



The eighteenth from behind the lake – the second shot

A win by a whisker

The Kubota records will show no more than the bare bones of our latest success, gained at the tenth anniversary match for the Kubota Golf Challenge: it will be simply written – The Greenkeepers defeated The Golf Club Secretaries in 1992 – period.

What will not be recorded is that for the seventh time in ten years the greenkeepers have succeeded – this time in a final which ended at four games all, decided in our favour by the margin of holes won, nineteen to fifteen, with the match result resting on the performance of Bernard Emberley, a stout performer with the courage of a lion. Let me explain...

Since 1983 the Kubota Challenge has been the very epitome of match play golf – head to head singles – and the greenkeepers have had it pretty well sewn up year upon year – certainly for the past seven years and irritated only by a single hiccup in 1990, when a team of secretaries sneaked in a blow for their side. We've had grand victories, none finer than the eight-nil whitewash of 1991, and in truth we've come to expect to win! This heavy burden, the massive expectations of the greenkeeping fraternity, was never more apparent than in this latest series, when the team came to battle out the final after winning a semi-final against the Golf Foundation – by the now familiar margin of eight games to zero! We all know this God-like play can't last forever, there must come a moment when the veil slips, when players become human again...

Richard Barker, captain and number one, is noted for his golfing excellence, a more solid four handicap player doesn't exist... yet he met his Waterloo at the hands of Martin Yates, four and two – without putting a foot wrong! Barry Holt, the Mighty Atom who seems to romp along the fairways, his legs trying to catch up, couldn't wait to get on with his game as our number two, loving the hard battle. He positively thrives on match play and his was a crucial victory, a splendidly contrived five and three whilst declaring throughout the round that he was 'not at his best'!



Alistair Tough



Ian Holoran



Jim Byrne



Bernard Emberley



Graeme Patrick



Richard Barker



Craig Handyside



Barry Holt

Holt's game over, there came a pause while a handful of spectators settled down to gossip in the chill, sunny air and wait for the Handyside/Peak match to reach a conclusion. Both are excellent players, but in Handyside's case it was all nip and tuck, up then down, the game finally swinging in Peak's favour by two and one. No disgrace for Craig Handyside and one that could have gone either way.

Meanwhile news was filtering through of a battle royal between ex-pro turned secretary, Bob Lanyon and our Bernard Emberley. It looked likely to go the full distance... and it did, as you will soon learn.

Of Graeme Patrick, our number five, there can be nothing to add save a drum roll and trumpet fanfare for his annihilation of Dewi Davies by seven and five. Add a second fanfare for Jim Byrne's similar thrashing of Bill Short by six and five... things were looking positively rosy!

If Alistair Tough will forgive the obvious pun, his day couldn't have been tougher. Each tiny slip was punished beyond reason: his ball would nestle between tree roots, lodge in unplayable lies, spin three times round the cup and lip out – the Gods were against him. His five and four defeat against Len Harpum was something even he came to expect in the end, for when the bitch that is Old Mother Fate takes a hand it's best to greet her with a grin, hoping for her blessing the next time round.

It was a similar story for Ian Holoran, our number eight. His was a game which never quite reached his own high expectations and he

went down battling to Trevor Davey by four and three.

From these known results you will see the rose had withered, we were in deficit by one, we needed a win from Bernard Emberley! Our man Bernard has nerve galore, though I doubt he has been called upon to exhibit such nail-biting stuff at such a crucial time before – and at such an illustrious arena as the eighteenth on the Brabazon. For those who may have been in a time warp, The Belfry's prima-donna hole, scene of so many triumphs and tragedies in Ryder Cup history, is 474 yards from the back tees, two lakes in play at both tee shot and approach, the final shot a most daunting carry to a sloping and well protected green.

Coming to the final hole all square both players hit fine tee shots, Emberley's some 15/20 yards longer. What followed, especially at such a crucial point, was somewhat uncharacteristic for an ex-pro, for he played short of the lake rather than risk a carry of some 190-200 yards. Emberley was made of sterner stuff and conjured the most exquisite spoon shot imaginable, the ball finishing near pin high and just rolling into the right hand bunker. Lanyon faltered with his third, leaving it on the very edge of the green, uphill and sloping – three-putt country! Calling on every ounce of those priceless qualities called grit and inspiration, Emberley feathered his wedge and we saw the ball floating, landing above pin and some ten feet from the cup. The inevitable happened, Lanyon three-putted, Bernard lagged to within 'gimmee' distance and the game was over – sweet victory was ours.

What a wonderful event The Kubota Challenge is, what a clever concept. It has been said before and deserves repeating: The Kubota Challenge is a very important event indeed. We are proud to retain the handsome porcelain Kubota Trophy – our good friend Brian Hurtle, Vice President and Director, Kubota GB Ltd., may be assured that it is in very safe hands!

Results: The Greenkeepers defeated The Secretaries. Third place was taken by the Golf Foundation, who defeated the English Golf Union (margin of four holes the better after a tie at four games each).