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Oly Browning, assistant greenkeeper at Stocks Golf Club in Hertfordshire, blazed round the formidable links at Irvine Golf Club in Ayrshire to claim the title of BIGGA National Champion 2012. 67 players flocked to the extremely challenging course from as far afield as Ireland and the South Coast all dreaming of glory.

Incredibly, after a miserable summer across the UK, Scotland enjoyed what BIGGA Chief Executive Jim Creton described as “the best two days of weather imaginable” with unbroken sunshine teaming up with the rolling countryside to provide a breathtaking vista for play.

Theoretically, the tremendous weather should have led to perfect conditions for play - but the course still proved difficult throughout with a number of players posting no returns, mainly due to the heather returns, mainly due to the heather and gorse waiting to gobble up slightest errant drives.

Even triumphant Oly did not enjoy two trouble-free days as he explained while proudly clutching the BIGGA Challenge Trophy. He said: “I four putted on the 17th, but I kept it on the fairways and didn’t take any chances - I only got my driver out three times over the two days.

“I think the key was hitting the greens - I hit a lot of them which was pleasing. It’s a difficult course but despite that, it can still be forgiving in some places.”

Playing off scratch, the modest 23-year-old explained he has won minor events in the past but this was the proudest moment of his golfing career.

“This is probably the biggest trophy I’ve ever won. It’s the fourth time I’ve entered, I came fourth last year so it feels really good to get my name on the trophy at last.

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But they were delighted by the challenge, and hugely impressed by the quality of the course – indeed Head Greenkeeper Derek Wilson and his team were overwhelmed with congratulations.

Simon Wootley, from Bricken- don Grange Golf Club, said: “The course is absolutely gorgeous; it’s in fantastic condition. Everything about it is superb. The greens are brilliant. If you don’t hole a putt it’s your fault!”

Steve Mason, his Course Man- ager at Stocks, said: “Oly has won Club Championship four years on the trot, a feat I’m sure will not be repeated.”

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But the real highlight for me has been the camaraderie. It’s a great opportunity to catch up with old colleagues and also meet new people from across the industry.”

Derek Wilson himself enjoyed some rare relaxation time with a couple of rounds of golf on the sun- shirt. He commented: “It’s been a very good couple of days, everyone’s thoroughly enjoyed it - not just the golf but the evening do was a great night.

“I played alright on the first day, not so well on the second. I don’t think I had any advantage knowing the course – there are too many bushes on it which I found!”

The excitement grew during the second afternoon as the returning players enjoyed a well-earned drink in the clubhouse. However it soon became clear that overnight leader Oly was in no mood to relinquish his slot at the top of the leaderboard as his 75 67 players flocked to the extremely challenging course from as far afield as Ireland and the South Coast all dreaming of glory.

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Playing off scratch, the modest 23-year-old explained how he won minor events in the past but this was the proudest moment of his golfing career.

“This is probably the biggest trophy I've ever won. It's the fourth time I've entered, I came fourth last year so it feels really good to get my name on the trophy at last. I drove up with my brother, it's been a real pleasure to play here. I'm not going to drink to celebrate because I'm teetotal, but my name on the trophy is enough. The golf itself was terrific but it's also been really good fun. I had a good laugh with all of my playing partners.”

Steve Mason, his Course Manager at Stocks, said: “Oly has won Club Championship four years out of the tot, so I think I’m sure we will not be repeated.

“Having spoken about turning pro but tried an Euros event and was disqualified by the outcome as he was 24 shots off the lead after 36 holes of qualifying. “But he has gained strength from this experience and went on to win the event is a massive boost for him, we all hope he can use this to build his confidence and achieve his dream of becoming a star on the big stage.”

Ryan Beaton from Roundwood Golf Club in Barnsley had the honour of striking the first tee shot on a bright October morning. At the end of the first day's play, Oly led the way with a magnificent par 71, establishing a two-shot lead over Gary Burgess from Grange Park and George Morgan from The Mendip.

The Monday evening saw the competitors, sponsors and BIGGA team enjoy excellent hospitality in the traditional clubhouse, with a three-course meal and speeches from Jim and BIGGA Chairman Tony Smith.

Both made a point of thanking the sponsors Charterhouse and Kubota, who once again offered first-class support for the annual event.

Once again the Scottish sunshine rose over the course on the second morning, eventually clearing the cool crisp frost from the fairways, paving the way for another spectacular autumn day.

Almost every golfer returned to the BIGGA registration area with tales of two days – including Tony who wrecked a potentially respectable round with eight shots in a bunker on the 18th.

But they were delighted by the challenge, and hugely impressed by the quality of the course – indeed Head Greenkeeper Derek Wilson and his team were overwhelmed with congratulations.

Simon Woolley, from Bricken- don Grange Golf Club, said: “The course is absolutely gorgeous, it's in fantastic condition. Everything about it is superb. The greens are brilliant. If you don't hole a putt it's your fault!”

Gavin Robson, from Burton-on-Trent Golf Club, said: “It's an awesome course, the greens are beautiful and true. It's a true heathland golf course and a true test of your putting. You can't stray off line because if you do, you're in the heather and you're in trouble. It's a true heathland golf course and a true test of your putting. You can't stray off line because if you do, you're in the heather and you're in trouble.

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Derek Wilson himself enjoyed some rare relaxation time with a couple of rounds of golf in the sun. “I played alright on the first day, not so well on the second. I don't think I had any advantage needing to know the course – there are too many bushes on it which I found!”

The excitement grew during the second afternoon as the returning players enjoyed a well-earned drink in the clubhouse. However it soon became clear that overnight leader Oly was in no mood to relinquish his slot at the top of the leaderboard as his 75 ensured a memorable victory – a gross score of 146 enough to win by three shots.

Carnoustie's Duncan Cairnie and Cathkin Braes' Gordon Sangster were his nearest challengers on 149 - Duncan claiming the runner-up spot by virtue of a superior second round.

Kenneth Mitchell from St Andrews won the Challenge Cup for best net score over 36 holes.

1) Kenneth Mitchell (St Andrews) 141 (70, 71) - £100 prize
2) Gary Burgess (Grange Park) 145 (75, 70) - £50 prize
3) George Morgan (The Mendip) 153 (73, 78) - £25 prize

BIGGA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2012

BIGGA CHALLENGE TROPHY
(Beat best score over 36 holes)
1) Oly Browning (Stocks) 146 (71, 75) - £100 prize
2) Duncan Cairnie (Carnoustie) 149 (75, 74) - £50 prize
3) Gordon Sangster (Cathkin Braes) 149 (74, 75) - £25 prize

BIGGA CHALLENGE CUP
(Best net score over 36 holes)
1) Kenneth Mitchell (St Andrews) 141 (70, 71) - £100 prize
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BIGGA CHALLENGE PLATE (Stableford)
1) David Fuller (Levant) - £50 prize

BIGGA CHALLENGE BOWL (Affiliate)
David Nelson (Nelson & Vecchio) - £50 prize

DAILY HANDICAP - DAY 1
1) Six - 12 Iain Barr (Largs) 72
2 - 5 Gary Burgess (Grange Park) 70
6 - 12 David Nelson (Nelson & Vecchio) 71
13 - 24 John Wilson (Irvine) 73
DAILY HANDICAP - DAY 2
1) Six - 12 Kenneth Mitchell (St Andrews) 71
6 - 12 Iain Barr (Largs) 72
13 - 24 John Wilson (Irvine) 76