

Scott MacCallum reports from the Walker Cup at Royal Porthcawl on a historic victory and a wonderful BIGGA team.

At the end of the 1995 Walker Cup the scenes of euphoria and joy were so overwhelming they could not be diluted by the rain which had fallen incessantly for the entire second day of the match.

Who could blame the huge crowds which had flocked to the south coast of Wales and the magnificent links of Royal Porthcawl, to witness only the fourth victory by a Great Britain and Ireland team – and the biggest ever winning margin of 14-10 – in the 35 matches which had been played.

Clive Brown's team of 10 good men and true deserved all the adulation for a wonderful effort but there was another team, less well heralded but no less highly regarded, which put in another superb effort.

The 20 strong BIGGA Greenkeeping Support team, headed by Royal Porthcawl Course Manager David Ward and his own eight man team, guaranteed a course fit for such an occasion and was on hand to ensure that the rain didn't ruin a match which will go down in history as one of the finest.

It was the first time a BIGGA Greenkeeping Support team had operated at the Walker Cup although it has been a vital part of The Open Championship since 1986 and such was the impact made it would seem set to become a similarly important element of the biannual amateur match between Great Britain and Ireland and the USA when it is on this side of the pond.

The ultimate triumph of the whole occasion must have felt a million miles away for David, though, when disaster struck the course a month before the start.

#### Take All Patch on greens



# Magnificent team effort



The BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team, headed by Royal Porthcawl Course Manager David Ward

David, who became Head Greenkeeper in 1990 and was promoted to Course Manager in '93 having been at Royal Porthcawl since 1988, arrived at the course on a Monday morning to discover Take All Patch spreading over his greens like wildfire.

"In the dry spell we were forced into using our bore hole to

water the greens more than usual and the water from the bore hole is more alkaline than is ideal and means that the greens are more prone to disease.

"It was a Catch 22 situation either don't water the greens and have them burn up or water them and risk disease," he said.

We used the maximum permis-

sible dosage of Rimidin once, left it 24 hours and then hit them again with another maximum dose. It slowed it down a bit but there was not much else we could do," said David.

Fortunately the greens were of such quality that the Take All, although doing nothing for their appearance, did not affect their playability.

"They putted well, at around 10 on the stimpmeter, and the R&A and both teams said they were perfectly happy with them," added David.

Ironically just over a week later the greens were beginning to return to normal.

The Walker Cup had seen the culmination of a £200,000 five year programme of intensive work on Royal Porthcawl Golf Club by David and his staff of seven.

Since 1990 all 96 bunkers were revetted, the irrigation system upgraded, the greenkeeping sheds relocated, the 12th and 13th tees re-sited to lengthen the holes while several other existing tees

# Magnificent team effort

have been rebuilt and a new practice range purchased and developed.

"R&A Agronomist David Stansfield said that we had effectively completed a 20 year programme in five years," said David.

In addition to the programmed work the 2nd green had to be rebuilt in '91 after it was lost through flooding in a storm.

Royal Porthcawl is one of the finest links in the country and a worthy site for one of the foremost international golf matches, professional or amateur.

In the Walker Cup programme, Peter Corrigan, enthused about the view from Royal Porthcawl across the bay to Swansea. Peter, a Welsh golf writer who should know about these things, said, "The arrival of the Walker Cup to our treasured course will ensure that thousands will be sharing that view with us – unless it is raining in which case you'll have to take our word for it."

Prophetic words indeed because although the weather on the first day was ideal with sun and a light breeze the second day had latter day Noahs rolling up their sleeves and digging out their tool boxes.

It was then that the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support team showed its true worth. Gathered from clubs in the immediate area – with others from Hereford,



A rare sight: Sun on the opening day

Birmingham and two from America, Ed Walsh, from New Jersey and Peter Cassidy (allowed on the team only if they didn't cheer for the opposition!) – the team was able to adapt to the additional work brought about by the conditions. While conventional weather saw two bunker rakers accompanying each morning foursomes match and one with each of the eight afternoon singles the torrential rain called for squeegy operators to walk with each match and a scout, Paul Rosser,



What's the *Best* thing about being a Greenkeeper?

Bob Lupton...

*"I enjoy presenting the course for the members and building it up to a peak for a specific occasion. There is a certain amount of satisfaction seeing the benefit of all the hard work."*



to walk ahead of the matches.

In the main the course continued to play well and survived the onslaught from above and the squeegy team was not called into action until the final match of the day to go the distance reached the 18th green and a huge puddle had to be forceably removed to the cheers of the galleries before the approach shots could be played. By that time, however the Cup had been won

and celebrations were well under way.

"I was delighted with the professional way our members worked and I know the work was appreciated by the organisers and especially the players. I also received a visit from Royal Porthcawl's Chairman of Green who asked my to pass on his thanks to the team," said Peter Lacey, the local section secretary who co-ordinated the team.