

HOLE LOT OF FUN

Clubs change course to drive dwindling memberships



Rod Perkins and Therese Siebel with their daughters Sophia and Charlotte at Kareela Golf Club. Picture: Justin Lloyd

EXCLUSIVE

CLARISSA BYE

IT may have once been the exclusive domain of middle-aged men, but golf clubs are now throwing open their fairways to families and offering free bar tabs in a bid to revive dwindling memberships.

With dads now more likely to be ferrying kids to soccer and cricket on weekends, and women working longer hours, golf membership has been hit hard.

Revenues from golf clubs have dropped by 32

per cent in recent years and membership numbers have fallen by 21 per cent since their peak back in 1998.

Women, who used to comprise 35 per cent of golfers in the early 1970s, now only make up 20 per cent.

"Golf's biggest problem has been that it lacks a 20/20 cricket equivalent," industry analyst Simon James said.

But many of Sydney's 100-plus public golf clubs are fighting back with incentives including "tradies' 9 hole" games and midweek twilight competitions for those tied up with family commitments on the weekend.

And forget about the waiting lists of old — golf clubs at Cammeray, Bankstown, Gordon and Penrith are all now instead trying to entice members with promises of \$100 worth of drink vouchers.

"Seven-day introductory membership for \$400 — buy now and receive an extra month free and you also receive a \$100 bar tab included in the price," Cammeray Golf Club advertises.

Other clubs have dropped joining fees altogether and slashed annual subscriptions, which previously cost thousands.

Balgowlah Golf Club has

brought in a new "pay as you play" full membership for just \$150 for the time-poor.

"A quick nine holes of golf in two hours is what people are looking for," club manager Deb McDonald said.

Sylvania's Par 3 club offers a "Mad Monday" unlimited holes deal for \$10 and Pennant Hills is promoting free membership for under 21s and a suite of new flexible "lifestyle packages".

A new family friendly approach is being trialled at a growing number of clubs, with special tees for children.

Popular in America, the children's tees have been in-

stalled at eight Australian clubs including Cammeray, and another seven are slated to come on board this year.

US Kids Golf Australia, which manufactures the tees, said it was all about creating a greater family focus on the fairways.

Mum Therese Siebel, from Kareela in Sydney's south, introduced her daughters Charlotte, 11 and Sophia, 10, to golf several years ago, partly for the fitness, and partly as a way they could spend more time with their dad, Rod Perkins.

"We play as a foursome and that's great," she said.

Fire kills shedload of sheep

FIRE has killed almost 2000 top quality wool-producing sheep with an estimated value of \$500,000 at a farm near Wagga Wagga in the state's southwest.

A 67-year-old farmer was doing some maintenance work in a feeding shed containing about 1800 merino sheep on his property at Trungley Hall, near Temora, when a hay bale caught fire about 12.30pm yesterday.

Police said that the fire quickly spread through the hay and the shed was soon engulfed in flames.

The farmer tried to save his stock inside but could rescue only a small number of the sheep.

The Rural Fire Service (RFS) rushed to the scene and contained the fire but could not prevent the shed from being destroyed.

The fire is expected to burn for days because of the shed's contents.

Merino wool is considered to be of high quality and is sold all around the world.

Police said they would prepare a report for the coroner and are not treating the incident as suspicious.

Baden-Clay ruling delay

PROSECUTORS have asked a chief justice to delay re-sentencing wife-killer Gerard Baden-Clay until after a High Court case, arguing to do otherwise could be inefficient.

Queensland Director of Public Prosecutions Michael Byrne QC made the application in the Court of Appeal in Brisbane yesterday, days after seeking leave to appeal Baden-Clay's downgraded manslaughter verdict in the High Court.

His conviction was downgraded after the Court of Appeal found it could not be proved beyond reasonable doubt he intended to kill his wife Allison in 2012.



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BUILDING A NEW HOME

Don't miss the 148-page **Home Build Annual** with the latest design inspirations, practical planning advice and more than 60 pages of stunning display homes.

On sale NOW for \$7.50 from selected newsagents and via Zinio: zinio.com/homemagazinebuild.

Full list of newsagents available at dailytelegraph.com.au/lifestyle/home-mag

The Daily Telegraph

home