

Those lucky enough to be entered in the 2001 BIGGA National Championship have a real treat in store with the rare opportunity to play two of the finest courses in the country possibly on the way to winning some of the most prestigious silverware in the Association's possession. Royal Birkdale is regarded by many as the finest course in the country while Southport & Ainsdale, a two time Ryder Cup venue in the 1930s., but a scan of the web produces other tributes to both of these great courses...

Just Champion



I know everyone at Royal Birkdale is looking forward to hosting the first day of the BIGGA National Championship and my team and I will be making sure that the course is set-up so that everyone will enjoy their visit. We shall certainly look forward to meeting up with fellow greenkeepers from all over the country

Chris Whittle Head Greenkeeper,
Royal Birkdale GC



We are delighted to be hosting the final round of the 2001 BIGGA National Championship and I am sure the players, whether in contention for a prize or not, will thoroughly enjoy playing the course we shall be preparing for them. I am also looking forward to meeting fellow greenkeepers from around the country and I'm sure it will be a superb occasion

Mike Mercer, Head Greenkeeper
Southport and Ainsdale GC

Southport & Ainsdale (S&A), situated in the famous belt of linksland near Southport, lies adjacent to the main Southport to Liverpool railway line, across from Hillside.

Established in 1906, Southport & Ainsdale soon became famous. Having already held several tournaments, S&A was chosen to host the Ryder cup in 1933 and 1937. Few changes have taken place since then and many of the holes are still as they were when Sam Snead and Percy Alliss graced a course which was regarded as the toughest in the country by professionals at the time.

S&A also hosts many local and national championships, including the Open qualifying rounds. A links course by nature, S&A is a fair test of golf, stretching to 6,687 yards in length off the championship tees and 6,285 yards off the yellow tees.

Royal Birkdale is a championship course par excellence. It provides a most formidable, yet always fair, test of links golf and fully deserves the accolade of recognition as a venue for the one of the world's golf classics.

The test it provides is a complete one. It tries the golfer's skill, character, nerve and intellect.

Along with Muirfield it is justly regarded as the fairest of all the British Championship links courses. It is modern and progressive without

betraying the game's heritage. If ever the Open were to be given a permanent venue, Royal Birkdale would have a widely-accepted claim.

Birkdale exploded onto the championship scene in 1946 with the Amateur Championship and celebrated its centenary in 1989. Since then it has staged numerous championships and international matches for the best amateur and professional, men and women golfers, including the biannual matches between teams representing GB&I and America; the Curtis Cup; the Walker Cup and the Ryder Cup. Above all though, Royal Birkdale is an established venue for the Open Championship.

Each hole runs in the valley between towering sandhills. The problems are clearly stated but if you stray from the fairway, the sandhills, buckthorn and scrub can be punitive. The signature hole at Royal Birkdale is the 17th – a 547-yard par 5. Great accuracy and boldness are required – the twin sand dunes, some 240 yards from the tee, pose a real challenge, even with help from the prevailing wind.

Royal Birkdale can also boast the accolade of being voted number one in the top 100 golf courses in the British Isles.

Information from:
www.golf-england.co.uk/golf/sanda.htm



Pictures by Alan Birch



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