

Oswestry Games - Olly M's Blog - Minigolf Q&A

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Amongst some of the more established sports on offer for participants at the Oswestry Games are some less traditional pursuits. One of these is the popular sport of Minigolf. Oswestry Games Mascot Olly M had the chance to speak with BMGA Spokesman Richard Gottfried, one of the event organisers for the Minigolf coaching & competitions at the Oswestry Games ahead of his and the BMGA's visit.

Olly M: *For people who don't know about Minigolf, could you give a brief explanation of the sport?*

Richard Gottfried: Minigolf is also often known as Mini Golf, Miniature Golf, Adventure Golf and Crazy Golf. The aim of the game is to get a ball into the hole in as few shots as possible, ideally scoring a hole-in-one on every hole

Courses vary greatly, although there are some standardised obstacles and hole designs. There will often be loop-di-loops, volcanoes, windmills, water wheels, plateaus and all manner of lumps, bumps and tunnels to contend with on a course.

In Minigolf, players each take their turn to play out the hole before the next player begins their turn. In the final of the Castle Golf World Crazy Golf Championships held in Hastings each October the rules state that everyone's ball is in play at the same time and you can knock an opponent's ball out of the way, but this is an exception.

In competitions players are allowed to use different types of specialist Minigolf balls, there are over 2,000 available! They all have different properties to better enable a player to tackle a hole. For example, some pipe or tunnel holes would be better played with a ball that doesn't bounce much, so you would choose a 'dead' ball for the job. Alternatively you may find that a ball which is super bouncy is needed so you can play a shot which rebounds before it reaches the hole. The multitude of Minigolf balls available help the Minigolfer to get passed some of the fiendishly designed holes and their obstacles, but it still takes some practice!

OM: *It was a pleasant surprise to have the British Minigolf Association contact the Oswestry Games organisers and offer to be a part of the games and we're excited to have expert players on hand and a portable Minigolf course at the fun day. Can you tell us what people can expect from the Minigolf events at the Oswestry Games?*

RG: It's a real honour for Minigolf and the British Minigolf Association to be a part of the Oswestry Games. It's the first time Minigolf will be a part of a multi-sport event in the UK and we're all looking forward to showing people the competition and technical side of the sport. Minigolf is a very accessible sport that many people have played at the seaside or on holiday, but there is also a national competition circuit with prizes and ranking points on offer.

At the Oswestry Games the BMGA will be running coaching and training sessions at the 18-hole Miniature Golf course at Cae Glas Park on Saturday 14th July. Between 11am and 3pm players from the BMGA Tour and Great Britain Minigolf Team will be on hand to give hints and tips. At 1pm we'll be organising a Pro-Am Doubles Minigolf competition where members of the public can join in a competition by pairing up with an experienced competition player. There's no need to book so people can turn up on the day, but to help give us an idea of numbers for the training sessions and competition anyone interested can email us at membership@minigolf.org.uk for further information.

On Sunday 15th July we'll be at the Fun Day at Oswestry Leisure Centre where the Minigolf Company PutterFingers.co.uk has kindly agreed to bring along their portable 9-hole Minigolf course. There will be an 'Open' competition running all day to find the *BMGA & Putter Fingers Oswestry Games Minigolf Open* Champion! The BMGA players will also be having an elite-player competition on the course that will count towards the BMGA National Strokeplay Order of Merit Rankings! It's going to be a busy few days and we're looking forward to bringing Minigolf to the people of Oswestry.

OM: *Can you tell us a bit more about Minigolf Competitions?*

RG: Yes indeed. Every season the BMGA organises a tournament calendar, last year there were 22 Ranking BMGA Tour competitions and a total of 12 players lifted BMGA Tour titles in Open, Invitational, Club and Doubles events. This year there have been competitions in Birmingham,

Worthing and Hastings and there are tournaments planned to take place in Margate, Sidcup, London and Dorrige.

There are a mixture of competitions, some are one-day events, while 'Major' events such as the British Championships, British Open and World Crazy Golf Championships take place over seven-rounds in two-days.

In BMGA tournaments players compete for trophies, cash prizes and ranking points, as well as bragging rights. There are some team and doubles events, while most contests are played an individual level.

Players who compete in the Oswestry Games Minigolf competitions will have a chance to win a BMGA 'Tour Pro' membership for the 2012 season, along with a free tournament entry to a one-day competition this season.

OM: *Is Minigolf played all over the world?*

RG: Yes, Minigolf is played in many countries around the world. The governing body, the World Minigolf Sport Federation (WMF), has over 40 member associations with more than 35,000 registered competition players. Not every country has a competition structure or a national association, while others have a very established tournament calendar and sizeable membership. The largest Minigolfing nations are Germany, Sweden, Austria and Switzerland. There are World and Continental Minigolf Championships for WMF member countries held in adult, senior and junior categories.

