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Communal Massage seemed to be just the ticket for Ronan McKeown, Mark Ellis but particularly Neil Whitaker

BIGGA's Greenkeeping Support Team

saw more sand than Lawrence of Arabia at the 125th Open Championship at Royal Lytham and St Annes.

There are 185 bunkers on the magnificent Royal Lytham & St Annes course. That's an average of more than 10 a hole and by any stretch of the imagination an awful lot of sand.

BIGGA's Greenkeeping Support Team must have shifted every grain of that sand during the four days of The Open Championship because during that time between them the 52 greenkeepers raked an incredible 1618 bunkers – to put that in perspective at St Andrews last year the figure was a mere 701.

The work was appreciated by everyone from the Championship Committee Chairman, Peter Greenhough who made a visit to the BIGGA Marquee to find out the three day figure on the final morning, and BBC commentator Peter Oosterhuis, who also visited the marquee to collect results, to the caddies, whose job it is at regular Tour events to rake the bunkers. The general consensus being that slow play would have been a real problem had the caddies had to rake such a huge number of bunkers – the same player frequently visited more than one bunker on a hole. Indeed one player was in four bunkers on one hole.

For the second year

BIGGA IN THE LYTHAM RHYTHM

BIGGA ON THE INTERNET

BIGGA was launched onto the Internet during The Open and the new service will offer "surfers" a range of information on the Association's services.

The BIGGA Web site can be accessed on – <http://www.bigga.co.uk> – and will initially display five pages including information on Golden Key sponsors, BTME 97; Greenkeeper International.

"This is a new and exciting vehicle for BIGGA to utilise and we are sure that as the Internet grows the benefit from our involvement with it will increase immeasurably," said James McEvoy, Sales and Marketing Manager.

"This will enhance our reputation as a truly international Association and will enable us to offer our sponsors added benefits and spread the word about Association membership," said Executive Director Neil Thomas.



Iain MacLeod was called into action to rake the bunker Nick Faldo found on the very first morning



Above: We've done it! Another successful Open and time to party. BIGGA's Vickie Peckham certainly isn't short of dancing partners!

Left: The Augusta National division of the Greenkeeping Support Team – Brad Owen and Russell Myers



BIGGA ran the Great BIGGA Bunker Competition for the world's press and media for a daily prize of a bottle of whisky and an overall prize of a Hayter Harrier lawn mower worth over £600. This year the lawn mower was won by the end of the third day because the highest estimate by any of the press was lower than the three round figure of bunkers raked. That meant that Patricia Davies of *The Times* could relax on the Sunday safe in the knowledge that she and her husband Dai, golf correspondent of *The Guardian*, would take the prize.

As it was her estimate was 1113 more than 500 out but still better than everyone else, all but two of whom predicted under 1000.

If the top brains in the world of golf could be so far out how would the Support Team members fare in their own competition which was run in conjunction with the Media event. Well judge for yourself. The winner was Chris Sheehan of West Derby GC who as well as being an active member of the team on the golf course was also one of the designated mini bus drivers. Chris estimated 1620 – only two out!

The Support Team also had time to pick up snippets of news for circulation in the Press Centre, television and radio and to assist the scorers. Duncan Smith was actually called in by Championship officials to clarify one scoring situation.

Irishman Des Smyth had signed for a three on the final hole of the second round but the scorer had him down for a four. Duncan was called in and showed on his bunker form that Des had been in a bunker on the 18th. This evidence was accepted and Des, who would have missed the cut in any case, was disqualified.

For his efforts Duncan won the Editor's Prize for the Best Newshound of the week.



Steve Evans (top) led the way with the first match on the first day at 7am while Alex Robertson (below) brought home the winner on the Sunday when he won the draw for the Nick Faldo, Tom Lehman match

■ Dave Musgrove, who is caddying for Lee Janzen, was protecting his player's interests when he shouted "Quiet Please" at a man moaning on the left hand side of the 15th fairway. It was only later that it became apparent that the poor man had a broken arm – Information supplied by Howard McAddey of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ Amateur Champion Warren Bladon had a magnificent first day but must have rued the three putts he took from two and a half feet at the 16th – Information supplied by Anthony James of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ Michael Jonzon had an eventful time on the 13th. His tee shot landed in bounds but was inadvertently kicked out of bounds by a spectator. He was given a free drop and was able to continue – Information supplied by Richard Heaslip of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ Tiger Woods used the hard running 7th fairway to launch a drive, his caddie measured at 390 yards leaving himself just 160 yards to the green – Information supplied by David Weedon of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ Paul Azinger's fit of pique (he broke his putter over his knee) on the 9th and their implications didn't necessarily affect his performance on the greens. On the 10th hole, using his sand wedge he holed a nice 10 footer – Information supplied by John Wells of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ The BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team, which has been raking bunkers and divoting fairways, had another use in game 50 when Duncan Smith, the Support Team member designated to the game, was called in to clarify a scoring problem which resulted in the ultimate disqualification of Des Smyth. Des had marked his score at the 18th as a 3 but his scorer had him down for a 4. To clear up the situation Duncan was asked to bring in the form upon which he was marking the number of bunkers he'd raked and it showed that the Irishman had been in a bunker on the 18th and that he couldn't have made a 3. "I was asked to recollect every shot on that hole," said Duncan.

