



WELCOME HOME - Golfer Lynnette Brooky is greeted by her dog Ben after returning from qualifying for the European professional tour in Spain. Picture: JOHN NICHOLSON

Brooky prepares for big pond

By KEIRAN BLEACH
Golf writer

Golfer Lynnette Brooky has returned from qualifying for Europe's professional tour knowing she'll have to be mentally tough to survive the arduous lifestyle.

The 27-year-old flew into Wellington yesterday from Spain, where she earned her card for the prestigious European tour by finishing second equal at the qualifying school.

While she was rapt with her performance, Brooky learnt a few lessons she now wants to work on.

"I've gone from being a big fish in a small sea [playing as

an amateur in New Zealand] to being a small fish in a huge pond and I know I can't stay the same because it's a new game with new rules and there's now money involved."

Brooky said she had come home realising she'll have to "learn to play hard" to stay up in the top 10 on the tour.

"Under pressure, some of the girls [in the qualifying school] just lost it. Obviously I'm going to try and make sure I don't make double bogeys, but everyone makes mistakes and you just have to put it behind you."

Brooky says there will be a lot of pressure on the tour, so she wants to prepare herself mentally for it. "The crowds

are big and sometimes they don't want you to win so they boo or talk while you're playing a shot. But you can't control the crowd, so you have to develop a routine that is so consistent that under pressure your swing pattern and everything won't change - you just go to your routine and close everything else off."

Before returning to Europe in May and playing her first tournament in Portugal, Brooky will work with her sports psychologist and practise with Wellington Golf Club professional Jack Oliver.

"I'll also be hitting a lot of balls and doing my routine - thinking about every shot, not just hitting ball after ball."

Mercer retires as NZ men's golf coach after 20 years

By RUSSELL GRAY

NEW Zealand men's golf team coach Alex Mercer announced his retirement yesterday after 20 years in the job.

His successor is expected to be Mal Tongue of Wellington.

Since being appointed as coach in December 1976, Mercer, 62, had charge of the New Zealand team at eight Eisenhower Trophy world teams championships, with the highlights being winning the world title in Vancouver in 1992 and finishing second in Christchurch in 1990.

"It has been a wonderful 20 years, but inevitably the comprehensive coaching systems which are now in place need someone close at hand to run them," Mercer said yesterday from his Sydney home. "Having me visit New Zealand periodically worked in the past, but with so many players now involved and with new technology to help them, teachers should be on hand."

"I knew this day had to come, but I didn't want it to arrive. There was initial resistance from some PGA professionals to having an Australian in charge of the New Zealand team, but over the years I was accepted and made some marvellous friends."

"It is now time for New Zealand to do it with New Zealanders, though I am available if anyone ever wants help in any area."

Mercer said he would continue his involvement with the New Zealand women's team and would love to win an Espirito Santo trophy.

"I believe the women are good enough if I can get them up at the right time for this year's world championship," he said.

Golf Association executive director Grant Clements said if anyone could get the women in the right frame of mind for such a task it was Mercer.

"Alex is a terrific motivator and did a magnificent job with the New Zealand team," Clements said. "I can't think of any of our current crop of professionals who didn't at one time or another go to one of his schools or clinics. Alex has done a marvellous job for New Zealand golf and we are grateful."

Tongue is expected to be given the position when Mercer's replacement is named later this week.