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Storm out to grow the game

HAVING got a taste for helping to grow the game, European Tour star Graeme Storm would love to keep going with long term aspirations for County Durham to produce more talent for England Golf.

Storm was speaking after an exciting few weeks for him on a personal level when the first leg of the newly created Mini Storm Series at Rudding Park was followed by the fourth Graeme Storm Junior Open at Hartlepool Golf Club last Saturday.

The two events sponsored by Hellens Group not only provided an opportunity for youngsters aged 7-18 to experience more competitive play, they also helped to raise £1,855 for Storm's chosen charity, the Percy Hedley Foundation.

There will be further fundraising when the Mini Storm (for ages 7-10) heads to Consett on May 18 and returns to Wynyard, where it was held for the first time last year, to complete the three-leg series on June 15, when one of the 30 to have played in all three will be looking to finish top of the Order of Merit.

More than 100 played in the Graeme Storm Junior Open (ages 11-18) and the Hartlepool Tour pro would love for the competitions to become even bigger on the junior calendar.

"We have things in mind for the future, we want to keep growing the Mini Storm and the Junior Open," said Storm. "We want to make this better and better. Who knows where it could lead. We want to keep them both going. We are grateful for the sponsorship and the support we get from the charity too."

Storm's work in junior golf has led to him being made the coaching chairman for Durham County Union and he is an ambassador for the Golf Foundation, so links are already there for him to build.

The 41-year-old, who won a long list of boys' titles as a junior and then the British Amateur Championship in 1999, is the most successful golfer Durham has produced and he would love to see some of the younger generation follow in his footsteps.

"I would like to stay involved and grow the game in the North-East," said Storm after the latest England squad was announced without a Durham golfer included in it.

"If there is one area that is crying out for it then it is this one. Yorkshire is in the north of England and has



THE FINEST PROSPECTS: The Graeme Storm Junior Open took place at Hartlepool Golf Club on Saturday

ROLL OF HONOUR

GS JUNIOR OPEN

Overall girls' champion and Gross winner: Lois Blythe
 Runner-up: Amy Buchan
 Overall boys' champion: Joe Maloney (Eaglescliffe)
 Runner-up: Leroy Reynoldson (Woodham)
 Gross winner: Will Skipp (Eaglescliffe)
 Boys (11-14) champion: Benjamin Waite (Howley Hall)
 Runner-up (11-14) and Best Nett - Isaac Murray (Hanging Heaton)
 Gross winner (11-14): Freddie McKenna (Tynemouth)

Girls (11-14) champion: Neve Pearson (Boldon)
 Runner-up (11-14) and best nett - Jasmine Lee (Heworth)
 Gross winner (11-14): Immy Williamson (Delamere)

MINI STORM

(at Rudding Park)
 Boys winner: Henry Price
 Runner-up: Alex Boyes
 Third: Elliot Moon
 Girls winner: Amy Burton (Wynyard)
 Runner-up: Millie Hixon
 Third: Caylin Milton



a massive pool of players, there's a few in the England and Walker Cup set-up from there, they are breeding players well.

"We need to catch up in Durham, we hold our own at men's level and at boys' level. We want to create a talent pathway from Durham County to help the boys and girls get to the next level to England golf, that's what we want to achieve."

All of those are a knock-on effect of Storm's idea to host junior events, and this

year's first visit to Rudding Park, near Harrogate, was a brilliant occasion won by Wynyard's Amy Burton and Henry Price.

"The whole thing was brilliant, the weather was fantastic, the set up ran smoothly, and we were able to do a presentation outside which was great for the kids and the families," said Storm.

"There was music on the tee when they were teeing off, like a Golf Sixes vibe and we have already had emails telling us that some children

are planning their music for next year. It's great.

"Rudding Park wanted to take it to North Yorkshire and it helped us expand. The Consett one came off the back of me opening the academy course there. Now we have an event in north Durham, south Durham (Wynyard) and North Yorkshire. We are just dipping our toe in the water and the feedback has been good."

At Hartlepool on Saturday there were wins for Lois Blythe (Hexham), Joe

Maloney (Eaglescliffe), Benjamin Waite (Howley Hall), Freddie McKenna (Tynemouth) and Neve Pearson (Boldon) in the different age categories.

Storm said: "The weather wasn't as good as we have had in previous years but the event was really good and went smoothly."

"There were 105 golfers and a good mix from talented players from Durham and elsewhere. It was fantastic to see again."