



SEACROFT

goes down a storm

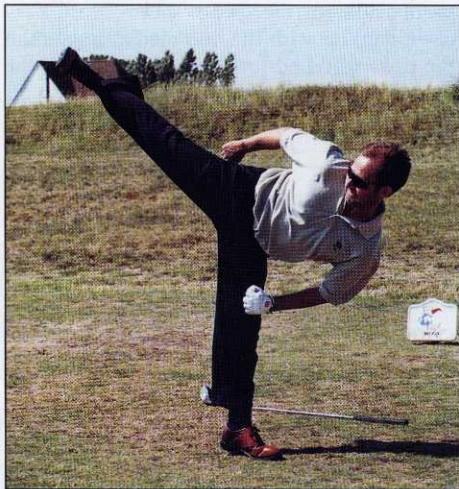
The 1996 National Tournament in association with Miracle Professional was a big hit with all who attended, reports Scott MacCallum.

Driving home from the National Tournament, news that scientists had uncovered life on Mars was being announced over the radio. It struck me that it was an extraordinary coincidence because at just about the same time so many people had discovered the time of their life in Skegness.

The National Tournament in association with Miracle Professional at Seacroft Golf Club was a resounding success. Many who had attended year after year declared that it was the best ever and others that National Tournament week was always the highlight of their summer.

It is difficult to analyse why 1996 should go down as a great year. The weather wasn't bad but it wasn't perfect. Indeed the thunder storm which deposited five millimetres of rain on the course in 20 minutes during the second round and lit up the sky with forked lightning had players and caddies racing for shelter. The course certainly wasn't of the "feel good" variety and didn't surrender any really low scores. In fact quite a number of players had to record hole scores which required more than one digit.

But the welcome afforded to BIGGA by the golf club, the superb service of the Crown Hotel in which the Monday night barbecue and the Tuesday night banquet were held,



Dave "2nd Dan" Leatherland opens his legs and shows his class...

together with a prize table which looked more like a window display at Dixon's ensured that 1996 would be a year to remember.

Seacroft is a traditional links golf course of the out and in variety beautifully maintained

and presented by Richard Hardie and his team. It is extremely well bunkered – some of which are big enough, if some of the competitors are to be believed, to contain double decker buses – but the principle hazard is one over which Richard has no control. The wind wasn't particularly fierce over the three competition days but still played a major influence on Seacroft's playability. Whipping in from the sea the prevailing left to right wind going out meant early danger and more than one player was forced to reload on the 1st or 2nd tees.

Peter Holtham was the star of day one. In conditions which were perhaps the toughest of the entire tournament he posted a gross 77 off a handicap of 9 for a three under par nett 68 which was the best of the day by three clear shots. Dropping only two shots to par on the more difficult outward nine Peter completed the round with nothing worse than a five on his card. A remarkable achievement.

Barry Emberley was next best, also with a gross 77 off a 6 handicap despite double bogeys at two of the par threes. He too kept a six off his card. The best gross score of the day came from John Berry who shot a 72 just heading Richard Barker on a card play-off.

The evening saw the Miracle Professional barbecue in the Crown Hotel, an event which drew a record attendance for the traditional Monday night function. Over 120 competitors, family and friends munched through 200 hamburgers, 120 chicken legs, 217 Lincolnshire sausages, 8 bowls of potato salad, 30 lettuces and 12 bowls of coleslaw, all washed

'Scoring was much better on day two'



Everyone a winner

down with assorted fluids.

Second round and the day of the storm. Ironically it was a much better day for golf than the first day with only a very small breeze to influence any club selection decisions.

For those who were lucky enough to witness it there was a unique sight early on the Tuesday – that of Scottish Regional Administrator Elliott Small, a man not known for his tolerance of late comers when he and wife Edna are organising events, running the final 50 yards to the 1st tee. The starter had already showed extreme compassion by allowing the Kincardine man's two playing partners to tee off before him and anything short of the lung bursting run Elliott put in would have resulted in his ignominious disqualification. His excuse? He and Edna had become stuck behind a tractor on the way to the course. As it was he struck a fine drive down the opening hole and came away with a bogey five.

Scoring was much better on day two and the day included the best nett round of the entire week – a nett 66 by 11 handicapper A. Roberts.

It was the lower handicap players who were beginning to dominate at the top of the leader board. Four handicappers Graeme MacDonald, John Berry and Richard Barker came in with gross 73, 74 and 75 respectively all playing in the same three ball.

