



Update

Spring 2021

# Message from The Chairman

Fellow members,

As we emerge from our third and hopefully final lockdown and into Spring, we are all optimistic that the worst is behind us.

Your new committee has been active on many fronts. Our objective is to have our course presented in the best possible condition to maximise the enjoyment of members returning from lockdown. To that end we plan to have all current drainage work areas restored to their former condition as soon as possible and with the help of Mother Nature.

Our course staff, under the watchful eye of Hilda Cussen and the direction of Carr golf, are working to an agreed programme to improve all aspects of the course.

We will continue to replace vital worn machinery as funds allow. Any remaining drainage works required will be completed as and when funds become available. However the bulk of this work is substantially complete.

Irrigation is a longer term project and we don't envisage any substantial work in this area in the near future.

We have applied for additional Government grants, both from the Club Resilience Fund and under the Sports Capital Programme. The results will be known over the coming weeks.

Other ongoing projects include resurfacing the road to the buggy shed and machinery yard, the need to increase the covered areas to house valuable machinery and provide additional buggy storage for members.

The golf academy will be completed in late Spring and our practice facilities will be refurbished providing a first rate training and practice facility for all.

We acknowledge the work and commitment of our course staff who have kept the course in excellent condition during these difficult and challenging times - not forgetting our administration staff of Lydia and Evelyn who have done a fantastic job in running the administration functions in the absence of our departed general manager.

We will continue to upgrade our clubhouse facilities under the diligent management of Gerry Thornton. A lot of work has been completed already including new showers and toilets in the men's locker area, new central heating pumps and area controls making for more efficient operation, new LED lighting and many more health and safety improvements.

Our catering will continue to be operated in-house as long as the COVID restrictions remain. Our Lady Vice-Captain, Mary Browne, has assumed responsibility for this important role and in the longer term we hope to out-source this challenging area. In the meantime we are indebted to our Lady Captain, Ailish, for her efforts in getting our catering up and running with the assistance of Anita, Viva and Gavin over the past few months.

Membership is strong and the recent influx of new younger members along with juvenile and junior numbers at record levels augurs well for the future. I am pleased to report that Brian Sherwin has been co-opted to the COM and has responsibility for membership, whilst our Men's Captain, Declan, has agreed to take responsibility for junior golf.

Member subscriptions are coming in steadily and a full report on finances will be published in the coming weeks.

Health and Safety is a vital area and I am pleased to report that the COM have given this

# Message from The Chairman

role a renewed focus, Geraldine Neary has been appointed Club H&S officer and I hope everyone will cooperate in increasing the awareness of the need to keep members and staff safety in mind at all times.

Skerries golf club boasts a very long and proud history in many respects, including the Kin-sella's long tradition which endures to this day,

and with the support and goodwill of all we have a great future ahead of us.

It is our ambition that skerries golf club be listed in the top tier of golf clubs in Ireland.

We look forward to seeing you all back golfing and enjoying our excellent facilities as soon as safely possible.

Yours in golf.

*John McInerney*



# Getting Back to Golf

The start of 2021 is not what we had all hoped for and, as we finished 2020, we are once again in lockdown with no golf, no drive in and plenty of uncertainty as to what we are faced with for our 2021 season.

However we are looking forward with a positive attitude to the Golfing year and rest assured that the Men's and Ladies Committees are gearing up for a great season of golf as soon as we can get playing again.

Full calendars of events are planned with Gopher of the Year, Gross Medal of the Year, Captain's Prize, Medals, Majors, Senior and Junior Scratch cups and Ladies Majors, Medals, Swap day with Balbriggan and all the usual yearly golfing events. Open Week is planned although possibly in a different format than previous years.

So full plans are in place, but we may need to adjust dates to fall in line with restrictions at any one time; we will keep you fully informed at all times.

We missed out on our club championships in 2020 so many members will be happy to learn that these will be back this year. We may run them over a shorter time frame so watch closely for information in the coming months on these events.

The Men's winter league was all set to go in January prior to the lockdown but it is not lost; we are considering running it as a Spring league when we can open again.

Thursday competitions will resume as these have proved very popular. With any luck, we will have Mixed or Nine and Dine to enjoy

through the summer months.

It will take some time to adjust fully to the new World Handicap System (WHS) and if you need assistance, please contact our Handicap Secretaries.

