



PROFESSIONAL
GOLF
ASSOCIATION
BULGARIA

PGA OF BULGARIA

The 19th in the series that takes a random look at our member PGAs in turn.

“We will see the game grow in Bulgaria,” - Neil Turley

Among the thirty-six countries that form The PGAs of Europe there are examples of every phase of development, from GB&I in its second century to new international members, Hong Kong.

Of these none illustrates the benefits of working together with more advanced professionals from other nations who, in modern parlance, have ‘been there, done it’ than BULGARIA who are currently in only their fourth year of membership.

As an indication of the young nature of golf for the masses in this region of Eastern Europe where the sport is promising to blossom in the years ahead, The Bulgarian Golf Association was only launched in the year 2000 and The PGA followed five years later.

Where a ‘role model’ type of format for other beginners could be emerging is that, since the experienced UK pro Neil Turley moved to the St Sofia club in 2004, and the BGA responded positively to his arrival, Bulgaria has pursued the tried and trusted route to growing the game with sound foundations.

Bulgaria has a population of approaching eight million but, currently, fewer than 200 registered amateurs, five courses and a PGA membership of five pros. While this means that, in terms of facilities, players and professional personnel they are a little behind some of their Eastern European neighbours, they have planted the necessary roots, that’s for sure.

“Yes, we are a small PGA but we are really trying to grow the game here...” said Neil Turley, the PGA Chairman.” He is Director of Golf at the magnificent **BlackSeaRama Resort** with its range of impressive facilities and Gary Player Championship Course.

This is one example of an ambitious pursuit of quality and a sign that Bulgaria is developing a whole new section of its tourism industry. Another similar example is the **Pirin G&CC**, an Ian Woosnam course, established in its early days with PGAs of Europe Education Committee member Martin Westphal at the administrative helm.

Here, in the appointment of indigenous pro Nikolay Stanev to succeed Westphal, lies another example of how, one day, Bulgarian golf can become self-sufficient. While it’s true that, at St Sofia, another experienced UK pro has been recruited in David Eddiford, more home produced PGA professionals will without doubt emerge eventually.

“Through a few very enthusiastic people involved I am sure we will see the game succeed in Bulgaria, even though it may take a few more years yet,” stressed chairman Turley.



BLACKSEARAMA Club House



(l to r) David Eddiford, Neil Turley and Nikolay Stanev.

Ryder Cup Trust Takes Golf to 3000 Schoolchildren

The belief that golf will grow steadily, and for the long haul, in Bulgaria is based on vision, rather than mere optimism and, in particular, the initiative in seeking and acquiring of an appropriate grant from the Ryder Cup European Development Trust in 2006.

Due to the BGA’s awareness and forward planning (in providing a workable scheme for the committee to consider and pass), Bulgaria was one of the first countries to benefit from surplus income generated by Ryder Cup income to fund ‘grass root’ schemes.

Over the past two years this programme has introduced the sport to 3,000 children in schools and has then taken the next step of introducing those wishing to continue to the golf course.

“For example the programme staged a summer school attended by around 150 children, and around 35 of them continued to the next level of using the academy course,” explained Neil Turley, who supervises the PGA input to the scheme.

“These 35 young golfers will be continuing into 2009 with the necessary encouragement and coaching to obtain an official handicap along with full use of a regular golf course.

“The BGA is now finalising a deal with the Municipality to develop a area in the middle of Sofia for a 4 hole pitch-and-putt course with a 9 hole putting green.”

The Ryder Cup Trust also helps to fund a bus that is used to transport the children from Sofia to the golf course, 35 minutes from the centre. Others projects on the horizon are:

- the announcement shortly of a Development Manager, with a full-time team supporting him to grow the game dramatically over the next two years, helping the school programme to become a nationwide project.
- On-going work with the National Sports Academy to develop sports teachers to help with the coaching of golf and, from this, to educate coaches.
- Formation of a National squad encompassing all age categories

Tournament Schedule Planned

As The PGA of Bulgaria website indicates, several business associates are now ‘on board’ and a programme of tournaments is taking shape as the exciting prospect of golf claiming yet more new horizons opens up.

Meetings have taken place with potential sponsors with a view to hopefully staging a Pro-Am at BlackSeaRama this summer.

PGA of Bulgaria The Facts

Number of facilities	5
Number of players	170 approx.
Number of PGA Members:	5

OFFICIALS

President: Krassimir Guergov

Chairman: Neil Turley

Board Members: Alan Rogut.

General Secretary: Successor to Pascal Simard to be appointed. (Pascal is concentrating on some new projects in Rumania).