

\$170,000 goes missing – police talking to SFO

By SIMON BEATTIE

Police are talking to the Serious Fraud Office about the whereabouts of \$170,000 in charity money linked to Wellington golf promoter Frank Burgess.

Mr Burgess is promoter of the \$650,000 New Zealand Women's Golf Classic, that was to be held at the Hutt Golf Club next month. The event had attracted many leading international players. It was stripped of its official status by European authorities before Christmas and now appears dead.

Apart from via e-mail, Mr Burgess hasn't been heard from for weeks and is believed to be in the United States.

There has been no response to repeated phone calls and visits made by The Evening Post to Mr Burgess' Hattaitai home.

The Post understands a complaint by The New Zealand Community Trust has been lodged with police

over the whereabouts of money it granted to Wellington-based sports collective Sports Services Ltd in 1999 and last year. The money never filtered down to the groups in that organisation.

Mr Burgess had worked as an administrator for Sports Services.

The money, believed to be about \$170,000, was the total amount of a series of grants given by the trust to Sports Services, which embodies several sports bodies.

New Zealand Community Trust spokesman Bill Day said he wouldn't comment as the matter was now in the hands of police. The trust had also given Mr Burgess \$25,000 for the golf tournament which is now in the hands of Hutt Golf Club.



Frank Burgess

The officer handling the complaint, Detective Senior Sergeant Hugh Macrae said today he was still waiting for information from the trust but said: "There is a strong possibility it will go straight to the SFO".

Mr Macrae, of Wellington Central police, said he had spoken to the SFO about the complaint and was waiting for it to reopen next week.

Asked if the complaint amounted to about \$170,000, he said he hadn't tallied it but it was a "sizeable sum".

Meanwhile, Hutt Golf Club manager Paddy Wells said yesterday he hadn't spoken to Mr Burgess since before Christmas but urgently wanted to.

Mr Wells said Mr Burgess had e-mailed him recently, saying the golf tournament was officially off.

Mr Burgess has yet to state this publicly.

The Post understands the club is still owed at least \$15,000 from

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