

TOURNAMENT TROUBLESHOOTER

Tony Howorth, section secretary and reporter for the East Midlands, retires from his BIGGA commitments this month. By way of a swan-song, which Tony describes as 'being seen to go out with a bang rather than a whimper,' he gives his impressions of a typical day of tournament golf with greenkeepers from the East Midlands

Earlier this year at the now annual gathering, section secretaries were each given a document prepared by Elliott Small, outlining how to properly run a golf tournament. What follows is probably an outstanding example of how *not* to!

One of the points Elliott makes is to have an early cut-off date for entries – preferably 14 days before the event. Our autumn tournament this year took place on 21st September. As of 14th September I had 14 entrants; the final number attending on the day was 53. Mind you, I have only myself to blame for this – for due to a word-processing error we nearly became the first section to hold its autumn tournament on 20th April! Suffice to say that the week before a competition can be fairly hectic, usually to the point where my wife threatens to leave me 'if that damned 'phone rings once more!'

So, to the big day. Being a believer in not doing today what can be put off until tomorrow, the day begins for me at 5.30 am when I write up the starting times and the list of those who have still to pay. This completed, it's into town for an early shopping trip. I would give more than a penny for the thoughts of the supermarket check-out girl, whose first customer of the day arrives with a basket full of booze and biscuits. 'They're raffle prizes', I tell her, and get a 'likely story' look in return.

Shopping completed, having also obtained petty cash, photocopies and raffle tickets and spent 20 minutes polishing the tournament trophy, I'm ready to depart for Ruddington Grange. This is a critical time, trying to ensure that you have everything you might need with you. It's surprising what members will arrive without – at the East v West Midlands match last year I spent half the day holding my trousers up, whilst *my* belt ensured that Jamie Bedford didn't lose *his* trousers on the first tee. I try to arrive on site a couple of hours before the first tee-time, but I'm seldom the first, usually being beaten by trade members in early attendance for the expense-account bacon sandwich.

As I pull into the drive, the course looks a Belfry-esque picture – I often think that efforts made for Captain's Day pale into insignificance compared with what's done for visiting greenkeepers. Having made a 'getting to know you' tour of the relevant club personnel, run up the BIGGA flag and collected the score-cards, I can

then sit back and let it all happen – for about two minutes!

Our section has been blessed with many new members over the past two years, and it is always pleasing to see new faces at our tournaments. It still makes me cringe a bit, though, to have to walk up to someone and ask 'good morning, who are you?' – especially when the guy turns out to be a member of some 15 years standing who I've not met before.

Everything proceeds smoothly. First tee-time is 12.30, and the official starters arrive promptly at 12.28 (Mark and Walt, you did a grand job really). One of the highlights of my day is watching the looks of trepidation on the faces of the occasional golfers at the first tee, willing their first drive to be a good one. I note with satisfaction that the out-of-bounds on the first hole is on the left – leaving no need to send out spotters for Baz Gostinshie's terrible slice. I am also rewarded by seeing the shortest drive of the day – a classic pitching-wood shot which lands a yard in front of the tee.

With all the players away, everything is calm until disaster strikes Maurice Emery on the tenth – he leaves his pipe on the tee and has two card-ruining holes before I return it to him on the twelfth. Wives go shopping or read books, while I devote my attention to the prize tables. Thanks to the generosity of the trade, I swear we end up with more bottles to give away than there are behind the bar.

As the protagonists return, expressions tell it all – from the plainly disgusted to the quietly confident. As the results become clear it's time to check the prizes again, to ensure that cordless shavers are not presented to gentlemen with beards, and large shirts are not given to small members. This having been attended to, speeches written and raffle tickets sold, it's on to the meal.

Section meals tend to be lively affairs, due largely to the activities of Dave Leatherland, who manages to produce an array of props – from whistles to rubber gloves – which invari-



They're off, in an autumn golf tournament which almost took place in April

ably leave those in his near vicinity helpless with laughter. With the section's good name in mind however, and having seen previous performances, I have to insist to the waitresses that under no circumstances is Dave to be given an orange!

As it transpires, it is Trevor Bennett, our sponsor for the day, who provides the entertainment with a 'hot and bothered' routine which delays the main course for at least ten minutes. With the meal completed the vice-chairman speaks, the prizes are presented, and the day is concluded with the drawing of the raffle. It has become a tradition that this is done by Gordon Mitchell, whose Scottish brogue and ready wit make the raffle an event in itself, especially if the dreaded number 'tue tue tue' happens to be drawn.

Of those present, I would especially like to welcome new member Ian Meakin to our section, and to congratulate Anthony Foulds on being amongst the prizes on his first attempt. Further, it would be remiss of me not to thank Dave Johnson and all the staff at Ruddington for a most enjoyable day.

TOURNAMENT ROLL OF HONOUR. *Class One* (0-9) 1st R. Peck. 2nd G. Mitchell. 3rd R. Barker. *Class Two* (10-18) 1st P. Billings. 2nd A. Foulds. 3rd J. Dickinson. *Class Three* (19-28) 1st G. Arnold. 2nd I. Dunmore. 3rd M. Bindley. Trade prize – Mike Franklin. Low gross – Richard Barker. Best nett and overall winner – Graham Arnold.