



**AUSTRALIA**  
**BRUCE YOUNG**

Former Leading Caddy  
Course Design Marketer and now  
leading Australian Golf Analyst



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

He had found himself almost drifting off that day and wondered to himself whether there might be a way to inject something different into tournament golf by creating a new format to run hand in glove with the traditional form of the game.

“One Day Cricket was the all the rage in the game at that time and so I started thinking about a range of concepts I thought might work in creating a one day golf event that was a little bit different,” said Langford-Jones recently. “A few years later I was back up at Coolum on a site visit for the PGA and Rod Leembruggen and I, over a bottle of red, started talking about a concept that would incorporate both forms of the game. He loved the idea so much that he has now put his heart and soul behind it.”

Leembruggen is an event manager based in Melbourne with lengthy ties to the tournament side of golf. He began during the heady days of the Vines Classic which in turn

Several years ago the PGA Tour of Australasia’s Director of Tournaments, Andrew Langford-Jones, sat in his ‘rules buggy’ at the Australian PGA Championship at Hyatt Regency Coolum contemplating the state of tournament golf.

became the Heineken Classic in Perth. He moved with the Heineken Classic to Melbourne and later played a key role in the establishment and success of the Australian PGA Championship at Hyatt Regency Coolom.

The Langford-Jones dream was fine tuned to the point that in June the Surf Coast Knockout at The Sands Torquay near Geelong in Melbourne was officially launched. The event is to be played in the third week of January 2011.

Essentially the event will see a full field of professionals lining up, initially, 36 holes of strokeplay after which a cut will be made to the leading 50 players and ties then another cut made after 54 holes to the leading 32 players. At that point those 32 players enter a series of six hole match play contests on the final day to eventually arrive at the two finalists who will play off for the title.

“I looked at it (the concept) and thought what does golf need to do,” said Langford-Jones. “Firstly it needs to give the patron a quick result rather than having to wait four days and secondly we needed to find a way to provide something or someone for the fans to barrack for if they do not know the players.

“Hopefully the format answers one of the question and with the second we are looking at creating teams of four amongst the final 32 who will be named after the various sponsors involved in the tournament.

“We are currently discussing with a couple of betting agencies as to how we might formulate a betting table for the overall winner and the teams’ winner also. So a punter might be able to bet on ▶

*Mathew Goggin and Geoff Ogilvy  
talk to Tournament Director  
Andrew Langford-Jones*



# THINKING OUTSIDE THE SQUARE



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Director of Operations for PGA Tour of  
Australasia Andrew Langford-Jones

ABOVE A shortened 'Shootout'  
competition played under lights on  
the Gold Coast has proven a hit.

the A,B,C or D Team, or whatever, plus the format overall opens up plenty of betting options.

“The other issue we faced was to convince the PGA to include it as an Australasian Tour Order of Merit tournament and, by making it a four day event, we managed to do just that. There will be a limited amount of prizemoney for the top five finishers in the 54 holes of strokeplay but the bulk of the prizemoney will be distributed to those who graduate to the matchplay phase on the Sunday.

“There are a number of innovations we are considering including the possibility of the leading qualifier picking who they want to play in the opening match on the Sunday and so on. We would need to get that past the Player’s Council but if we can do so it would add a further dimension to the tournament dinner on the Saturday evening before the final day as there would be much interest in who chooses who to play against.”

This venue for the event will be The Sands Torquay, a relatively new golf course owned by the same company who developed Moonah Links on the Mornington Peninsula, the Handbury Group. Moonah Links has staged two Australian Open championships and three Nationwide Tour events known as the Moonah Classic.

“When I sat down with Paddy (Handbury) at a dinner he thought it was a sensational concept and thought his new Stuart Appleby designed Sands Golf Course would be a great venue for it,” said Langford-Jones.

The Sands Torquay is near Torquay, 20 minutes from Geelong and 90 minutes from Melbourne and with Handbury being a resident of Geelong he thought the new format would promote both his new facility and the Geelong Torquay region.

According to Langford-Jones the event will be covered by both Channel Ten and One HD on

the Sunday with each six hole match expected to take around 75 minutes. The final is expected to take place in prime viewing time between 5.30 and 7.00pm. It will also be shown in New Zealand.

The Surf Coast Knockout is a response to what Langford-Jones sees as a growing need to think beyond the traditional tournament but what he and others have come up with is not altogether unique. Earlier this year in Jamaica the LPGA Tour played an event that was restricted to a field of 32 divided into four groups of eight. They played six hole matches on a round robin basis before quarter finalists, semi finalists and finalists were decided.

In Australia in recent times the concept of a shootout style competition has grown legs to the point that an event under lights at Emerald Lakes on the Gold Coast has developed quite a following. Under that format, 10 golfers play nine holes with one player per hole eliminated before two players remain to play the final hole. Crowds of up to 1000 people have watched the likes of Peter Senior, Rodger Davis, Nathan Green, Graham Marsh, Kurt Barnes and Terry Price battle it out.

Golfing purists scoffed when One Day Cricket was launched and they laughed even harder when the Twenty20 cricket was initially mooted but so popular have those products become that they now play World Cups in both formats.

Can the shortened version of the game of golf take off to the same degree? Only time will tell but, like Langford-Jones, there are many out there looking at solutions to an alarming and in some cases a growing disinterest in the professional game. Professional tournament golf is, after all, no more or less than the entertainment industry and failure to entertain will be its death knell.

The Surf Coast Knockout may offer both an insight and litmus test as to whether the golfing public is ready to adopt such a change. ✕