Please do consider your fellow members when returning your competition card; it is important to enter these into the computer system, even if it is only a 9-hole competition. The volunteer members that give their time by processing results don't want to be handling cards, so please input your scores using the computer or the App. This will make a huge difference and will help to keep everyone safe in these Covid times.

Team managers are all at the ready for the competitive inter club competitions. We are gathering information from Golf Ireland on the for-

mats and Handicapping requirements, so again please watch closely for communications on these. We are hoping to attract some of the new members to get involved in these teams as we would truly love to bring home a pennant in 2021.

We are delighted to inform you that, thanks to the help of Gerry Thornton and the generosity of one of our members, our Ladies office has been reorganised with new lighting and the computer moved to a more comfortable position and generally tidied up. This will make for a much improved work space for the Result and Handicap teams.

So, it is time to clean out the grooves, polish the shoes and get ready for a great season. We are looking forward to seeing you all on the Golf Course.



# Junior Golf

Those involved in the Junior Club are planning a full and enjoyable calendar of events for our junior members for 2021.

Some dates are already on the website (Junior Section) but we will have more dates soon for the Fingal League, CGI Junior Development Competitions and Festivals of Fun for younger members.

The Fingal League is important to both boys and girls but Skerries is also hosting the boys event in July. Both Leagues should be very exciting and competitive.

We have boys and girls taking part in developmental programmes but later in the year juniors should also have plenty of opportunity to

play casual/fun golf with their friends. Jeff Sexton has been accepted on to the Leinster Golf Pathway coaching programme.

As always, if anyone would like to give some time to the Junior Club, please let us know. We are also interested in any suggestions/ideas that juniors might have for 2021 and, as always, Elaine McGloughlin is still looking for girls who would like to try golf!!

## *Cadets*

It is looking like another great year for our boys and girls in the Cadet section.

Interest in this section continues to grow every year and is a great starting point for children who want to try golf for the first time.



**Photos from 2019**



# Tip from The Pro - Warm Up!

A problem I see with a lot of our golfers is that they don't give themselves a chance to play a good round. They run in to the proshop to enter the competition, out on to the tee and then hit a bad drive. This continues for a few holes before they warm up and then it's too late.

Here are a few drills that I try to do before a round, which I hope will help you play better golf.

I try and arrive at the course about one hour before my tee time. I will get my bag set up making sure everything is in there for the round.

Firstly I would go to the putting green with two or three balls and take some long putts to get the pace of the greens; then some 10 foot putts and some 3 foot putts - in

total about 15 to 20 putts. Following this I would do a few stretches.

Secondly I would go to the short game area where I would hit about 5 bunkers shots, 5 chip shots, 5 chip and runs and 5 lob shots.

Lastly I would go to the range or driving net where my preferences for shots are 9 iron, 7 iron, 5 iron, 3 iron and then the driver. After 4 or 5 balls with each club you are now ready for the round!

I hope this will be a help to you for the coming season.

*Bobby*



# Short Game Academy Update



result of the continued support of club members and friends who all believed in the benefits that a quality practice chipping green would deliver to the club.

In 2019 the club was able to use the money raised to secure a grant of €127,000 which is being used to fund the current drainage project and complete the Short Game Academy area.

The new facility will be located to the left of the practice nets at the back of the car-park towards the 10th tee box.

We are pleased to confirm that the long-awaited development of the Short Game Academy will commence in early spring 2021. If we get favourable weather conditions, it is hoped that this new facility will be in play for the members by late summer.

To help bring you all up to date and for the benefit of our new members, here is a brief history of the Short Game Academy.

In 2012 club members, Stan Pyke and Kingsley Lewis, approached the committee with a view to developing a state-of-the-art chipping green for Skerries Golf Club. The model used to design our green is the chipping green in the PGA Academy in Carton House.

The committee supported the plan, but asked Stan and Kingsley to raise the funds themselves as, back in 2012, the club was still recovering from the financial crisis of 2008/2009 and did not have the funds to put towards any new facilities. They raised approximately €35,000 over the next number of years up to 2017. These funds were raised as a

car-park towards the 10th tee box.

The architect and builder hope to commence in early spring when the weather improves, and the ground is better prepared for development and shaping of the green and sowing of grass seed.

