

Overseas play essential — Griffin

PARIS. — New Zealand needs to invest in sending more players to overseas tournaments if it is to keep up with improvements in international women's golf, national coach John Griffin says.

The New Zealand team of Lynnette Brooky, Susan Farron and Kerryn Starr ended the Espirito Santo world team championships yesterday in eighth equal position, some 20 strokes behind winners the United States.

New Zealand has had top three finishes at the last two world tournaments, but could not stay with the hot pace set by the Americans — and in particular outstanding individual Wendy Ward — Korea, Australia and the leading European nations.

While saying New Zealand's four-round team total of 589 was "not that bad", Griffin said

New Zealand will struggle to stay in touch with the top nations if it does not maintain a programme of international competition.

"It could be that the standard of golf in Europe is moving ahead at a far greater rate than what the rest of the world comprehends," Griffin said.

"The scoring of our girls has been first-class here. It has only really been one day when all three had a bad day that has hurt us.

"The preparation before this tournament was first-class.

"It was also invaluable that we came here in July — that was an absolute must.

"When I see the work going into these players it's vital that we get as many of our younger players going overseas as we can."

Griffin said New Zealand had regular contact only with



Lynnette Brooky — a farewell to New Zealand teams?

Australia — which finished fifth here — but funding was still needed to enable more players to gain exposure to international golf there and in Europe.

An example of what can be

achieved by giving players that exposure was provided by Canterbury's Starr at the world tournament.

Starr had rounds of one-under-par 71 then a par 72, but blew up for a 77 on the third day. She was one over on the last day for a four-round total of five-over-par 293, good enough for 11th in the individual standings.

"I've had a good week," Starr said. "To put four steady rounds together was quite nice."

Griffin said he was "proud" of Starr, at 23 the most inexperienced of the New Zealand trio.

"She had a bit of a rough day on Friday, but she has been playing well," he said.

"She didn't let herself down this week. She really ground out and put a good score on the board. I'm proud of the way she's come up."

While Starr marked herself as a rising talent, the tournament may have been the international representative swansong of Lynnette Brooky, a veteran of the 1992 Espirito Santo tournament.

"It was a good way to finish," Brooky said after her 72 yesterday, "especially as this might be the last time I'm in a New Zealand team.

"I'm getting a bit older and there are a lot of good younger players coming through."

Brooky, 26, added she has no firm plans to turn professional, but is "looking" at the possibility and will try to play some of the Australian professional tournaments this summer, but most likely as an amateur.

"But to do that I need a sponsor," she added.

"I have absolutely no money at all." — NZPA

Brooky close

Wellington golfer Lynnette Brooky is one step away from breaking onto the lucrative United States Ladies PGA tour. Brooky finished ninth in a qualifying school event in California at the weekend. The top-30 finish gives her the right to play in the final LPGA qualifying tournament at Daytona Beach, Florida, next month, when 30 cards will be on offer. Brooky finished two under the card. She returns to Wellington this week for a holiday before heading back to the US.