

Could this app change THE FACE OF GOLF?

If you think of it, this can do it: book a tee time, book a lesson, book time on the simulator, check in to a competition, pay for it, view a handicap, top up an account, enter scores into a digital card and virtually sign for them, show yardages from on board GPS, view a live leaderboard, order of merit or winter league, pay for a pint and lunch, fork out for a sleeve of balls in the pro shop and book an open competition anywhere in the country.

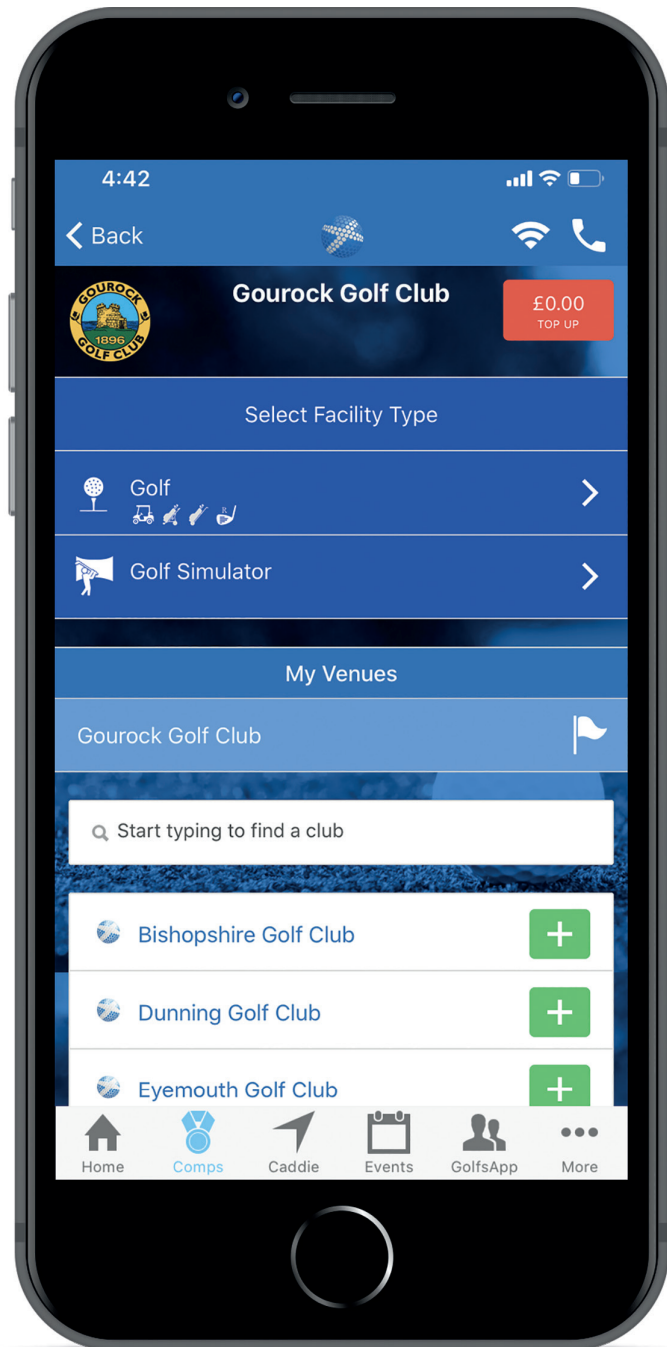
It's all done from your phone and with nothing more than a series of clicks.

If that extensive list, which is by no means exhaustive, doesn't serve to show you the revolution that's coming to Scottish golf clubs when the World Handicap System arrives in November, then one additional fact might just tip the balance.

Outside of the existing affiliation fee that every club member pays Scottish Golf each year, there is no extra charge to golf clubs.

It's probably no surprise then that this app, provided as part of their new Venue Management System, has ruffled some feathers in the golf industry.

The governing body has partnered with OCS Sport to provide the digital service, which is designed to give clubs everything from a customisable website to full control over their green fees, tee sheets and booking structures.



Scottish Golf's new Venue Management System gives golfers an app that puts everything in the palm of their hands. **Could it catch on at your club?**

And as it prepares to roll out officially over the next few months, its subsequent performance will beg the obvious question: will other governing bodies follow suit?

Scottish Golf have 103 clubs configured at present (around 20 per cent of the total number in the country) and a further 124 transitioning to take on VMS, which also comprises a wide-ranging software solution behind the scenes in the office.

But where it will seem really attractive to both clubs and golfers is in the way it gives them the power to use their own data.

Players wanting to make a booking, for example, will get the prices that apply to them – whether that's a members' guest rate, or a visitor green fee.

It works because VMS, through a log-in provided by Scottish Golf, knows whether a prospective booking is being made by a member, a player at another golf club or an independent golfer.

On the course, if there's a jam, a pace of play traffic light system on the app tells each group whether they are on time or not. The time allocated for each hole is controlled by the club, so the pace of play offenders will know who they are.

Messaging services create WhatsApp-style groups where members can link together and chat or arrange ties, and a news function means clubs

can communicate directly with members.

The app will have practical benefits in the office, too. With players encouraged to submit scores digitally, by marking and signing virtual scorecards, a PDF version is subsequently produced that is stored in the cloud.

Participating clubs will no longer have to find space for drawers full of old cards going back two years as paper copies gradually become redundant.

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Even though it's still several months before the app really flowers, it has already been showing its benefits to those participating in a trial period.

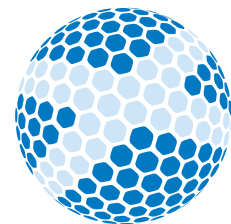
When clubs were able to stay open during the coronavirus outbreak, and members encouraged to take part in social distancing and avoiding pinch points around the clubhouse, players at Gourrock, on the banks of the Clyde, were able to take care of much of their business with their mobiles.

They were asked to enter competitions online, check in to those events with their phone as well as entering their scores on their handsets.

They were able to see results on a live leaderboard and to sign for both their marker's signature and their own in the same way.

This set up allowed golfers to change their shoes in the car park, and avoid congregating prior to tee-times, the app assisted the club in massively reducing the number of places where anyone could potentially come within two metres of another player or member of staff.

It was a novel solution to what was an unprecedented problem and, when the pandemic finally comes to an end and a semblance of normality starts to resume, Scottish Golf will hope the app's flexibility – and the software muscle that sits behind it – will help clubs as they begin to rebuild and look ahead to the future. 🏌️



Scottish Golf