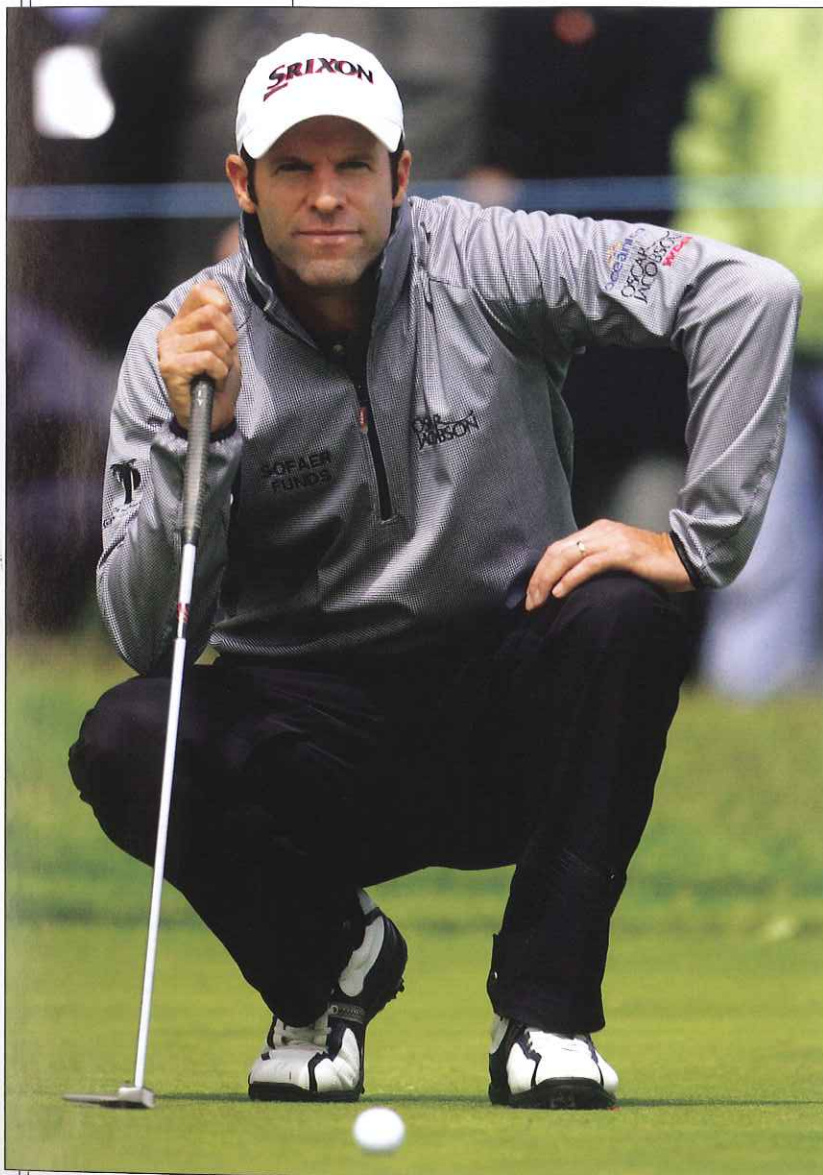
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brought glory to Wales alongside David Llewellyn in the 33rd edition of the World Cup on the Kapalua Bay course in Maui in 1987. Two years earlier they had finished fourth, but this time Woosnam was in fantastic form as he shot rounds of 67, 70, 65 and 72 for a 14 under par 274 to win the individual title by five shots. Woosnam's 65 in the third round on a day when only three players broke 70 remains one of the finest rounds of golf it has been my good fortune to witness, but Llewellyn played his part on the last day, being level par for the last 11 holes in pouring rain and buffeting winds.

Nevertheless Llewellyn and Woosnam only tied for the title with Scotland's Sandy Lyle and Sam Torrance before Llewellyn enjoyed his own special moment when, at the second extra hole, he coaxed in a six foot par putt to secure victory. Woosnam said: "Lulu showed fantastic determination. When he missed a putt or didn't hit a good shot, he turned and smiled. He never lost heart. He was great."

It was a massive turnaround for Llewellyn who quit The European Tour because he was playing so badly, lived in a small rented flat and drove a £110 Volkswagen Beetle. He once confessed: "I came back from playing in Africa one year with £60 in my pocket and my wife had £80 of bills to pay. That's

Bradley Dredge who won the 2005 World Cup for Wales with team mate Stephen Dodd.



DID YOU KNOW...

- The 1939 match was not played because of the outbreak of the Second World War. It was due to be played in November at the Ponte Vedra Club in Jacksonville, Florida. The British PGA got as far as announcing the first eight places - Sir Henry Cotton (Captain), Jimmy Adams, Dick Burton, Sam King, Alf Padgham, Dai Rees, Charles and Reg Whitcombe. The remaining places were never filled. The Americans announced their full Team of Walter Hagen (Captain), Vic Ghezzi, Ralph Guldahl, Jimmy Hines, Harold McSpaden, Dick Metz, Byron Nelson, Henry Picard, Paul Runyan, Horton Smith and Sam Snead. The Americans still awarded caps even though the match was not contested.

when your backside is really hanging out of your trousers."

Llewellyn, who went on to win on The European Tour and in Africa, said after the World Cup win: "I am proud to be Welsh, very proud and that was the most important thing in the World Cup. Wales won the Cup. I didn't. Woosie didn't. Wales did and next year it was Wales that was defending. That still makes me very proud."

