

Facing page: William Francis plays to the 4th green  
Left: Getting into the swing of things - Barry Holt



The winners: from left, Mark Lewer, Kevin Yeoman, Paul Fildes, Barry Holt, Paul Loffman, Ray Wootton, Malcolm Lathan, Tony French and Bernard Emberley



Putting out on the 18th  
Below, Don Major shows his injuries to a playing partner

# Water course's ultimate test

REPORT AND PICTURES BY CHRIS BOILING

**T**he water level of Dartmouth Golf and Country Club's lakes was distinctly higher following this year's ICI-sponsored BIGGA National Tournament.

There are two reasons for this:

1: It rained at some point on all three days, proving once again that if a greenkeeper wants rain he should organise a tournament. (Dartmouth Golf and Country Club had been dry for two and a half months prior to the event).

2: Greenkeepers find it easier to put the ball in a water hazard than in the cup.

The greenstaff at Dartmouth were expecting a golf ball bonanza following BIGGA's visit. Normally when they scoop the lakes they gather 200-300 balls, especially from the big lake on the long par 3 18th. Several hundred more are expected to be found next time out. From what I saw of the competition, the lakes on the 3rd, 4th and 5th were also popu-

lar targets among the 74 greenkeepers who entered this year's competition.

## FIRST DAY

The competitors woke up to rain on Monday morning but it had cleared before the golfers set off on what many likened to a mountain trek. Two competitors failed to make the first tee. BIGGA vice-chairman Barry Heaney was nursing some broken ribs after falling off a wall while watering his prize-winning potatoes. Don Major was recovering from a fall down the steep bank leading from the second green to 3rd tee during practice day. He went to hospital with very badly bruised legs and hip.

Some of the older and wiser greenkeepers turned up on the first tee in a golf cart. Even Dartmouth's head greenkeeper, 29-year-old Terry Farkins, was spotted in one. The advantage of local knowledge? The pressure of hav-







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From the turf to the baize: Ray Reardon takes on Huw Parry, Roger Willars and Richard Barker

I think everyone did well to get in

ing 74 greenkeepers traipsing over your course? "No, a bad back after playing cricket at the weekend," he tried to convince us.

A glance at the leader board at the end of the day suggested otherwise, too. 12-handicapper Terry was lying in second place after a first round 85. In first place was fellow Devon greenkeeper Mark Lewer. The 21-year-old Dainton Park first assistant was the only person to better par. Ten-handicapper Mark, competing in his first National Tournament, shot an 81 for a nett 71. He was helped by an eagle at the par 5 16th – a driver, eight iron and 2ft putt. It was downwind, but Mark is a big hitter – he won the longest drive competition, too. This was cunningly set up on the first hole.

In our tournament preview, Terry Farkins had advised competitors not to get their drivers out until the sixth hole. Most ignored this advice on the first tee – and went out of bounds. Not just on day one, but also on days two and three.

**Gordon Farrington shows great interest in his prize, presented by BIGGA chairman, John Millen**



The best gross score was Barry Holt's 77. With a five-handicap, this gave the powerful little left-hander a nett score of 72. Most of the nett scores were in the high 70s and 80s but, with the wind, it was a day when many people were happy to break 100.

**SECOND DAY**

Visibility decreased to 25 yards and the Dartmouth mountain rescue team was put on alert as the first players completed the first few holes. Organisers Gordon Child and Richard Minton decided to delay the tee-off times, meaning it would only be possible to play nine holes today and 45 in total.

While they were waiting to go out, most players tried their luck in the Vitax putting competition. Three players went round the 18 holes in 33, but Bernie Emberley, the deputy head greenkeeper at Knighton Heath, near Bournemouth, took the title on the best last six. Graham MacDonald came second and Don Major, bruised but unbowed, marked his appearance on day 2 with a third place finish in the putting competition.

When the ICI competition got under way again, the 4th hole, which was a headache during construction by former Asprin salesman Ralph Hitchens, was proving a headache again – for the greenkeepers. I knew it was the problem hole when I heard single-figure handicap players claiming the honour on the 5th with 7s and 8s. On the first day local greenkeeper Craig Earnshaw had taken 16. Today 12-handicapper Jason Bean, deputy head greenkeeper at North Foreland, Kent, took 18 – and didn't lose a ball. Without this he would have had a brilliant score as his total for the other eight holes was 39.

