



PGA OF DENMARK

The 26th instalment of a series that takes a random look at each member PGA.

How Thomas & Tiger Helped Danish Golf to Grow

Although there is no defining moment to mark when Denmark became a significant member of the European golfing community, probably the name 'Thomas Bjorn' rings a bell in most people's minds as the one that sparked an awareness that the Danes were now on their way as a golfing nation.

By appearing in the European Ryder Cup teams of 1997 and 2002 he led his country onto the world stage and in winning three of his six matches he became something of a Scandinavian icon along with such Swedish pioneers as Joakim Haeggman, Jesper Parnevik and Per-Ulrik Johansson.

An extremely popular figure among his peers, Thomas has grown in stature as a European Tour committee member, and it is down to his public profile along with sterling work behind the scenes by administrators, that golf in Denmark has grown steadily in the last decade.

The co-operation of the Federation with the PGA has been, as always when nations succeed, an important part of the Danish story. Only when the best young amateur players

are coached by the best professionals in their calling, in a spirit of working together for the well-being of the sport, can progress be made.

Since the year 2000 the number of golf courses and/or driving ranges has increased from 130 to 160 and the total of amateur players by more than half from 91,000 to 140,000. This additional demand naturally requires more PGA professionals to service requirements and it has led to an expansion in the number of PGAD members from around 200 to some 324.

During this period of steady advancement, the PGA of Denmark has also played a significant part in the affairs of The PGAs of Europe with **Richard Perthen** a board member for 15 years (until his retirement from that post in 2008) and past Education Committee member **Simon Dicksee** having worked there for a period as a club pro and chairman of their training committee.

Throughout this ground-breaking period in Danish golf **Alvah Routledge** has been a leading official as President and Chairman of the association thereby suggesting an on-going consistency of leadership and development in a PGA that was founded in 1972 when golf in the region was young.

It is interesting to recall that *The PGAs of Europe Official Yearbook 2000* reports how the appearance of Tiger Woods in the 1999 SAS Invitational at Rungsted sparked a whole new wave of enthusiasm among the public at large.

Also, at that time, seminars and various educational events were taking place, young people were being shown that football was not the only healthy outdoor pursuit and a generation of elite Danish players was emerging on various professional tours.

It was once written that until Bjorn's

emergence Denmark was 'better known for the stories of Hans Christian Anderson, the Vikings, butter, bacon and fine footballers', than for its golf. **But then, Thomas and Tiger on global TV, backed by administrators' ambition behind the scenes, quite literally started that little white ball rolling....**

QUOTE: "In Denmark our courses easily matches up to the standards in this part of the world. I myself grew up in Silkeborg, which has one of Northern Europe's best and most beautiful courses. Golfing in Denmark is also a thrill because there is such a large range of different types of courses – right from seaside courses to superb, rugged woodland and parkland courses and the atmosphere in courses and club houses is great and welcoming towards guests"

Thomas Bjorn.



Soren Hansen was a big hit with the kids in The R&A Junior Golf Centre at The Open at Turnberry in July as this young lady's 'thumbs-up' illustrates

Elite Players have Made their Impact

To mark the start of the inaugural Race to Dubai, the European Tour has produced a remarkable 2009 Year Book of quite outstanding quality which features on the inside front cover, a statistical record of its 38-year existence.

This shows that of 35 countries that had provided Tour wins before the start of 2009, Denmark lay in 16th place with 18, ahead of such countries as Italy (11), Austria(2), Portugal (1), Belgium (1), Holland (4) and so on.

These 18 victories were secured by **Thomas Björn** (9), along with **Anders Hansen, Soren Hansen, Soren Kjeldsen, and Steen Tinning**...statistics to confirm that those roots that were being put down at the start of the 21st century have been gradually bearing fruit ever since.

Well-Earned PGAs of Europe Awards

A clear indication of the part played by two individuals in Danish golf's development has been given in the awards presented at The PGAs of Europe Annual Congress.

The Christer Lindberg Bowl went to Richard Perthen in 2008 for his many years of service in promoting and furthering the game in Denmark while, in 2003, **Leif Nyholm** was acclaimed as a 5-Star Professional for his contribution as a coach and later as a TV presenter and analyst. Another 5-Star Pro winner, in 1995, was Roy Howett who also served on the Education Committee before Simon Dicksee.

Leif began to appear on the TV screen just when his country's golf need such widespread TV exposure to the masses and it must be

more than coincidence that this upgraded media coverage coincided with the other elements that led to a new public interest taking shape.

It was while he was acting as coach for the Danish lady amateurs at the world championship in Vancouver that, at a function, he sat next to a young male amateur who was 'considering turning professional'. His name was Thomas Björn...and a coach/player relationship developed that was unprecedented in their country's golfing history.

Leif went on to be known as the 'Peter Alliss of Danish golf' and Thomas became a Ryder Cup player and Major Championship contender. What could have been a brief encounter proved to be a dynamic duo.

PGA of Denmark The Facts

Chairman: **Alvah Routledge**
 Head of Training: **Marcus Brown**
 Secretary: **Joan Ejertsen**

	2000	2009
Facilities	130	160
Amateur Players	91,350	140,507
PGA Professionals	202	324