

# AA Insurance Ladies Championships

## A. The Brief

Founded in 1893, the Irish Ladies Golf Union is the oldest ladies golf union in the world. The organisation is responsible for the development of the game of ladies golf in Ireland and caters for 381 affiliated clubs. O'Herlihy Communications was appointed as the public relations partner of the ILGU in 2005. Our brief was to;

- Raise the profile of women's golf in Ireland with the intention of attracting new players to the game.
- Raise the profile of the ILGU so that existing players and new players would be attracted to become members of the ILGU
- Develop and implement a media relations strategy at a regional and national level to ensure that ladies golf was given a voice in the media
- Overcome all difficulties associated with ensuring that editorial space and airtime was afforded to ladies golf
- Exploit the opportunity that existed to find a sponsor for the ILGU to complement its reputation as one the largest women's sporting organisations in the country
- Promote the opportunities that existed for a sponsor to target a database of 60,000 ILGU members when presenting a sponsor package to potential sponsors

## B. Statement of Objectives

OHC set a clear objective to secure a corporate sponsor in order to facilitate the ILGU in introducing the first ever All-Ireland ladies golf championship as the key to achieving all of the goals in our brief;

OHC set the following objectives;

- To secure a six figure sponsorship package as the biggest ever sponsorship in the history of Irish ladies golf
- To facilitate the ILGU in utilising the sponsorship to develop the first ever All-Ireland competition for lady golfers, open to golfers of all ages and handicaps
- To implement a public relations campaign to publicise the sponsorship package and to promote the launch of the new All-Ireland ladies golf championship
- To put media relations structures in place at regional level by training a team of regional ILGU PROs to promote the new All-Ireland championship to ensure value for the sponsor
- To develop media relations structures through OHC at national level to promote the competition and its sponsor in the national and regional media
- To manage a national and regional public relations campaign to launch the competition and to promote its evolution.

## C. Programme Planning and Strategy

OHC developed a strategy which comprised of a number of stages spread over a total of four months and set out as follows;

## June and July 2005 inclusive

Stage One: A shortlist of potential and suitable corporate sponsors was drawn up from OHC's corporate database. Potential sponsors were identified on the basis of being able to deliver a six figure sponsorship deal and their natural fit with the sport. Consideration was also given to sponsors who would recognise the value of being able to access the ILGU database as a marketing tool.

Stage Two: OHC prepared a marketing kit in association with the ILGU for the purpose of presenting the sponsorship proposal to the potential sponsors that we identified. Our sponsorship proposal outlined the benefits of sponsoring the ILGU, detailed how sponsorship would work, and defined the parameters of the deal.

OHC advised the ILGU in negotiating and securing a confidential six figure sponsorship package each year for three years between AA Insurance and the ILGU and in putting the terms and conditions of the deal into place between the two parties.

Stage Three: The ILGU, in consultation with OHC, devised the essential components of the new 'AA Insurance Ladies Golf Championship' – the first All-Ireland competition of its kind – which has resulted in the radical development of the ladies national golfing calendar.

## October 2005

Stage Four: OHC organised a gala launch at Elm Park Golf Club on October 27, 2005 attended by 300 guests.

OHC prepared and managed respective video presentations by the ILGU and AA Insurance at the event detailing the structure of the new competition and highlighting the sponsorship support of AA Insurance and the commercial service that the company provides.

OHC managed all media relations around the event attracting RTE radio and television, SKY News and City Channel television. The story was given generous airtime on each station and featured prominently on RTE 6/1 news and SKY News. Feature radio interviews on RTE were also organised.

OHC arranged and managed a unique photocall which captured the essence of the new competition. It brought two sets of golfing twins together, namely Ann Heskin, the President of the ILGU and her sister Oonagh Fitzpatrick and 10 year old identical twins Leona and Lisa Maguire from Cavan who play off 10 and 12 handicaps respectively. The photograph was widely used in the following day's newspapers.

OHC also organised a series of television and radio news interviews with the two Maguire twins, Sinead Heraty, the CEO of the ILGU and members of the management team at AA Insurance.

OHC devised and implemented a media relations campaign in the print media which extended coverage of the launch of the new competition beyond the event itself over a three day period into the following weekend's Sunday newspapers.

## February 2006

Stage Five: OHC organised a media training day for a team of regional ILGU PRO's and worked alongside AA Insurance to conduct the course which examined how to generate the widest possible coverage for the new championship through the regional print and broadcast media.