The 4th also proved the undoing of overnight leader Mark Lewer. "I had major problems,"

he confessed. "I had a 12 after snap-hooking two out of bounds."

The best nett score was Tony French's 33 1/2. One shot behind was Paul Loffman, first assistant at Copt Heath near Solihull.

Best gross once again was Barry Holt's 36. Surely he was on his way to repeating his '91 triumph when he won the gross and was equal first in the best nett.

**THIRD DAY**

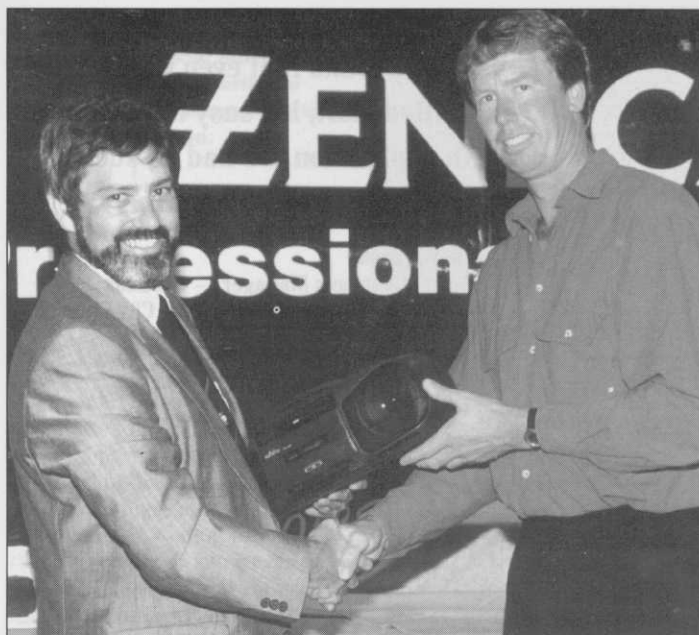
Barry Holt stood on the first tee 4.5 strokes ahead of the field. *Whack!* Out of bounds. *Whack!* Out of bounds. *Whack!* Out of bounds. He walked off the first green with a 10, and never recovered from that appalling start.

"It's one of those things that happens. That's golf," he said after signing for a final round 90.

This left the door open for one-handicapper Malcom Lathan who shot 78 on the first day, followed it up with a 38 and then recorded a final day 74, the best of the third day. It meant Malcolm, the head greenkeeper at Hexham in Northumberland, had successfully defended the Netlon Advanced Trophy he won last year at Dunbar. "I started badly with an out of bounds on the first and was beginning to slip backwards but then I hit a drive, 3-iron onto the green and sank a 35ft putt for an eagle on the 9th, and got two further birdies on back nine."

The competition for the main trophy of the event, the ICI Professional Products Trophy, was a close-fought thing between Mark Lewer and Paul Loffman. In the end Loffman, a frequent prize winner since he made his National Tournament debut in '92, collected the big one, the best 45-hole nett score. Dartmouth assistant greenkeeper Kevin Yeoman, competing in his first competition, won the best nett in the 15-28 handicap range.

The scores on the final day were generally a lot lower. Whether that was due to familiarity with the course or the lack of wind and only light showers on the final day, I'm not sure. But one great thing was that the drama



Dartmouth's Kevin Yeoman, right, receives his award from ICI's Roger Mossop



Paul Loffman with the ICI Professional Products Trophy for the best nett score



Mark Lewer: It's been a glorious three days

continued right to the very end. The last shot from the 18th tee, the hole chosen for the nearest the pin competition, bounced on the road in front of the green and rolled up about six inches closer than the previous best effort by Steve Wood. As they say in football: "He wuz robbed." The robber was 2-handicapper Paul Sewell.

The Jubilee Cup team prize was won by Berks, Bucks and Oxon. Barry Holt, Ray Wootton and Tony French romping home as deserved winners.