They were also among the players caught in the spectacular – and potentially dangerous thunder storm in the middle of the afternoon. Fork lightning etched the inky black sky and the rain



Roger Mossop and Richard Hardie

tumbled as though turned on by a tap. Those in the safety of the clubhouse set out in cars to retrieve anyone seeking refuge but such was the downpour – five millimetres fell in 20 minutes – it was impossible to leave the car and attract anyone's attention.

Ironically the storm coincided with Headquarter's Vickie Peckham's introduction to the peculiarities of the game. Vickie, until now more familiar with the 400 metres track than the links, caddied for Richard Barker on the second round and was not sufficiently put off by her drenching to stop her offering her services to Bert Cross as caddie for the final round.

The Vitax Putting Competition was also held during the second round and an excellent putting green surface was confirmed when Steve Sullivan triumphed with a "six under" score of 30.

In the evening it was back to the Crown Hotel for the Banquet and another full house. The excellent meal was complemented by the fine speeches by Club President Dr Gus Polard, BIGGA National Chairman Dean Cleaver and Miracle Professional Business Manager Roger Mossop. They were followed by comedian, Reg Thompson, whose 45 minutes of quick fire one liners and reminiscences of legendary music hall entertainers, were met by an enthusiastic audience.

Another feature of the evening was the antics of the table magician Mr Clive "Grate Suprendo" Heginbotham who had the many



Dean Cleaver and Roger Willars

children eating out of his hand.

The evening was also an opportunity for Midland Regional Administrator, Roger Willars, who is retiring from the role to be thanked for his excellent work over the years. He was lost for words when he was called up during the dinner to be presented with a watch by National Chairman Dean Cleaver.

Richard Hardie was also presented with a token of appreciation for the work he and his team had put into the golf course

Wednesday, and by an amazing fluke the draw, made three weeks before the event, threw up the three leaders in the final two groups.

Graeme MacDonald, John Berry and Richard Barker all struggled on the front nine Richard opening with a six, Graeme having a seven at the 2nd and John recording four bogeys to be out in 42, 40 and 40 respectively.

It was the Penrith man, John Berry, who pulled out the stops in the back nine coming back in level par to edge out Kirby Muxloe's Richard Barker, who dropped a shot at the 17th, by a single shot. John was therefore the overall winner of the Miracle Professional Trophy for the best nett score of the week.

The best gross round of the week was scored by the lowest handicapper in the field. James Dair, a one handicapper had not done himself justice over the first two rounds but shot a level par 71 on the third day to clinch the 54 hole gross prize.



A prize table and a half!



Spot the ball



After the storm



The "Miracle" workers

FULL RESULTS

Miracle Professional Trophy (Best Nett 1-14 - 54 holes) J. Berry.
2. R. Barker, 3. P. Holtham.

Miracle Professional Trophy (Best Nett 15-28 - 54 holes) I. Needham.
2. T. Patchin, 3. N. Maltby.

Hardi Amenity Sprayers Trophy (Best Gross - 54 holes) J. Dair.

Jubilee Cup (Team Prize) Midlands - M. Hughes, P. Loffman, P. Holtham.

The David Royle Cup (Best Nett 1-14 - 36 holes). G. MacDonald
2. P. Holtham.

The Pattison Trophy (Best Nett 15-28 - 36 holes) 1. T. Patchin.
2. R. Pearce.

The Toro Trophy (Best Gross - 36 holes) J. Berry.

Over 55s (Best Nett - 36 holes) M. Hannan.

Monday:

Best Gross, J. Berry

Levington Trophy (Best Nett) P. Holtham.

2. B. Emberley; 3. R. Barker

Longest Drive (Aitkens Sports Turf) G. MacDonald

Nearest the Pin (County Crop) S. Pope

Tuesday

Best Gross, G. MacDonald

Standard Golf Trophy (Best Nett) A. Roberts

2. P. Wentworth, 3. P. Fitzjohn

Vitax Putting Cup, S. Sullivan

Longest Drive (Avoncrop) A. Brebion

Nearest the Pin (County Crop) M. Hughes

Wednesday

Best Gross, J. Berry

William Hargreaves (SISIS) Trophy (Best Nett) J. Dair

2. J. Seisun, 3. I. Needham

Longest Drive (E.T. Breakwell) S. Sullivan

Nearest the Pin (County Crop) S. Pope

BIGGA would like to thank the following sponsors for making the tournament such a success: Miracle Professional, Hardi, Amenity Sprayers, SISIS Equipment (Macclesfield), Vitax, Levington Horticulture Ltd, Lely UK Ltd, DS Holdings Ltd, Pattissons, Ransomes, Standard Golf, County Crop, Aitkens Sports Turf, Avoncrop, E.T. Breakwell and Jim Fry.