

Well done John and the team

John Philp was described as "a greenkeeper out of control" by David Duval. He was accused of fertilising the rough by several experienced pros and, if some rumours are to be believed, is a close relation of the Marquis de Sade.

In fact all John had done - in conjunction with his own Links Management Committee and the R&A - was to bring a fine old links back into tip top condition and provide a challenge few of the professionals had ever faced before. Sure the fairways were a little tighter than was perhaps comfortable and sure the rough was...well rough, but the Angus area has been particularly wet and grass tends to grow in those types of conditions.

The players had launched their media offensive against the course well before the week started. The winning total was by all accounts going to be around 300. Well, 29 players broke 300 and the winning total, matched by three players, was the equivalent of two 72 and two 73s. Not too outrageous.

But isn't the score irrelevant? Isn't the idea to identify the Champion? The man who mastered the conditions the best? What score did O'Meara shoot to win at Birkdale last year? I'm blown if I can remember, and frankly it doesn't matter.

Jan van de Velde played the best golf for 71 holes and would have been a deserving champion. Paul Lawrie was superb in the play-off and as a result is a deserving champion - someone who won The Open not just the beneficiary of someone's sad stumble.

So why the criticism?

You don't hear cyclists in the Tour de France, which was running at the same time as The Open, complaining to the organisers that a particular climb was too steep. They get on with it.

Skiers tackling the fearsome Hannenkann mountain in the annual downhill race take pride in completing the course. They don't look at their times and say we only averaged 55mph and not 65mph, as we usually do, so the spectators are being short changed.

Even Formula One drivers, who one might forgive for prima donnaish tendencies, usually blame the set up of their cars rather than the layout of the track for disappointing times.

Professional golfers get many advantages not open to club golfers. In The Open they have ball spotters on every hole. They get free drops, line of sight rulings, they get someone to carry their bag, cars to pick them up from their hotels...

The list goes on, yet still they moan.

John Philp and his team did a tremendous job at Carnoustie and the set-up of the course showed real imagination. Sure it was tight, but it was not unplayable, and in the end it produced an

Open which will be remembered for many years to come.

Coupled with the fine new hotel it surely has guaranteed Carnoustie a permanent place back on The Open rota...even if the very thought will cause some nightmares.

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Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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