

**Marcus Hamon was selected for BIGGA's Greenkeeping Support Team at The Open at Birkdale. It provided him with enough memories to last a lifetime.**

# A week to remember



## **8th May 1998**

The 8th of May arrives, along with my letter of acceptance. I am over the moon and can't quite believe this is happening. The 14th of July can't come quick enough.

## **Tuesday 14th July**

Eventually 14th of July arrives, the alarm goes off at 7.00am. I am set for a long day ahead. I have breakfast and set off for the Airport, my flight leaves at 10.20am - I'm now getting excited.

Arrive at Manchester Airport at 12noon and catch the 1.05pm train to Southport. Arrive at 2.30pm and find the hotel straight away at approximately 3pm. Check in and get unpacked. It starts to rain, but can't wait and I set off back to the

station for Hillside, the stop for Birkdale. Get to the Course at 4pm and start to savour the atmosphere - it's absolutely brilliant and it's only Tuesday. Have a good look around, a links course, not dissimilar to my own, at least my experience will be of benefit. Set off back to the hotel, get showered, changed and go down for dinner, meet some of the other guys who have arrived early.

## **Wednesday 15th July**

Back down to the Course it's official practice day and I follow Faldo, Els and young Justin Rose, it's only 13 months ago that Justin was playing my course at L'Ancrese in Guernsey in the Hampshire Championship. He looks a great talent for the future. (If only I had put that bet on!)

## **Wednesday Night**

Briefing at hotel where we were issued with all the gear, shirts, jackets and waterproofs. I volunteer for divotting in the evening - first chance to walk the course and I want to make the most of every minute. I was surprised that divotting included removal of all divots previously replaced and filling with a sand/soil/seed mixture to present the course and playing surface to best effect. As the fairways were cut in the evening if divots had dried out or the birds had turned them over before the morning the players could have been left with a poor lie.

## **Thursday 16th July**

Drawn a match at 10.35am Loren Roberts, Greg Chalmers and Santiago

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Luna. Loren Roberts is absolutely brilliant and talks all the way round while knocking it around in 66.

Coming off the 18th he gives me his glove - What a way to start.

#### Friday 17th July

Early start raking bunkers. We set off at 5.30am. The weather is terrible it is pouring down with rain, but spirits are high the thought of going out with Tom Lehman, Mark James and Ernie Els keep me going. The weather is expected to clear. The R&A started to get concerned about green flooding, but Chris Whittle, Head Greenkeeper, knows his Course and the preparation he has put in. He was right, the wetting agent and hollow tining worked, no squeegees were needed, although they were distributed to susceptible greens as a precaution.

Tee off times arrives, on the tee absolutely soaked through but forecast is still for an improvement. Halfway round the rain stops, the suns out and waterproofs are off - what a way to finish.

#### Saturday 18th July

I welcome the lie in. Bus leaves at 8am and my match isn't until 11am. Chance to do some shopping - must keep the wife happy. Arrive on the 1st tee and the atmosphere is electric - pity the golf isn't. Go out with American Mark Brooks and young Spanish Amateur Sergio Garcia. The wind spoils it. Very windy, never mind Sunday will be better.

Back at the hotel and hoping to get a match on Sunday - I am given match 37 at 2pm - someone in contention I can't believe it. I get showered and changed and pop into town for a few drinks, but must get back early to see the highlights and who match 37 might be.

Watching the highlights it becomes clear, it could be, Tiger Woods, I can't build my hopes up, will wait and see but will keep my fingers crossed.

Saturday night - can't sleep.

#### Sunday 19th July

Arrive at Course and check matches, can't believe it is Tiger Woods, just when I thought it couldn't get any better.

The morning drags, eventually 1.50pm arrives and I make my way to the 1st tee, still can't believe my luck.

2pm and off we go, Tiger, nine minders, three Policemen, dozens of cameramen, buggies and myself.

Tiger does not get off to a great start and three putts the 1st, but birdies the 2nd. The round goes on and is nothing special until we get to the 15th which he birdies. He is now only two shots behind. He pars 16, but chips in at 17 for birdie and also birdies the 18th. The atmosphere walking down the 18th with the World No.1 is electric and when he rolled the putt in it was deafening - it made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

Tiger's caddie, Fluff, gave me the ball which I will treasure for the rest of my life.



Sat by the 18th and watched the few last matches and the play off come through. A perfect end to a brilliant week. The course had stood up well to the intensive play and ravages of both the weather and number of spectators all over the Course.

Sunday night after dinner and a couple of beers still can't get to sleep, head is still up in the clouds. Can't believe this has happened to me. Coming from a small Island like

Guernsey to Birkdale and The Open was a dream come true and to walk the fairways with the world's best golfers is something I will treasure for the rest of my life.

My thanks to everyone at BIGGA for an absolutely brilliant week.

Many thanks also go to my employer the States Works Department who are the contractors for maintaining the L'Ancrese Golf Course in Guernsey.

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