



Scott MacCallum admits responsibility for the worst performance ever by the greenkeepers in the Kubota Challenge

First the good news. It was a magnificent performance, achieved against great odds and proving an ideal showcase for the talents of the Greenkeeper's Kubota Golf Challenge team.

Unfortunately the victory came in not the golf competition, which has been dominated by the greenkeepers in its 13 year history, but in the consolation Drive and Chip competition where, despite handicapped by having to manoeuvre by far the largest piece of machinery through the slalom course, the time of eight minutes 28 seconds was good enough to see off the English Golf Union, the Golf Foundation and the Golf Club Secretaries.

However it was only the secondary event. Our men were actually sent into battle to bring the Kubota Challenge Trophy back to its rightful home.

The Kubota has long been a greenkeepers benefit – eight times we have won the trophy, lending it out to the secretaries on three occasions and the Golf Foundation once last year and never have we failed to win a match.

Did I say "never have we"? I should have said "never had we" because, ignominy upon ignominy, this year we finished last. Bottom of the heap. Fourth. Out of the Medals. Also rans... It's awful however you describe it.

The inquests have already begun. How could the mighty greenkeepers have fallen so far? Have the rest of the world caught up? Was it a freak result? Have our old stars gone past their peak and gone one fight too many?

I, too, have thought about it and, however reluctantly, come up with the probable answer.



**Above: Ian Holoran recovers from his over hit wedge at the 4th
Left: Brian Hurttley receives his gift from Barry Heaney, Chairman of BIGGA**

It must have been my fault. It was my first Kubota Challenge and we'd done well every year

before I had arrived on the scene, coming close on the rare occasions we didn't win. This year we

had even enjoyed their Drive and Chip triumph before I showed up. I must have jinxed us.

Look at the evidence.

Our star man was Iain Macleod, the sweet swinging three handicapper from Tain. I stood at the side of the 1st tee as he skied one down the fairway. I next saw him on the 5th tee and, remarkably, he was two up only for him to carve his tee shot into the trees.

I stayed out of the way and Iain

Sorry guys



recovered to win comfortably.

Thomas Jones from Wales found sand on the long 4th and with me in close attendance he extricated himself only to three putt and lose the hole.

Chris Mardon had played beautifully and won in the semi-final defeat by the Golf Foundation the previous day only for my presence to act as an invitation for a gremlin to enter the workings of his swing.

It must have been me. What else could account for Mark Cutler missing from three feet to close out his match on the 16th, as Barry Heaney and I stood watching, forcing him to down the formidable 18th before winning; Ian Holoran finding the trees at the back of the 4th green after "airmailing" a wedge 140 yards before eventually clinching

the last of our three points; Roger Willars missing the famous 10th green by the widest margin imaginable; Bill Banks finding water at the self same hole, and Alan Gamble succumbing by quite a few holes to an inspired secretary. All happening before my damning gaze.

It couldn't have been Barry's fault, he's enjoyed success in the Kubota in previous years, so it must have been me. I was like a lead weight dragging our guys down when I was anywhere within jinxing distance only for them to battle back, ultimately in vain, when I was out of sight and, more importantly, out of mind.

We lost 4.5-3.5 to the Golf Foundation on the first day and 5-3 to the Golf Club Secretaries in the third and fourth place play-off. The eventual winner, making

their first appearance on the top of the rostrum, were the English Golf Union.

The 13th Kubota Challenge was notable not just for new champions but for the fact that it was the final event presided over by Brian Hurtley, Vice President & Director of Kubota (UK) Ltd, who retires next June. Brian, who is to enjoy a particularly active retirement with some business ventures of his own, was presented with a gift from BIGGA members by Barry Heaney at the end of event dinner, during which he was also the subject for a "This is Your Life" tribute by comedian Mal Rich.

It was an excellent dinner but I wasn't in a mood to enjoy it. The responsibility for our defeat was weighing far too heavily on my shoulders.

The greenkeeping team, from left, Bill Banks, Ian Holoran, Roger Willars, Alan Gamble, Mark Cutler, Iain MacLeod, Chris Mardon, Thomas Jones and non-playing observer Barry Heaney



RESULTS

1. The English Golf Union
2. The Golf Foundation
3. The Golf Club Secretaries
4. The Greenkeepers (Iain MacLeod, Chris Mardon, Ian Holoran, Mark Cutler, Bill Banks, Roger Willars, Alan Gamble, Thomas Jones)