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Appropriately dressed male and female golfers take part in the first round of the World Hickory Open at Gullane yesterday

Pictures: Getty Images

# Golfers turn back clock at Gullane

German teenager has fun as he savours experience of playing with hickory clubs

MARTIN DEMPSTER

THE men were very dapper, the women extremely elegant. The golf bags they carried were neither multi-coloured or big enough to accommodate half the stock from the local club professional's shop

The scene was the opening round of the PGA World Hickory Open at Gullane and, according to those competing, both young and old, the chance to take a step back in time had certainly proved enjoyable

"This is the first time I have ever played with hickory clubs and it was good fun," said Maximilian Walz, a 17-year-old from Germany, playing in one of two teams entered in the pro-am by the Loretto Golf Academy.

Like many taking part, Walz, who plays off plus two, found it difficult at first to get used to sets that, basically, consisted of a

brassie, long iron, mashie, mashie niblick, niblick and putter.

However, once he'd discovered that he shouldn't be trying to hit the ball as hard as he normally would, the new recruit to the Musselburgh school's blossoming golf programme savoured the experience.

"I'm aware that players like Bobby Jones played with these type of clubs and know how well they were capable of scoring with them," added Walz. "When I go back to Germany, I'll be telling my national coach how much I enjoyed this experience."

According to Alasdair Good, the head professional at Gullane, his first round with a set of hickory clubs – he shot a two-over 73 over the No 2 course to share the lead with Steven Taylor and Andrew Oldcorn at the halfway stage – had definitely proved an enlightening experience.

"The first trick you have to



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Lionel Freedman

learn is to feel how the club performs and adapt your swing accordingly," he said. "You have to be 100 per cent committed with every shot and the one thing it would certainly teach

every golfer is that they would have to improve their timing

"I also think it opens your eyes to playing the game more imaginatively because you can't play that shot through the air over

bunkers that we see in the game today with the modern equipment"

Heather MacRae, who works for Good in the shop at Gullane, enjoyed both the challenge and also the opportunity to dress up for the day. "I love the whole idea of taking a step back in time," she said

This week's event is the fifth World Hickory Open. It started as a nine-hole tournament at Musselburgh Old Links before moving to Craigielaw. Now it's part of a Festival of Hickory Golf and Lionel Freedman, the driving force behind the event, is hoping it can continue going from strength to strength.

"It is growing in terms of enjoyment, in terms of numbers and also in terms of venues," said the 75-year-old current club captain at Craigielaw. "I'd like to see it continue being played on historic golf courses, perhaps even some of the really important venues, the likes of a St Andrews."

"We also get tremendous support, in particular, from Sweden and I would also like to take it there one year."

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