

Inaugural win delights Sammy

Royal Norwich's Sammy Martin and Rebecca Heeles staged an impressive fightback to become the first winners of the Norfolk lady and junior knockout.

They beat the Eaton pairing of county champion Karen Young and 14-year-old Emma Davies by one hole in the final at Swaffham – despite being three down after eight.

"It was a very close match and I was extremely pleased with our performance in coming back from three down," said Martin, who is a Norfolk first team regular. She and her 13-year-old partner chipped away at the deficit, winning the 9th, 12th and 15th to get back to all square.

Both pairs shared the short 16th with birdies before Martin and Heeles crucially won the 17th. The 18th was halved in par and the new trophy – donated by Karen Young – was won by Royal Norwich.

"We are very pleased to win this inaugural title," said Martin, who is a great fan of this new competition. "It's a wonderful opportunity for juniors to experience the heady conditions of matchplay and to acquire skills from senior players. It's a chance to build for the future."

"Both junior girls played extremely well in the final – although Karen and I did contribute as well!"

The event has given her a

close-up view of Heeles' improvement through this season, during which she has reduced her handicap from 25 to 12. Along the way she won the Norfolk girls' U16 and handicap championships.

Meanwhile, Davies has reduced her handicap from 16 to nine and was part of the winning combination for the scratch and handicap trophies at the Norfolk county foursomes.

■ The Norfolk ladies and the county girls managed nine holes of their annual get-together before storms washed out play at Fakenham.

Despite that, county captain Jo Ashmore has had a good look at the county's youngsters this season and been impressed by their play. "I have been to quite a few of the girls' events this year and I am so pleased to see the improvement in their games and etiquette they show and how much they seem to enjoy themselves."

"We could all learn a little from their enthusiasm that they have for the game and the events they play in."

The girls who took part in the three-ball stableford were: Katie Dagless, Emma Dann, Emma Davies, Jennifer Hide, Rachael Hide, Tiffany Howie and Ruby Plume. The ladies were represented by: Jo Ashmore, Jean Johnson, Rebecca Shubrook, Sammy Martin, B Royce, Sarah Steventon and Eppie Zandvoort.



WINNING COMBINATION: Rebecca Heeles and Sammy Martin who won the Norfolk Lady and Junior Knock-out event at Swaffham.

Picture: SUBMITTED

GOLFINBRIEF

Hole-in-one is not enough for victory

A hole-in-one by Diss veteran David Wittekind boosted his stableford score by five points – but failed to win him the new seniors' competition, the greenkeepers' challenge. His ace came at the 151-yard par-3 12th where he used a 5-iron and it was the second time in two years that the 22-handicapper had achieved the feat. The competition for the Edward Ray Trophy – a mounted niblick used by the legendary British golfer who captained the side in the very first Ryder Cup – was contested by 52 seniors and won by Bob Allison with 38 points. Second was Alex Fowler (37), third Mike Pearce and fourth Dave King (both with 36). At Royal Norwich Tom Robinson celebrated his 18th birthday a day early when he had a hole in one. He was partnering his father, Gary, in the Tom Eaton Cup foursomes stableford and Tom's ace got them off to a great start on the 164-yard first hole. He used a seven iron. Rocky Goodall, who plays off 13, has also just aced the first and he too used a seven iron. He was playing with Ben Plant on September 12.

Pro-am joy for Ellis

Ian Ellis won the PGA East Region pro-am at Maldon with a six-under par 65. He was one of eight players under par and his team were runners-up on 18-under. Neil Lythgoe of Royal Norwich tied ninth on one-over. Lythgoe was joint runner-up at the Bungay & Waveney Valley invitational pro-am. He scored two-under par 67 and was just one shot behind the winner. Mark Allen (Eaton) tied fourth on 68 while Andrew Collison of the host club and Paul Mayoh (King's Lynn) were in a group on level par in 10th spot.

Final hit by storms

The final of the Norfolk Scratch League between Royal Norwich and Costessey Park had to be abandoned when the event was hit by heavy storms. The title will now be decided at The Norfolk on Sunday, November 5, when play will start at 8.30am. The semi-finals were safely completed in fine weather when Costessey Park beat Feltwell 4½-½ and Royal Norwich beat Dereham 5-0. But after only four holes of the final and third place play-off play was suspended.