The new green should accommodate 8 to 10 players at any time and will be a fantastic addition to our golf club.

# Golf Course - Winter works

Hilda Cussen took over from Tony Farrell as Chair of the Course sub-committee in October. Tony continues to be of great help, and will continue to support the club as is needed.

This is a difficult time for all and we must try to stay positive and look forward to golfing in the spring. Considering that we have had rain in each of the past 19 weeks at Skerries Golf Club the course has stood up very well.

The drainage programme has been held up as heavy machinery cannot go onto the saturated ground. We still have a lot of work to do to complete the programme and DAR Golf are continuing to live up to their good reputation. Our winter programme is going very well. We highlighted two spinnies for work this year and Course Superintendent, Martin Browne, and his team have done a super job on clearing the undergrowth and dead trees. This was a very difficult task and Martin and his team have done a magnificent job.

As a result of these works, a considerable amount of timber is on the course. Once the saturated ground dries, we will be able to bring this back to a designated part of the yard from where we hope to make it available for members to collect. An email will go out to members when the time is right.

Most of our spinnies around the course - particularly on the right and left of the 8th hole -



have dead trees and hanging branches that have become loose over the years. We are so lucky to have the expertise and dedication of Assistant Course Superintendent, Michael Calvey, who you can see in the photographs tackling these trees and branches.

Jimmy Chawke started an 'Ivy league' some years ago and Maurice Cussen and Noel Finne-





# Golf Course - Winter works

gan and their team have continued their super work of removing the ivy from all the trees, of which there are hundreds.

On behalf of Skerries Golf Club Course Convenor, Hilda Cussen, would sincerely like to thank all our volunteers and, understandably, we cannot possibly mention everyone by name.

We are so grateful to a private donor for a gift of money for the trees that are to be planted in



the next three months. Course Convenor, Hilda, suggests to all of us that the bank on the right of the 16th and the left of the 7th tee box would be a perfect location for a little bit of colourful planting - plants like Elaeagnus or a few Hydrangeas and if any member would like to contribute towards the cost we would be most grateful.

Andriu Jackson is our superintendent from Carr Golf, with the staff and Course Convenor working under his watchful eye, and we are most grateful to him for that.

The golf course is our prize; how much we have missed it over the last year! So lets all help to maintain it to its high standard.

Fanacht sábháilte.

*This selection of photos illustrates some of the work that is going on around the golf course. What has been achieved so far is very impressive indeed, as are plans for further works.*

*It is very evident that the drainage work is doing a good job and areas for improvement have been identified for when additional funding becomes available.*



# The Value of Golf Club Membership

Have you noticed the stretch in the evenings already?

Imagine a sunny evening in late May with Rockabill lighthouse shimmering in an azure sea behind you as you power up the fourth fairway! The ground is hard enough to make the ball run a mile, yet the fairway is a soft forgiving carpet beneath your feet!

And with any luck —no more tears!

People are saying that Covid is teaching us the true value of community once again. Your golf club is a ready-made community — whether you like to play with regular pals or meet new pals, play the mixed, play with your son or daughter or with invited guests.

It's easy to forget how valuable golf club membership really is. Even if it's just being able to play a few holes when the fit takes you with no green fees to worry about, or make use of the putting green or the practice ground. Let's face it —where else can you go where all of your worries are banished for four hours at a stretch? For the competitive player there are plenty of intra-club and inter-club competitions to get the nerves jangling—if that's what floats your boat.

Not to mention having your own professional to call on, if your game goes off a bit —and if the worst does happen and you injure someone with a stray shot, your GUI membership insurance that will sort it out for you.

We all know that the odd gripe arises now and again— only natural. That's the time to send “a strongly worded letter” to the committee to express your views. As a member you can do so, and they have to read it! Try sending a letter to the owners of a “Pay and Play” course and see how far you get!

Then there's the clubhouse, best Guinness in the town for a start —and it's discounted. Even if you don't take a beer, you can have a nice meal, bring the family in or invite a guest for a meal, anytime you like. Not to mention the social nights. An extra bonus we have in Skerries of course, is our reciprocal arrangement with Lisburn Golf Club where Skerries members can play a round, free gratis any time we like.

All of the above will be back soon, once enough of us get the jab!

For young families, the golf course is the safest place in the world for your kids. You can be sure that they couldn't be in a safer place.

