Open Support Team Q&A
The chance to be a member of the BIGGA Open Support Team is one of the many benefits of BIGGA membership. If you were lucky enough to have been chosen, what can you expect at Muirfield in July?

The BIGGA Open Support Team members are an important part of the behind the scenes unit at one of the world’s greatest sporting events. It offers members the chance to follow in the footsteps of legendary golfers and learn from the greenkeeping teams at the UK’s top golfing venues – another real benefit of BIGGA membership.

We’ve had several queries over the years about the way the Team is formed and the various roles they perform at the Open Championship – so here’s BIGGA’s General Manager Tracey Maddison to answer your questions.

Q) How many BIGGA members applied to join The Open Support Team 2013?
A) We received over 100 applications from as far afield as Ireland, Sweden, Vietnam, Australia, USA and Germany.

Q) What process do you follow to select the Team?
A) It is quite a scientific process! We look at every single application we receive thoroughly - it’s vital we have a good mix of experienced members, younger members and overseas members. It’s important to ensure that there is a core of people who have Open Championship experience in the Team to act as mentors for those who are involved for the first time.

Q) How important is their role?
A) We’ve supported the existing greenkeeping teams at Open Championships since 1984 now, and the team’s responsibility is increasing all the time. There are a lot of early mornings! We have a team on the course from 4am every day from the Tuesday through to the Sunday, preparing the golf course alongside the home greenkeeping team working at The Open venue itself and from their fellow Team members, and that can only help their daily work and future career.

Q) What do the Support Team do?
A) There are a lot of early mornings! We have a team on the course from 4am every day from the Tuesday through to the Sunday, preparing the golf course alongside the home greenkeeping team – particularly the bunkers – for the day’s play. They then send out a member with each having a Pod Leader who has good prior experience of the event. Each pod remains together for transportation etc throughout the week, and generate a real camaraderie.

Q) What do the Support Team do?
A) We received a terrific letter from Paul Smith, Head Greenkeeper at Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club, after last year’s event saying how the team did a sterling job under very difficult circumstances – particularly overnight Thursday into Friday – which shows how vital the team’s work is. Paul also came into the BIGGA marquee on the Sunday to personally thank the whole team.

Q) How do you follow to the champion up the final fairway.
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Q) How does the Team come together?
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Q) What is the big challenge?
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Q) What can you expect at Muirfield in July?
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