

Success once again for the greenkeepers means the Kubota Challenge Trophy returns to Aldwark Manor for the eighth time in nine years. But as David White reports, the tournament had its sticky moments...

**T**he Kubota Challenge Trophy does not belong to the greenkeepers, certainly it is not the exclusive property of BIGGA as a God given right. No, it must be battled for year upon year. That stated, it will come as no surprise for readers of Greenkeeper International to learn that a selected team of eight BIGGA golfers have once again clasped the venerated Japanese vase to their chests, raising the old porcelain crock high, along with pride for their profession and for their undoubted prowess in the ultimate field of battle – match play golf.

At Kiawah Island in '91 American supporters wore gimme-caps proclaiming the legend 'The Ryder Cup belongs in the USA', and as a thought for 1994, as the trophy is returned to Aldwark Manor yet again – for the eighth time in nine years – there must now be a good case for our next team to bear the legend on their head-gear, "The Kubota Trophy belongs in BIGGA's hands!". By way of additional praise, this time from twice Amateur Champion Peter McEvoy, undoubtedly one of Britain's finest ever players, came the opinion: 'their (the greenkeepers') continued success comes as no surprise, and may be easily put down to both preparation and dedication.'

Before revealing the bones of BIGGA's success, let me first express a huge vote of thanks to Belfry course manager, Derek Ganning, on behalf of all Kubota players. The Brabazon periphery (and indeed parts of some fairways) had been ravaged by Ryder Cup crowds, transport and grandstands, whilst huge chunks of the adjacent Derby course resembled scenes from the Ardenne battlefields. There was mud, mud, and still more mud, a nightmare for Derek's team. Mud notwithstanding, the course was also taking a pasting from the heavens and it would not have surprised us to see the course closed. 'Not so', declared Derek, 'these games must go on, we'll close tomorrow'...and so they did. Full credit too, for the remarkable condition of all eighteen greens, together with remarkable drainage. Derek, give your team a bonus!

I suspect that meeting the greenkeepers in battle is enough to frighten many a team into losing before a blow is struck, thus it is to the credit of the Golf Club Secretaries that in the semi-finals they took us down the wire, indeed gave us a moment or two of apprehension before succumbing to a 4 – 3 defeat, with one halved match.

Thus in the final, Greenkeepers versus the English Golf Union, there was no feeling of invincibility in the greenkeeping camp, the pot had still to be won, the match needing to be played through incessant rain. To say the least, it was nasty, but when the going gets tough... the tough et cetera, et cetera.

First away, George Paterson (1) waged a monster battle against ex International Les



# VICTORY in the MUD



The winning team of greenkeepers with the Kubota Challenge Trophy. Top, The Belfry's tenth hole, showing flooding near the lay-up zone and mess left behind from the Ryder Cup

Walker (1), declared later by George to have 'a good old head on him.' Their game dinged, square at the turn, George one down at fifteen, square again at sixteen. The seventeenth halved, their game went the full five pennyworth, finally falling Walker's way when he rolled in a single monster putt (was it really only 20 feet, it looked even longer) to claim a one hole victory. Some matches were one-sided, and Aled Hughes (4) found Brian Evans (3) a smidgen off form, defeating him seven and five, whilst 'never down' John Mitchell (7), our hero, scored the sweetest of victories by annihilating Peter Wilson (6) to the tune of eight and six! More was to follow, with Mr Steadiness, Mike Hughes (4), scoring a deserved and well fought two and one victory over David Hood (6), whilst George Brown (4), ever the 'banker' in these circumstances, won what he described as 'a tough match' by three and two against John Brew (5). Interestingly, another competition was also being staged by Oracle, and at their declared 'longest drive' hole, George Brown thumped his ball some 44 yards past their winners mark!

Spare a moment now to cheer for Huw Morgan (7), who came from being three down with five to play to halve his match against that wily old bird, Brian Lewis (7) – great stuff Huw, especially recovering from dormy one

down to snatch a rattling good half – share also in the disappointment of Chris Yeaman (12), who fell to Tony Everett (9) by three and one, though not without giving of his very best. Chris was certainly the semi's hero, coming from four down with five to play to halve his match, which took us into the final! Can't win 'em all, they say. What can I say about Roger Willers (15)? His performance in the semi's (five down after five) was not of the usual Willers' standard and I suspect he gave himself a thorough talking to before meeting Maurice Hutchins (10) in all that rain. His victory (five up after six) was the sweeter for being least expected, and we applauded his three and two as though he'd sunk the winning putt for the Ryder Cup.

Last year we thanked our good friend Brian Hurlley, Vice President and Director, Kubota GB Ltd, for the wonder of this fabulous event – real golf, proper golf, man to man combat that makes the spine tingle. We thanked him again this year, reminding him that the Kubota Trophy remains in very safe hands indeed – and that we'll not part with it without a struggle!

Results: The Greenkeepers defeated the English Golf Union by five matches to two, plus one match halved. In third place was the Golf Foundation, who defeated the Golf Club Secretaries by a single point.