For the rest of us, if nothing else, there is always the health benefit of a “good walk spoiled”— and well into our dotage too! Chances are you won't be kicking a football around in your 80's but a golf ball? —you very likely will.

Membership of your golf club is a valuable privilege.

Joni Mitchell sang “*You don't know what you've got 'till it's gone.*”

She never spoke a truer word!

Adapted from 'Why join a golf club in 2021?' by Kevin Markham in [irishgolfer.ie](http://irishgolfer.ie) on 11th January 2021.

# Club Lotto

Let's face it, life's a bit dull with Covid about so why not add a bit of excitement to your life by entering the club lotto! Something to look forward to on a Saturday night...and it won't break the bank!

You can get 52 draws for €84, that's 10 draws for free! Or you could just do 25 draws for €50 or 10 draws for €20 or 5 draws for a tenner or even three lines for a fiver.

As we go to press the jackpot is €5769 — serious money! If nobody wins then anyone who matches three numbers gets a prize (this week it's €120). Plus —if nobody wins, the computer performs a "picky out" so somebody will get a prize every week... no matter what!

Biggest jackpot ever was €14,600!

Every penny goes back into the club coffers, as evidenced in the club finances —where as you

well know...every penny counts.

It's always a bit of fun doing the lotto after a game but failing that during Covid restrictions members can enter online. Best bit about that is —if you win you won't have to share it ☺.

## How do I Enter Online?

Go to the SGC website, scroll to the bottom of the Home page and click on the red Play Online Now link.

Simple as that!

There you can choose how many plays you wish to purchase then log in or register and away you go.

*"This time next year Rodney...we will be millionaires."*



# One Hundred Years Ago

In **1920** the club sent subscriptions to the GUI for the Michael Moran Memorial Cup, and to the R. and A. for the Open. Michael Moran had been the professional in Royal Dublin and had served in the British army during the war. The Moran cup is still being played for, and while Bill Kinsella was beaten in a final, his son Jimmy won it in 1968. Clubhouse security was a problem as evidenced by the Phoenix Insurance Co. refusing to insure against burglaries in June. A far greater problem for Phoenix occurred in August when the clubhouse was burnt to the ground, and when no evidence of malice was found by the local Volunteers, the committee submitted a claim in September. There is, on the other hand, a rumour, and only a rumour that the clubhouse burning was deliberate. While I have no evidence to support this, I am conscious of the fact that there was quite a high level of IRA activity in the area. The coastguard station on Red Island was also burned to the ground, and amusingly enough, it was done with paraffin acquired on 'tick'---allegedly. It would be silly to think that the golf club, a bastion of the old order, would not be a target for such like attention.

The standard scratch of the course was fixed at 74 for summer and 78 for winter. The ILGU fixed the bogey for all courses for ladies and this meant that ladies could now take control of their own handicapping systems. One slightly amusing complaint dealt with by committee in August, centred on a former captain R.T.Ross and a future captain Billy Towell. Ross sheltered from the rain and despite several attempts by Towell, a good golfer, to get him to continue and mark his card, Ross refused and used "strong" language to emphasise his point. One can only surmise at the content of the rebuke but the adverb 'off' was proba-

bly used. The committee took no action, as they decided the matter was a personal one.

The AGM. in **1921** passed plans for a new clubhouse and also decided to have two Vice Presidents. By March the committee accepted a tender of £1650 from a Mr.J.McCreadie of Malahide and negotiations began to reduce this to £1500. These developments brought the largest single intake of new members to the club at that time, 33.

Mr. Howard McDonald presented his cup for mixed foursomes in August and we play for that trophy to this day.

With the departure of Jimmy O'Hare, the committee appointed Dan O'Mahony as professional and went guarantor on his supply of golf balls from Messrs. Huet Bros. and the Indian Rubber G.P. and Telegraph Works Co., to an amount of £5. By the end of the year whiskey was 1s/9d per glass.

Extract from '*Skerries Golf Club - Years of Minutes*' by Brendan Grey.



**The original clubhouse.** This photo was taken on the occasion of the opening of Skerries Golf Club and is reproduced here as it appeared in *Skerries Golf Club 1905 - 2005*

# Recently Completed Clubhouse Works



An upgrade to the Clubhouse central heating system has been completed.

