Two superb golf courses played in testing conditions by a strong field containing some of the finest golfers BIGGA has to offer. Photography: Alan Birch

What could be better?

Yes, the 2001 BIGGA National Championship was a wonderful occasion and in Royal Birkdale and Southport & Ainsdale we had two golf courses which ensured that the entire field were tested but most of all felt privileged just to be there.

Played on the Monday and Tuesday after the Ryder Cup was scheduled to be played it shouldn't be forgotten that between them Birkdale and S&A had hosted four Ryder Cups and in Birkdale's case a host of memorable Open Championships.

So it was with a sense of real history and awe that the maximum field - reduced slightly by last minute call-offs - teed off at Birkdale on the Monday. The conditioning of both golf courses was a real tribute to Walter Woods who played some sparkling golf on both days to finish high up the prize list and, more importantly, see him ahead of his old rival George Brown, of Turnberry.

The fact that the Championship will again be held in the Southport area, on his own Hesketh course as well as Hesketh, sees Barry Holt do a Justin Rose at Birkdale's 18th by holing a chip for a birdie. It produced scenes not seen since the 17th green at Brookline with a display of over enthusiastic celebrating from the delighted left hander. As a follow up he also birdied the 1st at S&A and completed his two days of work with another birdie on the 18th, on this occasion followed by a slightly more restrained punch of the air.

Even now Past Chairman Elliott Small is hot on the trail of the player who played his ball - a Titleist 3 - on the 16th at Birkdale causing him to return. As the purple mist descended he finished his round birdie-eagle which perhaps only compounded his fury.

As yet it is not known whether any BIGGA members were responsible for Liverpool and England's Steven Gerrard getting into trouble prior to the England-Greece game.

Gerrard was spotted out drinking in a Southport bar at 2am on Tuesday morning, around about the time many greenkeepers were also frequenting bars in the area.

Tribute must also be played to Walter Woods who played some sparkling golf on both days to finish high up the prize list and, more importantly, see him ahead of his old rival George Brown, of Turnberry.
REGIONAL TEAM CUP

Winners - South East Region
Mick Haynes, Raymond Day,
David Murdoch, John Donnelly,
Nigel Colley, Antony Kirwan,
Jason Moody, Ian Semple

Runners Up
Scottish Region
George Brown, Iain MacLeod,
Steve Sullivan, John Main, Walter
Woods, Duncan Gray, Alistair
Philp, Craig Pennycuick

3rd Midland Region
4th Northern Region
5th SWest & SWales Region

Prestige Sports Surfaces Ltd
Evenproducts Ltd
Hunter Grinders
Talbot Farm Landscapes Ltd
Gem Professional
The Scotts Company (UK) Ltd
European Turf Technology
Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products
Rain Bird
Lely (UK) Ltd
Amenity Technology
Turfrax
Grass Roots Trading Co
Jim Fry

Above: Our National Championship winners take a bow!

Top: Barry Holt on fine form, and above, the Regional Team Cup is lifted by the South East Team

Walter Woods (above) and George Brown (right) battle it out

Above: The conditioning of both golf courses was a real tribute to Chris Whittle and Mike Mercer and their respective teams at Royal Birkdale and Southport and Ainsdale

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