In fact, Wales remained strong challengers for the World Cup with a number of different partnerships. Philip Parkin, whose family moved when he was five to Newtown in Mid Wales where he took up golf, had been Rookie of the Year in 1984, following in the footsteps of Llewellyn (1971), and Mark Mouland finished fifth in 1989. Mouland, son of Sid Mouland, six times Welsh champion and a World Cup player in the 1960s, was in the form of his life following wins in the Car Care Plan International at Moortown, Leeds, in 1986 and the KLM Dutch Open with a closing 65 at Hilversum in 1988 - one year after surviving a head-on car crash following which he admitted "I was lucky to be alive".

It was now time for Phillip Price to emerge. He had learned to play at Pontypridd - where he was born - with his father John and brothers Neil and Keith. He won the Welsh Region Order of Merit in 1990, one year after turning professional, and after his first European Tour win in 1994 - the Portuguese Open - he was named 'Pontypridd Man of the Year.' Price had finished second with Woosnam in the 1991 World Cup. He enjoyed individual success in Portugal again in 2001 and in the Smurfit European Open in Ireland in 2003, although perhaps nothing like the 'high' he felt in 2002 when he brilliantly beat Phil Mickelson 3 and 2 as Europe regained The Ryder Cup at The Belfry after which he was named 'Newport Man of the Year.'

Price's progress was followed by the emergence of players such as David Park, Jamie Donaldson and Sion Bebb, although Bradley Dredge and Stephen Dodd would make the biggest impact. Park, born in London of Welsh parents and who now works for The European Tour, lost a six hole play-off to Miguel Martin in the 1999 Moroccan Open - his maiden European Tour event - but gained more than adequate compensation the following week by

Philip Parkin at the Masters Tournament in 1984.

winning the Compaq European Grand Prix at Slaley Hall chased by, among others, Retief Goosen, Lee Westwood, Padraig Harrington and Darren Clarke.

Pontypridd-born Donaldson has won three times on the European Challenge Tour and in 2008 he captured the Mauritius Golf Open. Brynsadler's Bebb, son of Welsh rugby legend Dewi, won The Ryder Cup Wales Challenge on the European Challenge Tour in 2006. He started playing golf at 11 mainly because the family home backed onto Llantrisant Pontyclun golf course. He is coached at Cardiff Golf Club by Terry Hanson and is providing on-course commentary of The Ryder Cup this week for S4C, the Welsh television channel.

Dredge, who was born in Tredegar, followed his 1993 Welsh Amateur Championship triumph and Walker Cup honours by turning professional in 1996 at which time he was attached to Bryn Meadows. His breakthrough came in the 2003 Madeira Island Open and in 2006 he won the Omega European Masters.

Cardiff-born Dodd, who is based in Barry and also coached by Hanson, turned professional in 1990 – one year after winning the Amateur Championship – after starting out by searching for golf balls as an 11-year-old at Brynhill Golf Club.

Dodd climbed to 17th place on the Order of Merit in 2005 with wins in the Volvo China Open and Irish Open and he returned to Ireland in 2006 to win the Smurfit Kappa European Open.

Dredge and Dodd brought glory to Wales again when in 2005 they emulated Llewellyn and Woosnam by winning the World Golf Championship – Algarve World Cup in Portugal at the Victoria Club in Vilamoura. Torrential rain mixed with fierce thunderstorms rendered no play possible on the final day. Dredge and Dodd, however, fully deserved their superb success following an outstanding third round of 61 in the fourballs. “It was the best rain I ever watched,” joked Dodd. A delighted Dredge declared: “It means the world to us. There was a picture of Ian and David with the World Cup in our clubhouse at Bryn Meadows so you can imagine that to repeat what they achieved is massive for me, for us and especially for Wales. Absolutely fantastic.”

There is a strong link between the World Cup and Welsh golfers. Dave Thomas, whose son Paul was Rookie of The Year on The European Tour in 1985, and Dai Rees were top ten finishers six times in a row from 1957 and that continues with the emergence this year of Rhys Davies. Bridgend-based Davies, 25, has worked for ten years with World Cup winner Llewellyn. “Rhys was playing for Wales and I was the Welsh national coach so we spent a lot of time together,” explained Llewellyn. “When Rhys turned professional he asked if I would continue to help him and I will do so as long as he wants that relationship to continue.”

Davies said: “Dai’s very softly spoken but also very committed and very driven himself and I think that’s vitally important when you share common interests and common desires to do well in something.”

Davies knows now that he made a wise decision when he chose golf ahead of cricket. He represented Glamorgan and Wales at cricket but once he targeted the game with a smaller ball he made giant strides. Twice a Walker Cup player – he won both his singles in 2007 – he broke through two years after turning professional when he won the SWALEC Wales Challenge in July 2009 under a sponsor’s invitation to secure his first Challenge Tour title. He also won the Fred Olsen Challenge de España that season but he gained a life-changing win in the 2010 Trophee Hassan II in Morocco on The European Tour International Schedule in March.

“It’s great to see we’re a country moving forward and improving in how many guys we have on Tour,” he said. “Jamie Donaldson’s been knocking on the door for a while and the likes of Stephen Dodd, Bradley Dredge and Phillip Price have been good players for some time. I think we’re different in the ways we go about our business, but we all get on really well.”

That it would seem is the Welsh way and why every golfer at every level in the country can feel proud of their golfing heritage, especially this week with The Ryder Cup being played in Wales for the first time.

