

Recollections from The Open

Sitting composing this a mere 50 hours after Mark O'Meara had clinched his second Major of the year the events of Royal Birkdale are still fresh in the mind... if fresh is a word which can be applied to me, the rest of the BIGGA Headquarters staff and the 55 members of the Greenkeeping Support Team. It is a hectic week full of hard work, early starts, late finishes and innumerable candles being attacked from both ends.

For me the week will be remembered for a well deserving winner who displayed the best course management skills and three shots which will go down as among the best ever played in their particular circumstances.

First, Tiger Wood's 35 foot putt at the last to give himself a chance of a place in a play-off. He has a history of making crucial clutch putts and although his putting through the week had been iffy the odds on him holing out when he needed to were to those who knew his reputation, evens at worst. Then there was Brian Watts' bunker shot which will surely earn its place, up there with Sandy Lyle's to the 18th at Augusta and Bob Tway's to win the '87 US PGA as one of the greatest ever played. With the pressure he was under, given a perfect lie, to get it to six feet would have been an achievement but with one foot in and the other out of the bunker the result was extraordinary and would have made him a worthy Champion.

However, despite those heroics the '98 Open will probably be best remembered for a 17 year-old professional-in-waiting who showed that even under the spotlight golf can, indeed should, be fun.

Justin Rose's chip from thick rough short of the green proved that there is such a thing as fate and will contest the title of, "Most spectacular Sign off to an Amateur Career" with the Lamborghini-winning hole-in-one of the Sunday Telegraph golf correspondent recently.

Such achievements are only possible when people become inspired and there is no doubt that the work of Chris Whittle and his team inspired the players fortunate enough to play in the Championship.

Certainly the condition of the course impressed the members of the Support team and the many experienced greenkeepers who visited during the week. The general consensus was that no Open had every been played over a better conditioned course.

The team itself had never looked smarter thanks to a splendid sponsorship deal with Stylo, which saw everyone sporting smart baseball caps, shirts, fleeces and shoes. Also thanks are due to Standard Golf, who supplied rakes, and Hayter who, for the fourth successive year provided a Hayter Harrier mower as a prize for the increasingly popular Great BIGGA Bunker Competition run in the Media Centre.

All these companies help to ensure that, at the biggest golfing event of the year, the work of BIGGA and its members is shown off to its best advantage.

Editor:
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Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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