

The Greenkeepers' finest hour – a record breaking 8-0 victory over their opponents in the prestigious Kubota Golf Challenge. Report and pictures by DAVID WHITE

Make no mistake about it, the Kubota Golf Challenge is a very important event indeed, the very essence of matchplay at the highest level and the ultimate culmination of a season of hardened competitive campaigning by golfing greenkeepers – a melting pot where the cream rises...

The Kubota Golf Challenge – originated in 1983 as a series of matches between selected national teams from The Golf Club Secretaries and our own Association – has developed and grown in stature and importance with the inclusion of teams culled variously from The Golf Writers Association, The Stewards Association, The English Golf Union and, for the first time, a team from The Golf Foundation. In its nine year history the handsome Japanese porcelain Kubota Trophy has been won three times by The Secretaries and an astounding six times by The Greenkeepers, though never in its history by a more convincing margin than in this latest test of man against man.

You may be sure that our sights were set on erasing the bitter taste of a mere third in the 1990 event, our 1991 eight man team comprised Richard Barker, Barry Holt, Graeme MacDonald, Stephen Sullivan, Michael Hughes, Don Major, Mark Diment and Philip Wentworth; all of whom earned selection by winning their respective classes in our National Tournament.

Such is the competitive spirit prevailing in our ranks that the team were all in full battle order for some essential last minute fine-tuning at The Belfry, notwithstanding a fulsome force eight blowing with wind-chill factor to match. Full marks especially to Steve Sullivan, who had driven 400 miles overnight from his Perthshire home to represent his profession, such enthusiasm rewarded by two great wins, both at five and four!

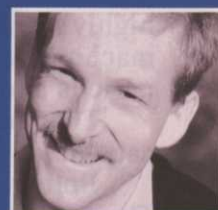
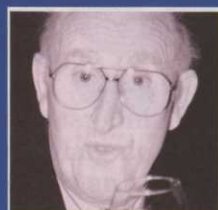
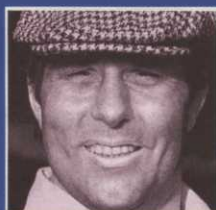
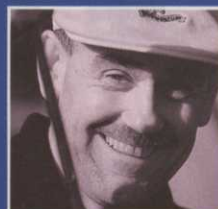
Meeting the current Kubota Trophy holders in the semi finals, our team held solid against a hand-picked group of single figure secretaries and succeeded in trouncing them, with a resounding five to two mark in our favour, one game being halved. Our two losses, which might well have gone the other way, both came at the 18th, first from a heart-stopping double break putt of twenty five feet from the magic wand of secretary Barry Vernon in taking Mike Hughes by one, the other being a ding-dong battle which went the full distance between the irascible and difficult to beat Vic Wood, secretary at Sandiways, and our old friend Don Major. No matter; for as a team we were in the final, in overdrive, and firing on all eight cylinders!

Not to be denied the gales again, we were lucky that 'the big blow' wasn't also matched with the rains currently dumping over the rest of the country, and thus we wrapped-up well against the chill of the day. Our finalist opponents were the English Golf Union, with first blood going to our stalwart of several previous Kubota finals, Richard Barker, who took scratchman and ex International Les Walker for a smooth three and two victory. The tails were up and the blood pumping as Barry Holt defeated Roy Lawford by three and one, fairly zinging as Graeme MacDonald annihilated Dick Bates by eight and six and over the moon when Stephen Sullivan crushed Malcolm Unsworth by five and four. Half way home and no defeats!

A further great breakthrough came as Mike Hughes defeated Jack Humphries by three and two, followed minutes later with Don Major conjuring all his many golfing tal-



CHAMPIONS



ents to slip a two hole victory against Cyril Rose. Then, glory be, we had Mark Diment, having a no quarter given head to head with Ken Johnson and fairly romped home whilst revelling in his five and four victory. In most events the anchor man has a tough task, but this was not the case with 'our' Phil Wentworth, who put the lid on a perfect series with a dogs licence victory (7 & 6) over Norman Bradford. Eight matches played, eight matches won and honour restored!

Symptomatic of both the severity and importance of these bloody battles, one must give much more than lip service to the wise choice of The Belfry itself, especially the Brabazon course with its famous nail-biting finish over the lake and its testing sixth, a narrow enough landing area sandwiched between water – which in a force eight is an examination paper of the toughest nature. The Brabazon is now so far removed from the bitch teeny bopper she once was, having blossoming into serene and gorgeous womanhood, and quite properly drew unquestioned praise from all who came in their attempt to conquer her – an outstanding example of dedication and skill by Derek Ganning and his management team. Come 1993 and the Ryder Cup, it is comforting to know that our man Derek will be ready and set to deliver the goods.

At the award ceremony given that evening, Brian Hurtley, Vice President and Director, Kubota (UK) Ltd., praised the spirit of good fellowship that prevailed, delighted in welcoming the new kids on the block – the Golf Foundation – and marvelled at the sheer skill and consistency of our glorious greenkeeping team. It was our finest hour.

From top left:
Richard Barker,
Barry Holt, Graeme
MacDonald,
Stephen Sullivan.
**Second row, from
left:** Michael
Hughes, Don Major,
Mark Diment and
Philip Wentworth

Results:
The Greenkeepers
defeated the
English Golf Union
by eight matches to
nil. In third place
were The
Secretaries, who
defeated the Golf
Foundation by five
matches to two,
with one match
halved.