All radiators have been fitted with new thermostatic radiator valves. Three new circulation pumps were supplied and fitted, as was one new three-way valve diverter together with an upgrade to two existing valves and a new time control system.

The refurbishment of the on-course toilet is now complete.

Considerable general maintenance, including new signage around the clubhouse, is ongoing. The dance floor has been sanded and polished and is now as good as new, with many thanks due to our sponsor Catherine Jones.

New LED external lighting has been fitted to the administration building, the top carpark, the buggy shed and the main shed. New LED lighting has also been fitted to the Pro shop. All Entrance/Exit timber doors to the clubhouse have been cleaned down and varnished, i.e. the doors to the Ladies and Gent's locker rooms, lotto room and the boiler house. The doors to the Ladies and Gents toilets off the main lounge have been cleaned down and pol-

ished.

Two new Convex mirrors have been fitted outside the main entrance. An Impact Hazard Marker has been fitted at the corner of the administration building. A new sign has been fitted near the entrance to the Ladies locker room regarding a potential slippery surface. In addition, a new ramp matt is fitted to outside of the entrance double doors to the spike bar.

Windows and doors in the clubhouse are now fitted with panic bolts and where needed, hinges and handles have been replaced on windows.

## **Proposed work for 2021**

Upgrade of emergency lighting and general lighting in the clubhouse.

Upgraded smoke detector and fire alarm system.

Replace cold store room and freezer room.

Refurbishment of the men's toilet on the first floor.

# Survey of Members' Views 2020

In October, 310 members took the *Online Survey of Members Views*. Below is a summary of the results with the questions we asked highlighted in bold italics.

***Playing arrangements, as pertained this summer at Skerries Golf Club, were guided by Covid-related recommendations from Government and the Golfing Unions. How satisfied were you with these arrangements?***

In general the majority of respondents felt that the Club did a good job in difficult circumstances. Members felt play was organised and conducted well by the club throughout the summer months. There was, of course, some criticism.

Most enjoyed the casual golf available but felt that the 9 hole format might have been continued. As soon as we switched to 18 hole golf, getting onto the timesheet became a problem, with five day members finding it even more difficult. For the ladies, because the Tuesday and weekend timesheets opened simultaneously, the ladies found it difficult to get on both

timesheets in the time allotted.

From a social point of view, a number of respondents felt the club could have made a bigger push to get people up to the club when the first lockdown was lifted. One suggestion was to provide a catering service outside.

The number of new members was identified by many as an issue with some complaints re its impact on slot availability.

Communication was also identified as a difficulty, particularly the need for timely updates as Covid rules changed nationwide.

***'Based on the Quality of the Course how likely are you to bring a guest to play golf in Skerries Golf Club?'***

The majority of comments were very complementary about the condition of the golf course with many praising the work of Carr Golf — particularly the quality of the greens.

However, tee boxes were identified as a concern—the main issue being the uneven nature of many of them. Tee placement was also mentioned, with a request to rotate the tee po-



# Survey of Members' Views 2020

sitions more often — the first tee seen as particularly important as it offers a first impression to visitors.

Many comments addressed the difficulty of playing the course — the growth of the rough being a major concern. Several more mentioned the positioning of trees adjacent to fairways as being overly punishing of a good shot.

A number of comments referred to the need to improve practice facilities with the upcoming short game academy seen as a welcome addition.

Continued course maintenance was seen as very important and that all areas of the course are kept tidy. Quite a number of comments urged members to repair pitch marks on the greens and fill fairway divots. Consistency in bunkers across the course was also mentioned as an important consideration.

The current drainage works were welcomed plus a need to upgrade our course irrigation system was expressed, particularly in the light of changing weather patterns.

## ***'How likely are you to encourage a friend or colleague to Join Skerries Golf Club?'***

The two principal reasons expressed in the comments were the friendly and welcoming nature of members and the high standard of the golf course. The social and health aspects of membership and playing the game were seen by many as very important. The success and the nature of the 'Ladies in Golf' programme was cited as a particularly good example of the welcoming and social side of the club.

On the flipside quite a few expressed serious concerns about the difficulty in getting to play

because of timesheet waiting lists.