Great Britain has sent teams and players to compete in competitions in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Finland, Sweden, Latvia, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Romania, Japan and China. This year the GB Team will be playing at the EMF European Championships in Porto, Portugal.

Minigolf is looking to be a part of more multi-sport events in the future and in 2012 Minigolf will also be a competition in the Hans Christian Andersen City Games in Denmark. The WMF is a member of SportAccord, the association of international sports federations, and in 1989 Minigolf was a demonstration sport in the World Games in Karlsruhe, Germany. The WMF is pushing for Olympic recognition, so who knows what the future holds for the sport!

OM: *How big is the sport in the UK?*

RG: Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of rounds of Minigolf are played by people of all ages in the UK each year. The BMGA has a membership of around 300 people and the larger tournaments such as the British Open and Castle Golf World Crazy Golf Championships will often attract new players. There are a core group of players that travel around the competition circuit and there is a great social side to the game too.

Away from the intense competition on the course members will often meet-up for meals and other events and you will often find groups of players enjoying a side-tournament here and there, recently a social Darts competition was organised and it's a great way for players to mix and have even more fun. That's one of the best things about sports, the bringing together of different people and the forming of friendships.

In the UK the BMGA is promoting the game by holding tournaments at a number of different courses and offering two types of membership, with serious players able to sign-up for 'Tour Pro' status and a free standard membership for people who want to find out more and keep in touch with news about Minigolf.

The BMGA and Great Britain Team are very happy to be a part of the 2012 Oswestry Games and our players are looking forward to showcasing the sport. One of the main aims of the BMGA is to raise the profile of the sport of Minigolf in the UK and with the help of the Oswestry Games we are looking to get people involved in both the competition and fun sides of playing Mini and Crazy Golf.

OM: *Where else can people play Minigolf in the UK?*

RG: There are over 600 Minigolf courses in the UK and they come in a variety of types, sizes, condition and location. You might find them at seaside resorts, on holiday camps, or in parks. Some of the newer Adventure Golf courses are being built in leisure parks and shopping centres! In and around Shropshire you have the 18-hole course at Cae Glas Park and there is a course in Telford.

The Midlands has a number of courses and there are regular BMGA Tour competitions held at the 36-hole indoor Adventure Golf courses at Star City in Birmingham. Two of the next events on the BMGA calendar see us head to the 12-hole Minigolf course at the Four Ashes Golf Centre in Dorridge, near Solihull. We'll be playing the Midlands Open and BMGA British Doubles Championship on Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th September and players are very welcome to attend.

Other courses in the Midlands and Wales can be found in Birmingham, West Bromwich, Dorridge, Prestatyn, Rhyl, Towyn and Llandudno. A great website for finding courses around the UK and the rest of the world is MiniatureGolfer.com <http://www.miniaturegolfer.com/minigolfcourses.html>

The BMGA also has a number of affiliated Minigolf clubs including the Cambridgeshire Minigolf Club, Kent Minigolf Club, London Minigolf Club, Midlands Minigolf Club, the Planet Hastings Crazy Golf Club and the Splash Point Mini Golf Club. New clubs can be formed by people at courses, in towns, or regions and there will hopefully be a Scottish club forming soon.

OM: *Have you got any tips for aspiring Minigolf champions?*

RG: One of the keys is to practice. Ahead of competitions players will spend time mapping out the holes and obstacles looking for the best way to play the shots. There are also standardised rules in Minigolf and the rules differ to what some people may play on a day trip to the seaside. For example, if your ball comes to rest at the edge of the course, or at an obstacle you are allowed to move it eight inches to allow you to get a backswing. Also, the maximum number of shots you will ever take is a '7'. This happens if you have taken six shots without getting the ball in the hole.

You can find the Abridged Rules of Minigolf on the BMGA website at http://www.minigolf.org.uk/joomla/attachments/057_Introduction%20to%20the%20British%20Minigolf%20Association.pdf Players who come along to the events at Cae Glas Park on Saturday 14th July and at the Oswestry Games Fun Day on Sunday 15th July will be able to meet and speak to players from the BMGA Tour, some of whom have played overseas for the Great Britain Team. It'll be a great chance to pick up some tips on how to play the game. We're hoping to see a lot of holes-in-one!

OM: *Thank you for the information, we look forward to welcoming you to the Oswestry Games.*

RG: No problem, we are all looking forward to the event and spending some time in Oswestry and soaking up the atmosphere of the Oswestry Games.

For details of the Minigolf events and the British Minigolf Association please click [here](http://www.minigolf.org.uk/joomla/index.php?view=details&id=85%3Athe-oswestry-games-minigolf-coaching-a-competitions&option=com_eventlist&Itemid=56) http://www.minigolf.org.uk/joomla/index.php?view=details&id=85%3Athe-oswestry-games-minigolf-coaching-a-competitions&option=com_eventlist&Itemid=56