Field's new contract

Swaffham Golf Club has just signed a three-year agreement with club professional Peter Field for his services. It's the first time they have had a deal spanning this time period and club chairman John Scales commented: "It gives both the club and Peter a stable framework against which to prepare for the future".

Kidd makes his mark

Royal Norwich's Richard Kidd won the 55-59 age group at the south-eastern seniors championship at Chelmsford. The four-handicapper was fourth overall in the Alan Hobson Trophy with rounds of 74, 74, against a CSS of 70. The championship itself was won Chris Buckley, a two handicapper from Woodlands Manor, who shot 71, 69.

Home clean sweep

Gt Yarmouth & Caister's first am-am in its winter series resulted in a clean sweep for players from the host club. Results in the betterball stableford: 44pts Reg and Lucy Hole; 43 Mervyn King and John Wood; 41 Steve Bullent and Jimmy Styles.

GOLF: Ryder Cup hero has Order of Merit crown in sights after brilliant 63

Casey charges on

Paul Casey signalled his determination to win the Order of Merit in style with a brilliant first round in the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship in Scotland.

Casey carded a nine-under-par 63 at Kingsbarns – one of the three courses used for the pro-am event – to lead by one shot from Wales' Bradley Dredge and Sweden's Johan Edfors.

That left the Englishman 12 shots ahead of his nearest rival at the top of the money list, Ryder Cup teammate David Howell, who struggled to a 75 after suffering a recurrence of a shoulder injury.

Casey, who could clinch the Order of Merit this week with a victory and suitable performances elsewhere, insisted he was keeping the issue at the back of his mind.

"I'm really not going to think about it," said the 29-year-old, who overtook Howell by winning the £1million first prize at the HSBC World Matchplay at Wentworth the week before the Ryder Cup.

"I would dearly love to win it and if it happens, it happens, but if it

doesn't, it doesn't. But it would be a wonderful honour. I have achieved so many of my goals this year and feel very satisfied so, if I was to win, it would be brilliant. If not, then it doesn't matter as I've had a wonderful year anyway.

"I can't control what the other guys do. I have David behind me and a few other guys are very much in it.

"Padraig Harrington asked me this morning if I was playing in Mallorca before Valderrama but I'm not going to change my schedule. I am tired and I need a break."

Casey, who carded seven birdies and holed out from 80 yards on the sixth for an eagle, could only finish 56th out of 62 last week as the World Match Play and Ryder Cup took its toll.

"That's all it was and I couldn't control that," added Casey, who recorded only the fifth hole-in-one in Ryder Cup history at the K Club.

"I still feel tired but I went into today with a really good attitude and didn't expect too much. That's what I intend to do for the rest of the week."

"I'm not going to change the whole

routine and go all serious just because I'm in front."

Casey is currently £80,000 ahead of Howell and £250,000 clear of Robert Karlsson, but the vast amounts of prize money on offer here and in the season-ending Volvo Masters at Valderrama means Karlsson (third), Henrik Stenson (fourth), Padraig Harrington (fifth) and Colin Montgomerie (seventh) are among those still in with a chance of topping the standings.

Harrington was the best placed of those after an opening 66 while Karlsson and Stenson both returned rounds of 68. Montgomerie – seeking a ninth Order of Merit title – could only manage a 73.

Howell said: "My body is tired, my mind is tired and although I'm trying to concentrate it's been very difficult. Because of the shoulder injury, I've come into it with no practice rounds and feel very unprepared. If Paul keeps playing like that for the rest of this tournament, then he could well close out the Order of Merit this week."

Dredge's 64 at St Andrews

established a new course record for the lengthened layout and could have been significantly better but for a double-bogey six on the 17th.

"A lot of good players have played here over the years so to be the course record holder is pretty good," said Dredge, who had an eight-shot victory in the Omega European Masters in Switzerland last month.

"After starting at the 10th, I was six under after seven holes but then carved it out of bounds on 17. But I holed a good 12-foot putt for a six so walked off with a smile on my face!"

The Dunhill Links pro-am event sees each of the 168 professionals teamed up with an amateur partner.

The teams play one round at each of the courses over the first three days before the top 60 professionals and those tied for 60th place, together with the top 20 teams, compete in Sunday's final round at St Andrews.

Playing in his first Tour event for three weeks, Norfolk's Andrew Marshall opened up with a one over par 73 at St Andrews to finish well down the field after the opening day.

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