#### Conclusion

No one can organise the weather, but the things that were organised were organised well. The entertainment arranged by Gordon and Marion Child was excellent. One night it was snooker ace Ray Reardon taking on and thrashing three greenkeepers followed by 20 minutes of superb trick shots; the previous

night there was roulette and blackjack with guests gambling £50 of fun money. One greenkeeper is obviously in the wrong business as he turned his £50 into £8,500. Shame it wasn't for real!

The Childs and the sponsors also put together a superb prize table with colour TVs, CD player, wall clocks, mantle clocks, radios and glassware.

Some of the golf was equally superb but there were a lot of scores that will encourage other greenkeepers to take part next year. The hospitality provided by Dartmouth Golf and Country Club was also excellent.

Having entered his first National Tournament, and done well, Terry Farkins is now considering entering next year's event. "It's a good three days and the people I've met this week, I've really enjoyed their company."

Unfortunately ICI Professional Products will no longer be sponsoring the event - they've changed their name to Zeneca.

Praise for Terry Farkins and his team was unanimous. Here are just some of the comments:

**Mark Lewer** said: "Terry has done a tremendous job in difficult circumstances. The greens are superb. It's been a glorious three days. You couldn't wish for better organisation, even with the weather. The course has held up well. It's hard but with this sort of tournament you've got to have something hard, it's no test going to a short course, you've got to have something tight."

**Bernie Emberley** said: "The course is very good, especially considering its age. It's a good test. I played poorly on Monday in the wind but I've played well since then. It's a course you've got to play positional golf and the reception we've had from the staff and everyone has been very, very good. It's a lovely place."

**Paul Loffman**: "I thought it was very challenging. I enjoyed it and I don't think it played as long as a lot of people thought but it played very tricky. I thought it was a super layout and I think in years to come it will be a tremendous

golf course. I'd come back again and play.

"I think everyone has enjoyed the week, it's been run superbly. I've certainly had a good time.

**Terry Farkins** himself said: "The course has been the best it ever has been. We've had two PGA events and we had compliments from them, now it's just far superior. We had some members early on saying 'Oh you're only doing all this because the greenkeepers are coming' but we always try to produce the best standard we can within the budget that we're working to and the machinery we've got available."

Devon Garden Machinery lent him a Toro fairway and a greens mower to prepare the course for the competition and all the lads worked hard on it.

"When you've got something good you want to show it off, I believe we've got something good here. Even if it wasn't in the condition it is now, it would still be good because of the layout. Anyone who appreciates good golf will appreciate the layout."

## RESULTS

**45 holes:** ICI Professional Products Trophy for best nett (1-14) - Paul Loffman; 2, Edwin Walsh; 3, Mark Lewer; ICI Professional Products Trophy for best nett (15-28); Kevin Yeoman; 2, Paul Fildes; 3, Paul Corfield; Netlon Advanced Trophy for best gross - Malcolm Lathan

**27 holes:** David Royale Cup for best nett (1-14) - Paul Loffman; 2, Mark Lewer; Pattisson Trophy for best nett (15-28) - Kevin Yeoman; 2, Paul Corfield; Toro Trophy for best gross - Barry Holt; senior division (over 55) - Edwin Walsh

**Jubilee Cup for best team** - BB&O (B Holt, R Wootton, T French)

**Monday:** Fisons Bowl for best nett - Mark Lewer; 2, Terry Farkins; 3, Ray Wootton; best gross - Barry Holt

**Tuesday:** Standard Golf Trophy for best nett - Tony French; 2, Paul Loffman; 3, Graham MacDonald; best gross - Barry Holt

**Wednesday:** William Hargreaves 'Sisis' Trophy for best nett - Paul Fildes; 2, Bernard Emberley; 3, Steve Gallier; best gross - Malcolm Lathan

**Longest drive:** Monday - Mark Lewer; Tuesday - Paul Sewell; Wednesday - David Wood

**Nearest the pin:** Monday - Gordon Farrington; Tuesday - Dennis Jones; Wednesday - Paul Sewell

**Vitax Putting Competition:** 1, Bernard Emberley; 2, Graham MacDonald; 3, Don Major.