■ The girlfriend of Tony Johnstone's caddie had an unusual way of marking the fact that "her man" was going to have the weekend off. Halfway down the 18th fairway and to the cry of "Well, I said I would if he missed the cut" she turned and "mooned" to the stands. As it was towards the end of the day the display did not have the size of audience it might have done – Information supplied by Alec Davies of the BIGGA Greenkeeper Support Team (who had an excellent view).



MAN OF THE



Head Greenkeeper Jimmy MacDonald and his team won praise from all corners for the condition of the golf course which was a model of how a links course should be.

It brought out the best in the world's best golfers and despite perfect golfing conditions

ensured that the leaderboard by the end was a roll call of some of the world's finest golfers.

Jimmy is pictured visiting his friends in the BIGGA Marquee on the final day

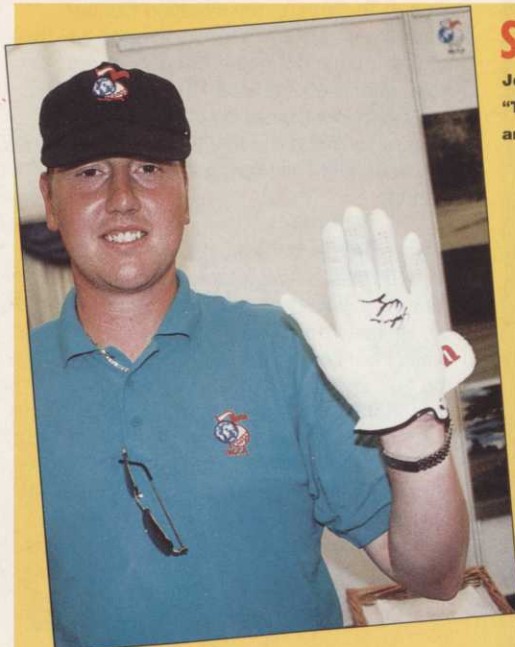
However, one woman spectator was not too

enamoured by a typical links golf course being overheard saying, "I've just returned from Spain where the fairways were wonderfully lush. I think it's a disgrace the way they've been allowed to die here."

What can you say?

SOUVENIR TIME!

John Daly's glove being modelled by its new owner Robert Hogarth, Mark O'Meara's hat bearing the words "To Peter, Thanks for all your help. Your friend Mark O'Meara" now owned by Mark's friend Peter Biscoe and Fanny Sunneson's towel now in the safe hands of Jimmy Neilson.



MOMENT



Mark Broughton, of Morecambe GC, was presented with his Master Greenkeeper Blazer by National Chairman Dean Cleaver during the Championship.

Mark, who spent some time at Royal

Lytham working under Jimmy MacDon-ald, and was part of Jimmy's own green-keeping team during the week, had family and friends on hand for the pre-sentation.



THE WAY WE WERE

The Greenkeeping Support Team from the last time The Open was held at Lytham – eight years ago

■ David Frost had a bad start to his second round. Standing on the 1st tee his brand new pair of golf shoes split and he had to send someone back to the tented village for a pair of size nine and a halfs. A marshal was presented with a pair of slightly damaged shoes on the 2nd tee – Information supplied by Gavin Kyle of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ The hard running ground presented Hidemichi Tanaka with an interesting rules problem on the 12th. He was preparing to make a chip shot when his ball ran into a bunker. He was allowed to play it without penalty – Information supplied by Billy Merritt of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ The work of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team has been well appreciated by the caddies, whose job it is to rake the bunkers at regular Tour events. With so many bunkers raked over the first two days slow play would have been a bigger problem that it actually was if every caddie had to rake his own player's foot prints.

■ British Rail has its critics but Anthony Davies of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team had reason to sing its praises. The head of his rake fell off and it was British Rail maintenance who came to his aid – Information supplied by Anthony Davies of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ Vijay Singh played the entire second round with a cracked driver – Information supplied by Alec Davies of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ The Duke of York took an interest in the work of the Support Team during his visit. He talked with Stuart Bridge of the Team on the 1st tee before the Ben Crenshaw and Tiger Woods match went out and then chatted with another member of the team, Neil Woolfrey, on the 8th tee during the Mark James and David Gilford match.

■ Stephen Curtis of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team got more than he bargained for when he sat waiting for his match to hole out on the 13th. He was hit square in the back by Klas Eriksson's tee shot which was hit long and right.

■ Mark Calcavecchia showed rare baseball talent on the 9th tee. He bounced his ball off the tee marker and hit it with his putter. It bounced off the road, hit a house and bounced back on to the course – Information supplied by Alec Davies of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

■ D.A Weibring took time to smell the roses during his final round. The American, who recently won on the US Tour having recovered from serious illness, stopped every couple of holes to have marshals take photographs of himself with his son and by the end the match had lost around half an hour on the game in front – Information supplied by Chris Sheehan.