

# Retford Golf Club

## Press Release

14 March 2024



### James Freeman – PGA Fellow

James has been awarded the status of Fellow with the Professional Golfers Association for his coaching work at Retford Golf Club and elsewhere. This is a rare and distinguished honour recognising his dedication and hard work as a Golf Coach. Since the PGA launched their Excel scheme in 2022 only 4 coaches nationally are believed to have been recognised in this way and only James in the East Midlands.



James first joined Retford Golf Club at the age of 12, and his name appears several times on RGC honours boards. He went on to represent the club in both UK national and international amateur tournaments including qualification to represent England at an international Grand Prix in Biarritz, France, where they won the Nations Cup for England.

He turned professional to play full-time on the PGA Euro Pro Tour, and the European Challenge Tour but after three years he was unfortunate to pick up a career threatening back injury, which took him two years away from the golf course. This inspired him to take a degree in Professional Golf Studies at the University of Birmingham, from which he graduated in 2017. Since then he has been combining a continued playing career

in local regional and national professional events with a flourishing coaching practice.

At Retford Golf Club has developed teaching philosophies based around injury prevention, and enabling players to have longevity in the game. He has continued a range of additional studies with top golf coaches, physios, and conditioning coaches in order to expand his knowledge in these areas.

Although a fully qualified professional, he is intent on keeping his knowledge up-to-date by attending PGA CPD (continuing professional development) seminars, and developing further as a coach in order to offer the best service possible to his clients. During his PGA degree, he was also the ambassador for the PGA's Modern Apprenticeship Course for 16 to 24-year-olds.

He runs group sessions for ladies, beginners and juniors at Retford as well as individuals from rabbits to scratch golfers and is extremely proud of all of the players he coaches and their achievements in improving and reducing their handicaps.



He has also been retained to coach County Squads in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. He is particularly keen on developing the talents of young golfers who he believes are the future of our great game.

Andrew Cooke has been with James as coach for a number of years since joining the Woodfield Golf Academy age 17 and James has seen him reduce his handicap from 20 to scratch. Andrew says “James has been a massive inspiration to me, not just as a coach, but as a mentor and friend”. So much so that Andrew is now on the same PGA Degree course that James did and wanting to specialise in coaching himself.



Another of James's pupils, Owen Rafferty, last year won through to the Grand Final of the under 16s Faldo Junior Tour in Abu Dhabi, playing off scratch. He also went unbeaten in the interclub scratch league playing for Retford.

James's loyalty to Retford Golf Club is without question and he is committed to trying to develop it as a centre of excellence in golf coaching.

Recently he was instrumental in acquiring funding from Nottinghamshire Golf Union to help with the provision of a DriRange golf shelter for the Retford practice ground and he spends many hours each week there and in and around the clubhouse

working with the Members, visitors and staff.

Of this latest accolade he says "I thought that I would love to be an Advanced Coach - then once I'd achieved that I thought why not keep pressing and trying to keep going. To now be a Fellow Coach is fantastic – it's quite a big step up. The framework is well within everybody's reach and you just have to put some time into it. PGA Excel is a brilliant system and they give you a chance to specialise in an area that you're most interested in which, for me, is coaching".

There are 2 more levels up the Excel structure all the way to "Master Coach" and you wouldn't bet against James going all the way to the top.

Charles Cooke

Communications Group