## ***'Golf Ireland, a single all-inclusive governing body, will begin representing all golfers in Ireland on 1st January 2021 and will replace both GUI and ILGU. How do you perceive the future impact of this change on Skerries Golf Club?'***

The comments of respondents point strongly to the benefit of the one-club approach to golf in Ireland. Many responses identified an opportunity to '*rationalise the number of committees and develop a fully integrated and cohesive club*'.

Some comments pointed to the over influence of male members of committees and to the idea that '*One governing body has to be an improvement over two groups who often vie with each other*'. Embracing change is seen as important by many.

Most respondents felt that change '*should provide a platform capable of stream-lining the overall running of "golf" within the Club and, given time and support, eliminate the perceived underlying "them and us" that currently prevails*'.

## ***'If you are a New Member, having joined the club within the last five years, how likely are you to remain a member for the next five years?'***

The responses indicate a concern for member retention. While most comments on this topic were very favourable to the club, quite a number of new members are keeping their options open and are not entirely committed to continued membership. A key factor in this calculation is value for money. The year 2020 was

# Survey of Members' Views 2020

seen as particularly poor value due to the impact of Covid related restrictions. As a result, some new members mention that they will wait to see the 2021 fee levels, before committing.

A recurring concern, again expressed by many, is the difficulty in getting a place on timesheets. If access to regular golf continues to prove difficult, some say they will look at other clubs.

***'How likely are you to avail of the club's Social Facilities, if available in the future?,***  
[This question was framed with Covid in mind]

Compared to previous surveys, there has been an improvement in that likelihood, though not as positive as we would have hoped.

As the pandemic continues to impact on our pattern of socialising, a number of comments suggested use of the balcony and surrounding area for "coffee/tea and scones". This was seen as very worthwhile as *'the Social aspect is a very important part of the game to me'*. A number of respondents wished to see Sky Sports reinstated. *'Decent food at decent price'* was a common sentiment throughout the comments. Overall, the quality of the catering on offer was identified as a very significant driver in encouraging members to socialise in the club.

Many respondents felt that the clubhouse itself needs attention. *'Now that the course has achieved such a standard it would be good to achieve more of a balance with improvements to the club house facilities'*.

A number of members did not envision social facilities being available in the club for some time due to Covid-19. However, they would

like to see a more established social committee in place, a chef employed and better advertising of upcoming events. The feeling was that unless there is a clear vision and proactivity in this area, there is a concern that the social side could wane.

***'How would you rate the Communication from the club (website, emails, updates, noticeboards etc.)?'***

The frequency of communications was identified as counterproductive by a number of respondents. *'Too many emails from too many departments means a lot of emails go unread'*. Consistency in the quality, timeliness and relevance of the club's communications was identified by many as a key requirement.

Respondents clearly want regular, timely updates on a range of issues across the club, for example: course in play, results, decisions, planned works, finance, socials, juniors, new members, society bookings, and many more. The common thread is to deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time.

It was felt by most that the club does a good job of communication, but simplification would lead to improvement. Then some felt that more information needs to be given to new members regarding the structure of payment and membership etc.

***'What Changes would you like to see implemented in Skerries Golf Club?'***

Of the 180 comments, most were positive: Membership Fees, Membership Categories, Competition Formats, Socialising, Handicaps, The Course itself, Strategy and Planning, Management, The Bar, Practice Facilities, Profes-



# Survey of Members' Views 2020

sional Services including the Pro Shop, Catering, A One-Club structure, Club Facilities, Standard of Dress, and Communications.

As we have seen in previous answers, most comments identified issues around the large numbers playing with the resulting difficulty accessing timesheets. This is perceived as the major issue for all. Many comments felt that we simply have too many members and new admissions should be capped. Some comments point to the number of members who enjoy discounted fees and question their rights of access to timesheets compared to those paying a full subscription.

Five Day members feel disadvantaged, particularly due to the pressure on Wednesday timesheets, which of course is their main competi-

tion day.

Slow play was highlighted in many of the comments: It appears as more of an issue than heretofore because of the higher numbers using the golf course. Course difficulty was identified in many comments as a problem – with special emphasis on the length of the rough.

With reference to our catering facility—the feeling is that bar and catering facilities need to stabilise and improve.

Several comments addressed the nature and makeup of the management committee, looking for more transparency and suggesting a changing of the old guard with an emphasis on younger members taking their place on committee. Better communication —and fewer surveys!



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