

Castle Miscellany – Our Club, Our People, Our Stories



Our Outstanding Ladies ‘Scratch Cup’ Champions

1927-2025

Part Two

The ‘Top Six’ Champions

Wins	Name	Period
17	Mrs J.W. Naismith (Vera) – Lady Captain 1951	1952 – 1978
17	Sinead Heraty	1990 – 2025
9	Yvonne Manahan	1988 – 2011
6	Mrs J.J. Carroll (Ethel) – Lady Captain 1948	1935 – 1948
5	Mary Kenny	1981 – 1985
4	Angela O’Flanagan	1933-1938

In **Part One** of this you story were initially introduced to the first ‘Scratch Cup’ winner **Molly McLoughlin**, who won the **Ladies Irish Close Championship** in the same year 1927, entering the Close from Dun Laoghaire Golf Club.

Then you were introduced to the first of our ‘Top Six’ winners **Angela O’Flanagan** who won four times between 1933 and 1948; followed by **Ethel Carroll** who won the title six times between 1935 and 1948. The third ‘Top Six’ winner was the legendary **Vera Naismith**, who won the title an extraordinary seventeen times between 1952 and 1978.

Mary Kenny

The fourth ‘Top Six’ champion was a very talented young lady named **Mary Kenny** who won the title five times in succession between 1981 and 1985.

Mary was the daughter of members **Denis** and **Kitty Kenny**, the youngest in a family of five. Denis was from Tralee, County Kerry and Kitty from Corraclare, County Clare.

Mary’s four brothers all played golf in the Castle at one time. Today two live in Canada and one is now a member of Powerscourt. An uncle **Bill Kenny**, twin brother of Mary’s Dad Denis, was also a respected member. The only Kenny family member still with us today is Mary’s brother **Rory Kenny**.

You may ask why Mary is considered to have been so exceptional. Well the facts speak for themselves. Besides winning the Scratch Cup in five consecutive years, she set a Castle Ladies course record – an amazing **65 gross**, in a earlier technology era. The current Ladies record is 74.

Mary was capped three years in succession on the Irish Girl's team, and gained full Leinster Caps in 1981 and 1982. In 1981 she was runner-up in the Irish Ladies Close Championship, only losing the final to the legendary Mary McKenny, on the 19th hole.

Mary in addition to being a talented golfer, was a fine singer, good fun and a high performing student who went on to study medicine in Trinity. Her medical career led to her meeting her American husband to be, while working in James's Hospital. Mary departed Ireland in the late 1980's, settling in Denver, Colorado, where she and her husband progressed their careers and raised their family.

Mary in time joined Denver Country Club, a club founded in 1887, with memberships only available by invitation. On being given a tour her attention was brought to a photo gallery of a Curtis Cup match played at the Club in 1982, won by the US team. The GB&I Captain that year was **Marie O'Donnell** from Donegal and the team included three Irish players **Mary McKenna**, **Maureen Madill**, and **Claire Nesbitt**. The tour host were amazed that Mary personally knew and played with many of the GB&I team . . . at the end of the tour the hosts took no time in issuing a membership invitation!!!

Yvonne Manahan

The fifth 'Top Six' winner is our current member **Yvonne Manahan**, who won nine Scratch Cup titles between 1988 and 2011. Yvonne was one of the "golden girls" cluster that developed their golf under the Celeste Kenny initiative in 1972. Besides her successes in the Scratch Cup Yvonne has clocked up an extraordinary number of wins both in the Castle and elsewhere. Yvonne, like Rory and Pdraigh, has to have a glittering trophy room at home!!!

Yvonne, in addition to her Scratch Cup wins, has won **Seven Majors**, including the **2012 Lady Captain's Prize (Vivienne Cosgrave)**; three Fourball Matchplay titles; a Foursomes Matchplay title; two Victory Cup wins; an Autumn Trophy and was Golfer of the Year in both 2009 and 2010.

Included in Yvonne's seven Major wins were six consecutive wins in the President's Prize to the Ladies, then a matchplay event, from 1988 to 1994. Her next exceptional run was winning the Ladies fourball title three years in succession between 2011 and 2013, in partnership with Anne Vella.

Two other significant wins for Yvonne were the winning of the **ILGU Open Foursomes Matchplay** with Gobbie Moran in 1989 and winning the very prestigious **Milltown Mixed Foursomes** with Caoimhin Mangan in 1996.

Yvonne has Castle DNA in her veins, with both her parents **Gladys** and **Jack Manahan** being great members. Her uncle **Captain Joe Manahan**, as well as being a member, served as our Club Secretary from 1975 to 1981. Yvonne's brother **Tony**, a current long-term member, is a go-to advisor for the Club on planning issues.

