A DAY TO REMEMBER

The 2008 BIGGA National Golf Championship, sponsored by Kubota, is being played at a fantastic venue which was once looked after by one of BIGGA’s favourite sons.

In the mid-80s East Sussex National was known as one of the first high profile golf clubs, which offered superb facilities for those with pockets deep enough to pay the debenture.

More recently East Sussex National, in greenkeeping circles, was associated with Course Manager, Raymond Day, the larger than life BIGGA Board of Management member whose life was cut short by cancer in January 2007.

It is, therefore, fitting that this October East Sussex National should be the venue for the BIGGA National Golf Championship, sponsored by Kubota, giving BIGGA members the opportunity to see at first hand the course which Ray managed for the final four years of his life and which has since been taken on by Ray’s Deputy, and current Course Manager, Scott Litchfield.

It is a truly majestic golfing venue - two courses, the East and West, were designed by Bob Cupp, a former associate of Jack Nicklaus - which will test the finest golfers BIGGA can muster, but also offer ample opportunities for those who succumb to the challenge to relax and enjoy themselves in sumptuous surroundings.

We will make sure the course is prepared to a standard Ray would be proud of, said Scott, as we sat in the foyer of the superb new hotel which opened in 2006 and which is located on the site of the old maintenance facilities.

BIGGA will play on the East, a stadium course, which hosted the European Open in 1993 and ‘94. The West, is regarded as more of a members’ course and is more tree lined.

Scott maintains the two courses in the same manner, treating them very much as 36 holes together rather than two 18s.

“You’ve got to be sensible and utilise the staff as well as you can so it is a lot better to treat it as one big golf course. If a guy goes out cutting the rough he doesn’t just stick to one course he goes around the course using the most economical route.

“We have a lot of competitions and corporate events for which we hand cut. For example we have one of the top amateur events, the Tillman Trophy, and a televised Europro event coming up and we will be hand cutting for them and we will do the same for the BIGGA Championship.”

Scott has recently reintroduced the long fescue rough for which the club was known in its early years and which looked stunning. It had been cut back to help improve the pace of play.

“We decided to surprise the members this
ENTRY FORM

Please select the relevant category:

☒ Greenkeeper Member

☐ Associate Member

The entry fee of £110 includes all golf fees, lunch both days and dinner on Monday evening. Please note that there is no accommodation provided.

Name ______________________________

Address ______________________________

Post Code ______________________________

Mobile ______________________________

E-mail ______________________________

Membership Number __________________

Handicap __________________

BIGGA Section __________________

Payment method (please tick)

☒ I enclose my cheque made payable to ‘BIGGA’ value £110

☒ Please debit my Mastercard/ Switch / Visa / Delta card with the fee of £110

Card number __________________________

Start Date ____________________________

Expiry Date ____________________________

Last 3 security digits __________

Issue No. (Switch/Delta only) __________

Signature ____________________________

Date ____________________________

Or E-mail your details to sandra@bigga.co.uk but ensure you receive confirmation of entry by return E-mail. Deadline for entry is 8th September 2008. Completed entry forms should be sent to: BIGGA National Championship, BIGGA House, Aldwark, Alne, York Y061 1UF

The main tournament for the Challenge Trophy will be played over 36 holes, medal play, with the best overall gross score producing the BIGGA National Champion, who must be a greenkeeper member. The greenkeeper player with the lowest nett score will be presented with the BIGGA Challenge Cup.

There will be prizes for 1st, 2nd, 3rd over 36 holes in both the nett and gross categories, additionally after each day of 18 holes there will be prizes for winners of handicap divisions. The BIGGA Regional Team Cup and prize will be calculated from the 8 best nett scores over the first day of play. If you have a poor first day, you may wish to elect to play in an alternative Stableford competition, that will be held on the second day of play.

Rooms are available at the East Sussex National at a rate of £85.00pp B & B for single occupancy, £60pp B & B sharing twin room. To book telephone 01825 880088 and select hotel enquiries then reception options.
So I quit, went to America and skied in Colorado for four months.

“When I came back I didn’t know what I wanted to do so my mother went to the local college and asked what courses were available. There was thatching and greenkeeping and as I didn’t fancy standing off roofs all day I went for greenkeeping.”

Even if it did come from an exasperated mother trying to find some direction for her son she couldn’t have found a better match. Scott took to greenkeeping like a duck to water and never looked back.

The key to his progression came when he worked at Shrivenham Park in Swindon.

“I worked for a great guy called Jason Taylor, who was very focussed and passionate about the industry. He told me that you never get anywhere if you just sit around. You had to move about.”

Scott took Jason at his word and applied for a seasonal job at Loch Lomond, giving up the full time post at Shrivenham.

“I took a real chance by going to Loch Lomond but after a season Ken Seims offered me a full time position.”

Scott stayed for five years gaining invaluable experience preparing a top 50 golf course for regular televised tournaments rising to become a First Assistant before moving to East Sussex National as Head Greenkeeper of the East Course. There is longstanding link between Loch Lomond and East Sussex with Ken Seims and Mike Wattam both having worked at both clubs before Scott made the same switch.

When Mike left Ray Day took over as Course Greenkeeper International
Kubota (U.K.) Ltd
Company Profile

Formed in 1979 and based at Thame, Oxfordshire, Kubota (U.K.) Limited is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Kubota Corporation of Japan. The Kubota Corporation was established in 1890 as a manufacturer of cast-iron products in Osaka, Japan before turning its attention towards powered equipment in the early 1920s. Kubota is now represented in every continent, is one of the world’s largest manufacturers of industrial diesel engines under 110 HP and is recognised as a world leader in compact tractors, diesel ride-on mowers and mini diggers.

Introducing the first compact tractors into the UK in the mid-1970s, Kubota remains the best selling compact tractor in the UK today. The company puts this success down to the highest of manufacturing standards in its Japanese and American factories, product reliability, durability and low running costs as well as excellent resale values.

Looking to the future Ray sat down with Scott and explained how to do the paperwork side of the job and spent a lot of time preparing Scott for a future that he might not see.

“He achieved a lot in the four years he was at the club and definitely left an improved golf course for me to take on,” said Scott.

It is fitting, therefore, that the 2008 BIGGA Golf Championship, sponsored by Kubota, is played on Ray’s course and that it will be followed the very next day by the Ray Day Memorial Tournament. “I want everyone to come here and enjoy themselves,” said Scott.

Everyone who knew Ray will know that is exactly what he would have wanted.

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Log on: www.kubota.co.uk

Manager with Scott becoming Assistant Course Manager.

“He was a really tough cookie and the hardest boss I’ve ever had. He was very demanding and expected a lot from his guys, but he really did care for his staff and had them very close to his heart, although he didn’t always show it,” said Scott.

The day Ray told everyone of his cancer was one that Scott will never forget.

He insisted on getting everyone together.

He stood there and explained the situation. It was very emotional and I had to finish off the meeting for him. You learn how to look after turf, but not how to do these sorts of things. No-one trains you for it.”

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