The course gave an insight into how to develop and present stories, the dynamics of the local media, and the importance of maximising opportunities to develop the identify of the competition and to promote AA Insurance's sponsorship. As part of this stage OHC also set up the structures to facilitate the delivery of results from the new championship to the local media and to the national media through OHC.

Stage Six: OHC developed and implemented a media strategy to promote the draw for the new competition and the fact that one in four lady golfers had been attracted to enter and compete in it. The campaign was conducted at a national and regional level and was especially successful in targeting its audience at regional level.

Stage Seven: OHC is managing a weekly results and reports service at national level which is achieving all of the goals set out in our brief. This work is being conducted in line with our original brief and the cost is being met by our monthly retainer.

#### **D. Measurement**

OHC achieved all of the objectives set out in our brief on the basis of a monthly retainer with the ILGU. Our work on this project was concentrated on key months during the year and it was especially focused on October 2005 when the new competition was launched.

OHC conducted media monitoring across the national and regional media mediums and measured the values derived from the extensive coverage that was achieved. The values hugely exceeded the accumulated cost of our work over the key months. OHC generated €96,938 worth of coverage in the national print media and €27,698 worth of coverage in the regional print press on top of primetime radio and television coverage.

#### **Media Coverage**

The launch of The AA Insurance Ladies Championship achieved significant national and regional print coverage and radio and television coverage, highlighting the success of the media relations strategy devised by OHC.

High photographic visibility across the tabloid and broadsheet media was well received and recognised by AA Insurance and the ILGU. ILGU President Ann Heskin and Chief Executive Sinéad Heraty were afforded the opportunity to promote the competition and the ILGU through a series of television and radio interviews including the RTE Six One News and Robbie Irwin's Sport Bag on RTE Radio 1.

The regional newspaper strategy put into place around the launch of the AA Insurance Ladies Championship was an outstanding success generating strong print and accompanying photographic coverage in sixteen local newspapers throughout the country.

The success of the public relations campaign continued from October 2005 through to February, 2006 with impressive local and national coverage arising from the announcement of the draws for the competition. A measure of the campaign's success is that journalists, especially journalists in the regional media, are now pro-actively seeking information on the 'AA Insurance Ladies Championships'. The competition has quickly established an identity as a significantly important event on the Irish sporting calendar.

The profile of the ILGU as a sporting organisation in Ireland has been significantly raised through the promotion of the 'AA Insurance Ladies Championships'. The success of our media relations strategies have highlighted the fact that the ILGU is one of the fastest growing sporting organisations in the country and that its membership has doubled in the past decade.

The launch of the Championship provided a platform to develop the reputation of the ILGU Chief Executive, Sinead Heraty as a new voice in Irish sport and to promote her identify as the driving force behind the radical development of women's golf in Ireland.

Furthermore, the launch of the competition boosted the profile of some of the ILGU's rising stars, most notably Leona and Lisa Maguire. There is now an acute media awareness of the twins and their talent. OHC secured a feature news piece on them on RTE's children's news programme News2Day and facilitated media relations around their subsequent success at international tournaments, generating unprecedented coverage for golfers of their age. This would not have come about without the initial exposure that they received through their participation in the 'AA Insurance Ladies Championships'.

#### Golfer participation and membership growth

The most significant measure of success of the public relations campaign is evident in the numbers of club golfers who have entered the 'AA Insurance Ladies Championships'. 15,000, or one in four, lady golfers have entered the competition. The ILGU report that there has been much excitement and a positive reaction from the 381 affiliated clubs and that membership is growing. By embracing the 'AA Insurance Ladies Championships', the ILGU members have positioned the event as the prime event in their club golf calendar.

#### E. Budget

OHC met the cost of putting the sponsorship package in place and all other elements associated with its launch and promotion from the monthly retainer (with billing for additional hours) that is in place with the ILGU. Our work on the project was concentrated on June, July and October of 2005 and February 2006. The total cost of this work over these four months was €14,576. OHC is charging the ILGU a monthly retainer of €1,600 from which the cost of providing the ongoing results service is being met together with the cost of all other work on the account. The results service will continue up until August 2006.

(The value of the sponsorship package is confidential and is referred to as a six figure sum each year for three years).

#### F. Appendix

Enclosed are the original press release and a limited number of press clippings from a variety of both national and local newspapers.