Loreto educated, sports became an integral part of Yvonne's youth, with a great love of tennis, squash, and hockey, plus golf. Yvonne has been a great club member, serving on the Board, the Greens and Ladies Committees including a spell as the Ladies Treasurer and Ladies team Coordinator. It is members like Yvonne that are the heartbeat of our Club.

Today Yvonne is an active member of the Bridge Club, which shows that she is well able to manage a deck of cards as well as a golf card. This season she won the Bridge Silver Plate in partnership with Lorna Hood.

Sinead Heraty

Last, but not least, of our 'Top Six' Champions is Sinead Heraty. Sinead is the youngest of six children, three boys and three girls, from Ballinalee in Longford, where her family ran a full-service business, encompassing a shop, a pub, an undertaking business, and a farm. Her Mum and Dad were both keen golfers and members of Longford Golf Club, founded in 1894. They served as Captain and Lady Captain in the 1960's. Sinead was introduced to golf by her parents at an early age accompanying them to the course equipped with a cut-down hickory shafted iron. Today Sinead is an honorary member of Longford G.C. Sinead boarded in the Mercy Convent in Moate, where she did Music for her leaving resulting in her gaining a place in the Royal Irish Academy.

When Sinead joined the Castle in 1983, encouraged by her aunt and Lady Captain Maise O'Nuallain, dress code was a contentious issue, with the liberals making slow progress. The Committee, after much debate that year, permitted golfers to wear **knee-length Bermuda Shorts**, provided they also wore knee height socks!!!

Sinead, when she joined the Castle, had left her music career behind, and was working with the Bank of Ireland. In 2004 Sinead was appointed as **the CEO of the Irish Ladies Golfing Union (ILGU)**, a role she carried out with distinction, taking the lead, in partnership with Pat Finn, CEO of the Golfing Union of Ireland (GUI), in driving the amalgamation of the two organisations, which led to the formation of **Golf Ireland** in 2021. Having achieved the objective of unifying golf administration in Ireland, both Sinead and Pat Finn stepped down from their roles.

Sinead in reflecting on her time as CEO of the ILGU takes personal pride in having been involved in supporting the establishment of the ILGU's **High Performance Programme** for Ireland's talented girl golfers. The first group of girls included the Maguire twins and Stephaine Meadow. The programme continues today, under the auspices of Golf Ireland, with a new group of wonderful Irish girl golfers taking centre stage today in the professional game.

When Sinead joined the Castle, Vera Naismith, just 70 years of age was still a formidable competitor. Shortly after joining Sinead was drawn against Vera in the Scratch Cup, and in Sinead's mind, she was the clear favourite, given Vera's age. A loss never to be forgotten was the result with Vera winning on the 16th. . . . To add to Sinead's damaged ego, Vera insisted on giving Sinead a chipping lesson when the match ended!!!

Sinead as well as having seventeen wins in the Club Championship, has won **Five Majors**, including the **2016 Lady Captain's Prize (Bernie Murray)**; a Fourball Matchplay title; a Foursomes Matchplay title with her sister Anne; and the Professional's prize to the Ladies. Sinead was also capped for **Connacht** in 1989.

Sinead, like Yvonne, besides being an outstanding golfer and champion, has given to the Club the benefit of her experience as one of the country's most respected golf administrators. She served on our first integrated Board, followed by a second term recently. She also has brought her talents to the lighter side of life in the Castle, being a performer on Lady Captain's nights in the era of those talented scriptwriters Norrie Egan and Marion Scott.

Yvonne v Sinead

After reading both Yvonne and Sinead's golf CVs, one might be tempted to try to rate one against the other. We know that Sinead has won seventeen Scratch Cup titles while Yvonne has only nine. However, Yvonne has won seven Majors versus five for Sinead. Then, while Sinead got an

interprovincial cap for Connacht, Yvonne won the Milltown Mixed. Sinead has had five holes in one, while Yvonne had just three. However, Yvonne has won more Club fourball and foursomes matchplay titles than Sinead. As one might suspect – a Judge’s nightmare! *The Judges Decision – A Tie!*

Sinead and Yvonne – Great Team Players

Yvonne has been part of three Ladies teams that won **All-Ireland Pennants**, being the All-Ireland Fourball teams in both 2005 and 2006 and the All-Ireland Junior Cup in 2023.

Sinead likewise won three **All-Ireland Pennants** being on the All-Ireland Fourball winning teams in both 2005 and 2006 and the All-Ireland Senior Foursomes in 2015. Sinead also managed the team that won the Junior Cup in 2023.

Both Sinead and Yvonne, on being asked as to which wins were the most special, replied that it was being part of those Castle teams that won All-Ireland Pennants, with the icing on the cake being the winning of a Lady Captain’s Prize.

Finally – Remember to contact Paddy Power for odds both for and against Sinead getting her record 18th win this year, the 100th year of the Scratch Cup.