



Words and pictures by
SCOTT MacCALLUM



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).