



# Hold on to your hats!

**Seacroft, venue for this year's National Tournament sponsored by Miracle Professional, is a magnificent links – but boy is it windy.**

I've always known the east side of the country was cold. I was brought up there and can still remember climbing into my thermal vest in June.

I wasn't too surprised then when Richard Hardie, Head Greenkeeper at Seacroft GC, suggested I might need a thicker jacket as we prepared to look over the course despite it being the middle of May.

Confident in my ability to embrace the chill like a long lost childhood friend I said I'd be fine and was content merely to "zip up". Just as well I did because had I left my jacket flapping open I'm convinced I'd have taken off and finished up in some dark corner of Lincolnshire.

Seacroft is a windy golf course. It is a kite flier's paradise. Weather vanes have been known to seek shelter. It could double up as a wind tunnel. Wind socks are so full young children think it's permanently Christmas. If flags hang limp it's only because the flagpoles are horizontal... Get the picture? Seacroft is a breezy place.

We walked most of the way down the 1st hole known as "The Tree" because of the magnificent "marker" to the 1st green which is the only tree on the course, when Richard said



- ◆ Venue: The Seacroft Golf Club August 5th-7th
- ◆ Closing date for entries Friday July 5 – forms available from BIGGA Headquarters.
- ◆ Accommodation – Skegness Tourist Board Tel: 01754 764821
- ◆ Note: Would any trophy winner from last year who has not yet returned his trophy to Vickie Peckham please do so as soon as possible.

that people had been driving past the fairway bunkers to our left and right. I looked back and there appeared enough room to land a jumbo jet between the tee and where we stood.

On the other side of the course players were attempting the 18th hole which, by coincidence, is exactly the same length as the 1st. I know on which of the holes I'd like to play if I had to make par to save my life.

"You really need the wind to make the course a challenge," explained Richard, although I'm sure it's a rare day when it's left defenceless.

It's also the wind which causes most of the greenkeeping problems at Seacroft.

"The bunkers do get blown regularly and we have problems keeping the sand in place."

The solution is one which will cause the odd shiver to work its way down the spine of the competitors in this year's National Tournament sponsored by Miracle Professional.

"We do a lot of riveting and the bunkers tend to be quite deep," said Richard, a man known, as I found out on the course walk, for understatement. The first one he showed me was at least eight feet deep.

"We've had an on-going programme of riveting over the past five years or so and over the winter added a new bunker and replaced one big one with two smaller ones on the 18th – as if it needed any more defences!

"We find it is the best way to keep the sand in place and is fairer to the golfer as shots can be played by both right and left handed players wherever they are in the bunker.

"They've got straight faces which help to keep the sand in and we've done a lot of work on them. It's a little like painting the Forth Bridge because by the time we've done them all it's time to start again at the beginning."

Like every other course at the time of my visit the course was well behind for the time of

the year and if the native Indians of South America had devised a dance for rain...plus a bit of sun, Richard and his team would have been straight on the phone to Peggy Spencer.

"This is the worst it has ever been. We are often late as it can be so cold here but this year I reckon we're about a month behind. Just last week we had three mornings of frost on the trot"

Richard has worked at Seacroft since he left school and became Head Greenkeeper late last year, taking over from his mentor - father John, who still works at the course in an advisory capacity.

Speaking to Richard you would have no idea of his origins. They only become clearer speaking to his father. He still retains a broad Scottish accent, having been brought up in Inverness, and he worked as greenkeeper/professional at Tain before moving south.

"They say Scotsmen make the best links greenkeepers," says Inverness-born Richard later, in an accent which is definitely from the wrong side of Hadrian's Wall.

But back to the course. Like many of the best links it's not fair. Hit a screamer down the middle and you're quite likely to face an awkward lie with the ball below or above your feet - that's if you're lucky enough to miss a bunker. The fairways are undulating and this causes Richard and his four man team a few problems.

"It's quite a severe course and we have to cut them both ways to make sure the jobs done properly - we have two sets of gang mowers, one four bladed unit and one six bladed unit and we get a lot of run off into the hollows making them green and the humps bare. Balls also gather in the hollows so the divots concentrate there much more."

The club is in the process of installing irrigation to the tees already having a Watermation system on the greens.

"We have a double valved system so we can organise it that we can cover the entire green by only using a sprinkler on one side because of the wind. We don't waste water."

On the prospect of have a host of greenkeepers descending on his course and giving it the critical eye Richard just smiles. "I haven't given any thought to the fact that they'll be coming. Not yet anyway. But I am looking forward to meeting them."

Skegness is the pleasure capital of Lincolnshire and those who make the trip for the National Tournament sponsored by Miracle Professional will find a playground to occupy everyone from the youngest in your party to the oldest.

In conjunction with the tournament there is the Miracle Professional evening with barbecue and entertainment on the Monday while the Tournament Dinner on the Tuesday will feature after dinner speaker Reg Thompson. Tickets may be purchased from BIGGA Headquarters, price £15.

Among those stars who will be appearing in



the town in August when the National Tournament takes place are Chubby Brown, Joe Brown (no relation) and Sheila Ferguson, Cannon and Ball, the Grumbleweeds, Ken Dodd and Chas and Dave.

For those of a more racy disposition "The Ultimate Challenge" is available, Skegness' Indoor Karting centre and, as a veteran of such entertainment, I can vouch for the rush that speeding round a cut down Grand Prix track on four wheels with a lawn mower engine purring behind you provides.

For those who intend ensuring that their name rarely disappears from the higher reaches of the scoreboard they can wile the hours away from the course by visiting The Elms Golf Centre where they can utilise the...deep breath: 20 all weather floodlit bays, six hole par 3 course, 18 hole putting green and practice bunker.

Yes it's all there and the excellence of Seacroft, which is surely one of the better links south of the border, coupled with the other

attractions of Skegness make the National Tournament, in association with Miracle Professional '96 one not to miss. Oh yes. But if you're thinking of camping make sure you've got plenty of lead in your ground sheet.

## EQUIPMENT

955 John Deere Compact Tractor  
1070 John Deere Tractor  
20F Massey Ferguson Highway  
Toro GM 3100 Greens mower  
Toro GM 3000 Greens mower  
With Grooming Unit and verticut units  
Three Ransomes Auto Surtees  
Ryan Turf Cutter  
Sisis Rotarake  
Wessex Sweeper  
Two sets of John Deere Gang Mowers -  
One four blade one six blade  
Hardi Sprayer  
135 Massey Ferguson Tractor  
Assorted Strimmers and Mowers