

IRISH GOLFER

Play in Pink Friday an undoubted success at Dromoland

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2nd September 2023



Play in Pink National Coordinator Miriam Hand (centre) with a couple of volunteers at Dromoland Castle

Friday was Play in Pink day at the KPMG Women's Irish Open and the players and galleries duly obliged, creating a barbie-decked landscape all over the grounds of Dromoland Castle.

The golfing-wing of the Breast Cancer Research charity have become a regular presence at golf courses nationwide, running charity Play in Pink days and raising incredible amounts of donations for what is the worthiest of causes.

Miriam Hand is the driving force behind it, and the enthusiastic and driven Dublin woman's presence is almost as conspicuous as the eye-catching colour in which she, and her band of volunteers, sport and support.

"Play in Pink and the National Breast Cancer Research Institute has been nominated as the charity partner here at the KPMG Women's Irish Open and they, along with Dromoland Castle are great supporters of the charity," Hand said.

"And this year we've got great support from Horizon as well, and this has enabled us to get a lot of signage for the event. And the nice thing is that because of the Play in Pink and the golf connection, the organizers arrange for Friday of these events to be Play in Pink Friday."

Hats, coats, t-shirts, trousers, shorts, shoes, umbrellas, you name it. If it was possible to be pink, somebody had it and was sporting it, and the vast majority of the LET stars got in on the fun.

"It's been fantastic," said Hand, "and it creates awareness for the Play in Pink project, which we have in about 200 clubs all over the country, and we get great support from Golf Ireland and *Irish Golfer*. They've supported us from the very beginning and, because of that and the support from lady captains and members of clubs all over the country, Play in Pink is now phenomenal."

Since Hand began the initiative almost a decade ago, close to €2 million has been raised for the charity through Play in Pink initiatives alone – and as Hand explains, the growth over the past couple of years in particular has been rapid.

"It started off very small, but since 2015, it's been slowly gathering momentum," she said, "and then last year with over 200 clubs getting involved, we raised €450,000."

One club who've long been a proud supporter of Play in Pink is Dromoland neighbour Lahinch, and the iconic Clare club banded together to raise €25,000 this year – their biggest donation to date, having seen a gradual year-on-year rise.

It's a wonderful opportunity for our friends and guests to come to Lahinch and play golf and support the charity," said former Lahinch Lady Captain Margaret Cooney. "I don't think there's a family in the country who haven't been touched by cancer at some stage. And I think it's the one charity that you're always pushing an open door.



“People are delighted to support it, and it’s always a brilliant day at Lahinch. As well as running the actual golf, we run a raffle using the iDonate platform and the local businesses have been absolutely fabulous at supporting, you know, giving us prizes, giving us vouchers, so it’s been really, really successful.”

Like most clubs that have run Play in Pink events, women were the initial drivers and majority participants at Lahinch’s Play in Pink day, but, in a similar vein to what’s been seen all over the country, more and more men are getting involved as tournaments have become unisex and the supporting men only too delighted to don their pink colours.

“In the last couple of years, Paddy [Keane], our manager has he has been fantastic and very supportive,” said Cooney. “He has enabled us to use the Castle Course and to get the men involved and some of the ladies who don’t really want to play on the Old course.

“So we’ve had the men involved for the last number years as well. And that’s a huge contributor.”

Making it as simple as possible to run a Play in Pink event has been a clear objective of Hand’s, and all you need do is register and the Play in Pink team will come onsite and offer considerable support.

“There’s plenty of time to register for 2023,” said Hand, “and then come 2024 register as soon as you can. But there’s no deadline for running events. You could do it up to Christmas if you want to, you know.

“If you register, we’ll send you out the prizes, we’ll send you out support like signage, templates for posters and things like that if you want them. But a lot of the clubs do spectacular things themselves, you know, they’ve all got into the run of it.”

“So it used to be an all ladies event but now the men are as good as the ladies and they’re great supporters. And they all look very, very well in pink and I think they love wearing it,” she added with a grin.