Turnberry's Ailsa course was in amazing condition for the 122nd Open. George Brown and his team of 18 full-time staff and three temps did a brilliant job.

It's always difficult to set up a links course because you never know what the weather is going to be like but, judging by the scores, it seems they got that right, too.

George was certainly proud of it. "It would be difficult to get it better," he said.

A few days before the big week, his staff were lightly watering parts of the 6,957-yard par 70 course because the greens were going brown, then he had three days of rain which made the greens and fairways soft.

"The last three days didn't help," said George on the eve of the tournament. "On Friday evening we played golf with the R&A and the course was absolutely beautiful, the greens were firm and fast, almost crunching underneath the spikes. Mike Bonallack asked me what sort of weather I'd like and I said, 'A little shower would see us nicely for the week' and since then it's rained every day. We had 17mm on Sunday, 5 or 6mm on Monday and another 4 or 5 on Tuesday - coupled with no wind. I can't remember Turnberry going five days on the trot without a breath of wind."

For most of the competition Turnberry was blessed with sunshine and light breezes, although after one wet and windy afternoon Willie Blair was heard muttering: "I don't know why they don't hold this competition in the summer."

Before the event George had said: "It's just like having your mother-in-law over for Sunday tea, you just do a bit extra." So we asked him whether it really was that simple.

"Yes, it was," he replied, "you get the best white tablecloth out and polish the table."

But he was obviously happy. "I'm very pleased," he said. "We've received so much good publicity from the newspapers, magazines and players."

Looking around the course after the event, he said everything would soon get back to normal. Mother Nature would take care of the rough that had been trampled down by spectators; his staff would concentrate on repairing the damage to the Arran Course's 2nd and 18th fairways, which were used as a practice ground and walkway respectively, and to the original practice area, where the tented village was sited.

He gave the impression that within a couple of weeks you wouldn't notice the Open had been there. It would all be a memory - but what a memory!

Specs appeal: Gordon Moir watches the final players come in at the 18th

It's the best condition I've seen an Open Championship course in the last 10–15 years – Michael Bonallack, R&A secretary

Nicked it: Nick Price congratulates George Brown and his Turnberry team.
I have to compliment the R&A for the wonderful job in setting it up. Of all the British Opens, this is the best condition of an Open Championship I have ever seen. It is the best condition of a links course I have played in Europe. The condition is fantastic – Greg Norman

This is only the second links course I have played and I think it’s awesome. The novelty is that we do not play courses like this in the United States. The way it looks, the way it plays, the different shots you have to play, it’s just different, just great. You need more imagination on a course like this – Tom Lehman
Lew Brown and Buddy De Sylva must have been thinking of the bunker rakers at the Open when they decided: "The best things in life are free."

While some spectators were complaining about the cost of a day out at this year's championship - £20 entrance fee, £6 for car parking, £90 for a seat at the 18th - members of the BIGGA support team were enjoying a complimentary grandstand view of each game.

Since 1984 greenkeepers from around the country - and a few from abroad - have been drafted in for the Open to rake the bunkers and help the permanent staff with things like divotting.

This year more than 125 greenkeepers volunteered for the 52-strong team, many taking a week off work for a chance to be part of one of the most exciting Opens for years. They were close at hand for the memorable moments, like Nick Faldo playing the wrong ball, John Daly hitting two balls into the wee burn at the 16th and Nick Price's 75ft eagle putt at the 17th.

Sometimes they got a little too close at hand for the memorable moments, like Nick Faldo playing the wrong ball, John Daly hitting two balls into the wee burn at the 16th and Nick Price's 75ft eagle putt at the 17th.

The course is set up magnificently, the best condition of any Open I have played in the 10 or 11 years I have played it - Ronan Rafferty after shooting a 65 on day 3

This is one of the best links courses I have played. Really fun - Brad Faxon, joint leader after three days

This is a very good course, we don't have this type in Japan. But it's difficult for me to find the line to shoot at because there's nothing to take a line on - Masashi Ozaki

The course is fantastic. Nice to see the R&A listened from the last time and I have to say they have done a great job. Greens as good as possibly they can be. Fairways in good condition and the rough is very fair, so probably the best conditions I have seen in quite a long time. It is set up perfect, and anyone scoring 10 or 15 under may win. Nothing wrong with that. Whatever happens, it is going to be a great championship - Seve Ballesteros on the eve of the tournament

The course is in very good shape and condition. It seems to be quite fair. It is a bit easier without the wind, but there are some long holes out there where I had to go with long irons and fairway woods on the par 4s. The fairways are a bit narrow, but there is a stretch of semi rough on both sides 5 to 6 yards which seems to make it fair before the thick rough stuff comes. What I remember in '86 it was severe, only 3-4ft of semi and then really bad kraut, as we would say - Bernard Langer

The course is very good - Nick Faldo

I think the whole golf course is good. The lighthouse 9th hole is the one that stands out. I think it is the toughest on the course. They have some very tough short holes there, especially the 15th - Ernie Els

The course is in great shape and it is very straightforward - not a lot of hidden things out there. Greens do not have big, gigantic hollows and the slopes are not overly done. If you play well, you will shoot well - Corey Pavin

I think we've got a course in fantastic condition and they all agree on that. We've set the course up so players can have a go at it - Neil Roach, chairman of the R&A's championship committee
Gavin Kyle, 28, head greenkeeper at the new Sutton Park Golf Club, Surrey, was given Nick Price's glove by his caddy, Jeff 'Squeaky' Medlin, even though he was not raking for him. It was probably because Gavin, who comes from Durban in South Africa, said 'well done' in Afrikaans.

The greenkeepers are briefed to "only speak if spoken to". But if Ronan McKeown had spoken up on the 17th on the first day, the Open might have had a different result. He saw Nick Faldo play the wrong ball. "I had a feeling it wasn't his ball, but you can't say anything can you? Supposing you were wrong?"

Of course, it's not all big names and low scores. Euan Grant's threesome came in 49 over par. The UK's Lee Fickling finished with an 80 for a 20 over par total, Sweden's Anders Gillner shot 79 for +13 and Colombia's Eduardo Herrera's 79 gave him a +16 score. "I'd have preferred to watch a ladies' Tuesday medal," he said.

Richard Barker looked at his draw for the first two games and was a bit disappointed - no big names. Then he saw Jonathan Lomas shoot a 66 to lead for much of the first day and on the second day he had overnight leader Greg Turner!

As Brian Payne says: "It's nice to go out for people who are not household names, so you know who to look for in the future."

Ivan Hall, a retired greenkeeper, went out with Ruben Alvarez of Argentina, Peter Smith and Warren Bennett of the UK - and ended up talking to golf-mad Prince Andrew.

International

The support team is an international gathering. As well as the usual English and Scottish greenkeepers there were sisters Jean Esposito and Sue Smith from their family run Hinkley Hills Golf Club in Ohio, a Welsh course manager with Thai ties, and three greenkeepers from Sweden, who were hoping for a Jesper Parnevik victory. Maybe next year!

This year it was Nick Price who collected the Claret Jug and had the honour of being pictured with the boys and girls from BIGGA. Afterwards, when he said: "I am still a little stunned right now. It is amazing," we think he was referring to shaking hands with Jim Paton.

And when he said, "I nearly jumped out of my skin, it is like a fairy tale," he was probably recalling his visit to the loo in the greenkeepers' office. About three hours after finishing his round, Price was still giving interviews and signing autographs when he got caught short. He asked if he could use our loo. While he was in the small room, his wife Sue waited outside holding the Claret Jug.

Now that's something you don't see watching the Open on TV.