

Wellington golf professional Lynnette Brooky is back in town after another season in

Brooky happy to play the numbers game

By GARY MORLEY
Golf writer

NUMBERS MEAN a lot to Wellington golf professional Lynnette Brooky.

For example, 30 is the age she turned this week and 90 is the amount of people she's invited to a five-course celebratory shindig tonight.

Cuisine prepared by a master chef from Holland, no less.

"When I was in my early 20s I'd been engaged twice and I decided if I wasn't married by the time I was 30, I'd have a big party," Brooky explains.

Some party.

The dignitaries include the mayors of Wellington and Porirua, Mark Blumsky and John Burke, Brooky's cluster of corporate sponsors and some special friends.

"It's a chance to say thank you to everyone who's ever helped me," says Brooky, who next month sets out on her fourth year on the European circuit.

"People like my coaches Alex Mercer and Dennis Sullivan, who was the first person to put a golf club in my hand, and Gwen Hill [New Zealand women's convener of selectors]."

Brooky earned nearly \$NZ100,000 last year. And just as well, the party will cost her a fortune.

But the myriad of guests is a prime indication of how well the refreshingly-upfront Wellingtonian has established herself as a professional.

Brooky met Rien Heemskerk at a pro-am tournament in Amsterdam three years ago. After she and caddy/manager Gail Allport ate at his restaurant the following year, the master chef agreed to cook at her 30th party.

"His wife Ingrid, who does the desserts, brought out our dishes, which had the words 'We are coming for your party' on them. I've been saving for two years and I've had to save - master chefs don't stick to the cheapest ingredients!"

That Dutch pro-am has also led to an invitation to a prestigious Skins tourna-

Backward steps taken

LYNNETTE BROOKY believes amateur golf in New Zealand has gone backwards in the three years since she turned professional.

"I've noticed New Zealand's amateur profile has not been good worldwide. I don't even know who the girls in the women's team are," Brooky said.

"Our top players used to win trophies overseas. Now they only seem to win the ones here, which they have to win anyway."

Brooky said although the national golf academy is a good idea, it is "not quite working".

"I don't want to criticise it too much, because I appreciate the help I've had and because we do need an academy. But I think it should be more like a university. They should never just pick a certain amount of talent," she said.

ment in Germany in April, with Brooky and Scotland's Joanne Morley to play with two European men, yet to be named.

But let's get back to numbers.

Brooky was 13th on the 1997 European money list, her bag number was 13 and her room number in hotels was often 13.

"I've chosen it as my lucky number, even though it was my bag number when I lost in the playoff last year [to Joanne Mills in the German Open]. Some people said I must've been upset to lose but to me a good cheque equals good work," she says.

More numbers.

Brooky has finished 43rd, 34th and 13th in three seasons on the European circuit.

"It's amazing, they all relate to three or four in some way," she exclaims, pointing towards an ever-improving sequence.

"Any kid who wants to apply should have the chance to get in. But there should be a cash payment, some commitment made to succeed."

Brooky said she knew teenagers who had gone on the dole to play fulltime.

"Any kid who drops out of school to play golf will not have the hunger to succeed," she said.

"An academy should not just be about golf, it should provide a back-up as well. Otherwise you're missing part of being a person," said Brooky, a screen-printer before she decided on a golf career.

She said the most successful professional players were the older ones.

"The ones who make the most money are the mature ones. Tiger Woods is a great golfer but even he waited three years as a top amateur. And not everyone can be that successful so soon."

But while she may talk of "feeding out good vibes" and "jumping off the bad vibes", Brooky is a hard-nosed competitor.

She knows where she's going.

The Australian Masters on the Gold Coast next month - worth a cool \$US720,000 (\$NZ1.24 million) - is the first and only United States tour event Brooky can enter this year.

Because she's based in New Zealand, Brooky has another two years on the European tour before she qualifies as an "international player", which allows her direct access to the US LPGA tour.

Until then, she wants to continue her steady rise up the European order.

"I'm going to be even more committed to golf this year. If I have to stay away longer for a tournament, I'm going to do it. I've planned for the next five years. Don't think I've achieved any goals, I've not even started."