

# ROAD TO THE OPEN 2017

## ROYAL BIRKDALE

In the summer of 2017, in partnership with the Golf Foundation, StreetGames projects across the country have been playing StreetGolf. This is a fun and accessible way for young people to have a go at playing golf using adapted golf equipment in an urban setting. For some StreetGames participants this is the first time they have ever played golf in any form.

The summer StreetGolf programme culminated in three StreetGames projects being given the opportunity to attend the 146th Open Championship at Royal Birkdale Golf Club. The projects involved were Liverpool City Council, Wirral Borough Council and Sefton MBC, each bringing a group of young people to experience live golf for the first time.

As part of their visit to Birkdale, the groups had the opportunity to demonstrate the StreetGolf skills they had learnt in their sessions at the Golf Foundation hosted StreetGolf zone in the fan park area before heading out onto the course to watch the best players in the world battle the classic links golf elements at Royal Birkdale.



None of the young people who attended had ever watched golf before (the most experienced golfer in the groups had been to the driving range once) and many admitted that they had quite negative perceptions of Golf as a sport before they came, most had thought of golf as “boring” and associated it with being an “old man’s sport”!

It didn’t take long though for the excitement on course to capture the interests of the group. With some testing conditions, the players really stepped up and showcased just how good they are – a sight the groups, even with limited knowledge of the sport, found impressive.

One element of the day which surprised the groups was the scale of the event and the buzz around the crowd, most had expected the atmosphere to be quiet and frankly quite dull (and again mainly attended by old men!). They weren’t expecting to see other young people, just like them, also there.

Every project leader agreed that having attended The Open, the perceptions of golf within their young people had certainly changed a great deal throughout the day. One project leader commented that they couldn’t believe how fast the time had passed, his group had been walking around the course for seven hours before they realised what time it was!

Testament to the changed perception and perhaps most importantly, the impact on the young people has been transferred into a desire to play golf themselves now. All of the project leaders commented on how their young people had shown a real motivation to take part in not only their StreetGolf sessions, but also playing golf outside of their project sessions. One group from Liverpool had recently played their first ever round at a pitch and putt local to them – an incredible transformation from perceiving Golf to be “boring” and “not for them” to choosing to play in their own leisure time. The impact of having the chance to attend The Open for these young people cannot be underestimated.

