A Month of Ups and Downs

August was one of those good month-bad months for the game of golf. Obviously we’ve been overwhelmed by the Olympics and with golf not an Olympic Sport – if you ask me it never should be, nor should tennis or basketball for that matter – the game hasn’t been high profile in August.

But, as I say, there were reasons for genuine elation but also for depression all wrapped up in one 31 day period.

First the good news. Padraig Harrington’s emergence as a genuine golfing superstar.

There are those who argue that his Open win at Carnoustie last year was more of a case of stumbling over the line than a triumphant march towards the Claret Jug. That may be true but this year’s Open win at Royal Birkdale was much more convincing and we saw signs of Harrington becoming one of those players who can do exactly what they want when the pressures are at their most intense.

Those signs grew in size - and added neon to make them even more obvious - at the US PGA Championship when he came from nowhere, he was in danger of missing the cut at one stage, and absolutely dominated Sergio Garcia and Ben Curtis over the back nine to win his third Major. Anyone who looked at his eyes over the closing four holes, in particular, could see a fire burning that probably only Tiger could extinguish.

The phrase “role model” is vastly overused, but it is fair to say that Padraig Harrington is exactly what British and Irish golf, needs at the moment – a good guy who gets every ounce from himself in terms of achievement and a man who other people can relate to.

That’s the good news. The bad news has been yet another year of awful summer weather. I was on holiday for the first half of August but learning what the weather was like back home made me shudder. Having got back midway through the month the weather hadn’t improved and I’m sure there are a large number of courses which have been closed for a period during August.

That’s what we don’t need. Golf clubs need revenue from visitors and societies and lousy weather doesn’t encourage casual golfers to hit the fairways – even if beleaguered courses have been able to remain open for play. Coming on the back of last year, which was the wettest summer since I don’t know when and revenue was down, we really needed a bumper summer and that having failed to materialise it may well lead to calls to cut budgets.

Cries that standards are slipping will no doubt follow but golfers will need to get real and appreciate that Course Managers can only do as much as is possible from the resources he or she is given. Any reduction in resource will inevitably mean less can be done. It shouldn’t be too hard a concept to grasp.

Just time to wish Europe’s Ryder Cup team good fortune at Valhalla and to pass on best wishes to Superintendent, Mark Wilson, and his team for the final preparations and the week itself.

Welcome