Perfect conditions greeted the 63 Hayter finalists and, as Scott MacCallum witnessed, they produced golf to match the occasion.

The Hayter Challenge has a reputation for across the board excellence. The sectional and regional qualifying events bring out the best in those attempting to progress further; the courses used are among the best in the country while the magnificent sponsorship support at every Hayter day is second to none.

All those elements were to the fore at West Lancashire Golf Club for the 1995 Hayter Challenge Final.

The quality of the golf play was superb in all three categories, the course was one of the finest links in the country presented in excellent order and Kim Macfie and his Hayter colleagues were at their hospitable best.

There are some links courses which really do require a bit of wind to add steel to their defences and sharpen their teeth. The most famous links of them all, the Old Course at St Andrews can demand the power of Hercules and the touch of a safe cracker to break 80 if the wind blows but caught on a calm day in October by Curtis Strange a few years ago even it gave up a 10 under-par 62.

West Lancashire isn't like that. It's a beast even on a calm day and the finalists should know because they benefitted from a perfect day practice round and an equally calm competition day, a situation rare – if not unknown – on the north west coast in mid-September. Even at its most...
benign birdies were as rare as copies of The Sun in nearby Liverpool - it’s still banned in much of the city following its coverage of the Hillsborough Disaster.

As always, for every set of unlucky losers there is a multi-talented victor and on this occasion it was the team from the Home of Golf which prevailed and broke its duck in the event.

Scotland, captained by BIGGA's answer to Bernard Gallacher, Elliott Small, romped home by over 10 shots with an eight out of nine scores counting 27 hole total of 899. The Midland region edged home second just ahead of the Northern region.

It was a magnificent effort by the boys in blue whose spirit was epitomised by the performance of the “old man of the team”, and adopted Scot, George Brown. Turnberry’s finest was “nobbled” the night before the competition and forced to drink vast qualities of the aforementioned spirit by a former colleague. He came out the following morning somewhat sluggishly but by the afternoon was back to his best posting a gross sub-par total for the final nine holes. It was good enough to carry him to the over 55s prize with a score of 108.
'West Lancs tests every club in the bag'

His presence, and ability to come back from an excessively hard night, inspired the younger members of the team, particularly Alexander Reid of Letham Grange who shot the best of the morning nett 68 on his way to clinching the under 21 prize with a score of 105.5.

The quality of the golfer mustered by the teams was exceptionally high with many Category one players headed by Derek McJannett of Sherwood Forest GC who posted a gross one under par total of 107 off a scratch handicap. He brought him the best gross prize six shots ahead of Shaun Richards, the one handicapper of the Finals whose work was recognised with the presentation of a magnificent Starter's Jacket for going 13th 100% by building mounding to prevent the dog leg being carried from the elevated tee. The area from which the soil used to build the mounding was utilised by a new turf nursery.

The Hayter Challenge Final was an ideal opportunity to display the qualities of the new FM514 Fairway Unit Mower to the assembled greenkeepers.

The midweight machine has five floating heads, a Kubota 35 hp diesel engine, power on-demand four wheel drive, seven or 11 blade cutter 26 inch heads. Cost of the FM514, which was launched in prototype form at Harrogate earlier this year and is now in full time production, is £23,995.

Already it has attracted much interest, including in the USA and Japan and the West Lancashire practice range was the ideal place for Ian Holoran, Foreman, Middlesbrough Municipal Golf Centre:

"An impressive machine. It has a good turning circle which is great for going around bunkers and winter greens and it certainly scores over gang mowers because of its ability to present the course so well. You sit high up which means visibility is good. I do think the cab should be standard in this country (cab comes as an optional extra at £2,500). It has plenty of power and a good Kubota engine. It's also a UK company so parts back-up should be good and I particularly like the lever to drop the cutting blades which I much prefer to a pedal."

Buster Lewer, Course Manager, Dainton Park GC:

"It's a super machine. The weight is right and it feels good. It's the lightest machine on the market. The visibility is great and overall I can't really fault the machine.

If there is anything it's that you've got to get out of the machine to move the cutting units up to their vertical position but that only takes a couple of seconds. Using this machine the presentation of the course would be excellent."