



The team conquer the famous Himalaya bunker on the Sunday evening



The team awaits its briefing at the University of Kent

A TRIUMPH!

Ben Curtis wasn't the only winner at this year's Open Championship

The Open at Royal St George's was a triumph. Not just for Ben Curtis, who produced what must rank as the greatest shock in the Championship's history - he had never played in a Major Championship before; had never claimed a top 10 finish on the US Tour was a 500-1 shot before the start and even 80-1 on the Sunday morning - but for the course; Neil Metcalf and his team and the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

The course and its condition received universal praise and while the weather leading up to the Championship made fast, brown, running conditions possible Neil, his Deputy, Graham Royden, and the team made the most of those favourable conditions to produce a perfect test of links golf. The fact that one under-par won proved that a quality golf course in testing conditions can be the equal of the modern technology.

This year the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team was more involved than ever as, in addition to its regular duties, it was given the responsibility of raking all the bunkers before the start of play each day. Now, as the light goes earlier in the south of the country it meant an earlier than usual start of play and with the R&A wanting the two hour job completed half an hour before the start a team of 14 had to leave for the course at 3.15 am. The next bus left at 5am with the remainder following on a short time after. The last bus didn't return home until around 10.30pm.

The advance party on each of the four days was led by George Barr and Ian Semple and the R&A were delighted that the pre-play job was carried out in such a professional manner.

As usual members of the Support Team were rewarded by the players with souvenirs in the shape of balls, gloves and hats which will become treasured mementos for years to come.

News titbits: as supplied by the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team

- Although Hennie Otto was the first day leader coming from the first group on the course on Thursday it was his playing partner, Christopher Smith, who was actually the first player to find a fairway during the round - on the 5th hole! - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Steve Smith, of Gillingham GC.



The Staff team with BIGGA starter Ian Holoran. From left, Tony Cocker, Brad Anderson, John Pemberton, Scott MacCallum and Peter Boyd



Ronan McKeown strides out

- Former Champion David Duval endured a torrid time during his first round and his patience was not helped when he was forced to wait for a butterfly shaped balloon which flew down the middle of the 16th fairway - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, George Barr, of Ham Manor GC.
- Jerry Kelly's opening round got off to a dreadful start with his 11 down the 1st but he didn't lose his sense of humour, punching the air when he made a 4 down the 2nd - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member - Stuart Hogg, of Fortrose & Rosemarkie GC.
- Sergio Garcia was forced to wait on the 18th tee for a weasel which wouldn't vacate the tee - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Kevin Hodges, of Weston Park GC.
- Vijay Singh and Rich Been got their timings all wrong playing the 17th. They both played at exactly the same time and the two balls collided landing short of the green - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Ian Semple, of Old Fold Manor GC.
- Former Champion Paul Lawrie was obviously a little unprepared when he got to the 1st tee having to ask Ivor Robson if he had any spare spikes in his box - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Richard Saunders, of St Neots GC.
- US Amateur Ricky Barnes topped his drive off the 9th tee, knocking it 20 yards. He then hit it 40 yards further left into long rough and eventually made 7 - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Mark Ellis, of Stocks Hotel G & CC.
- Such were the weather conditions on Thursday, the flag blew off the 9th pin while players were approaching the green. It was replaced by a marshal - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Richard Barker.
- Souvenir hunting reached new heights in one of the last matches out when the young scoreboard carrier picked up a ball which had been played by the match following. He was called back from the next fairway to replace it - Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Tony Woolley, of Piltdown GC.
- Royal St George's Deputy, Graham Royden took his 10 year old son, Louis, to the Championship on the Wednesday.

"The only golfers Louis knew was Tiger and Ernie and I had the chance to bring him on to the putting green on the Wednesday to watch Tiger putting for a while. I spoke with Tiger's manager and he said he'd introduced us to Tiger. We met in the R&A compound and we spoke about the course which he thought was in great condition but very tough he'd hit some straight shots which were penalised but he knew that that was links golf. He said it was fantastic and congratulated me on it," said Graham.



Philip Hales takes time out to pose during the final round



Graham Royden, St George's Deputy, chats to Andrew Miller



Iain Gunn chats to a scoreboard carrier



Gavin Robson. Followed by a film crew!



Stuart Hogg before he encountered blister problems



Neil Burchett, John Keenaghan and Alan Magee watch how it's done before they set off!

He then took time out to speak to Louis, signed his programme and autograph book.

"When he left he said goodbye to Louis, who was still in a daze, so I told him that Tiger was saying goodbye. He turned round and Tiger gave him a little wave and said "Bye Louis". He was absolutely stunned and couldn't wait to get back to school to tell his pals. He'll remember the moment forever, and so will I," said Graham.

- The 2001 Champion, David Duval, was watching St George's Assistant Andrew Howarth, hand watering the 11th tee on Tuesday afternoon.

"It was late and the green wasn't clear and he was waiting so I asked if I could pose for a picture with him. I took off my sunglasses and said I knew he never took his off but he whipped them off and went 'Da! da!' We took the picture and he then asked if he could operate hose. He was very good, had a good arc but asked what would happen if he put too much on. I told him he'd be playing it."

- Alan Halfyear raked for Ben Curtis in the third round and learned before it became known in the Media Centre that he was using John Bickerton's caddy who'd called IMG when Bickerton had failed to qualify and asked if they knew of anyone looking for a caddy.
- Ben Curtis' father, Bob, is Superintendent at Mill Creek Golf Club, in Ohio. Ben's parents weren't at the Championship but were looking forward to watching the final stages on satellite until it broke down. They listened to their son clinching The Open on radio!

- Andrew Acorn, of Acorn Equipment, got closer to the action even than the Greenkeeping Support Team. He caddied for Tony Sproston, a qualifier, who was out in the final game on the Thursday and as a result was one of those who had to return early on Friday to complete the final two holes. Tony missed the cut but gave Andrew the thrill of a lifetime particularly as they were partnered by one of the up and coming stars of the game, Australian Matt Goggins, who finished fairly high in the field.

Andrew also managed to pick up a new nickname while in Sandwich when the other caddies christened him The Squirrel.

Ping sponsored the Great BIGGA Bunker Competition this year for the first time offering a wonderful wedge system to the press person and Support Team Member who was closest in his or her prediction as to how many bunkers were found during the course of the Championship.

The winner of the press prize was Sue Montgomery, of the Independent on Sunday with Paul Jenkins claiming the BIGGA prize.

Paul was only two out with his estimate of 2125 but spare a thought for Gavin Kyle who was also only two out with his guess of 2121 - a margin of error of less than 0.25 only to lose out on a card play-off when the daily estimates for the first three days was taken into account.

Daily prizes of whisky were won by Gideon Brooks, of the Daily Express, who won the first two and was equal first on the third day but the Editor decided to give the third day prize to Philip Reid, of the Irish Times to preserve Gideon's liver.

The Support team whisky was won by George Pitts and Bert Cross, on the first day (tied); Bert Cross on the second and Mark Lewthwaite on the third.

Our thanks go to Ping for the generous sponsorship of this well established Open competition.



Head Greenkeeper, Neil Metcalf, demonstrates how he wants the bunkers raked during the Wednesday evening meeting



The Home team

BUNKER HISTORY

Year	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03
	St A's	Ly'm	Troon	B'dale	C'stie	St A's	Ly'm	Muirfield	St G's
Bunkers	112	185	84	117	115	112	197	148	106
Rd 1	214	501	344	355	539	148	557	359	388
Rd 2	201	577	272	406	468	164	547	372	405
Rd 3	130	269	107	226	202	65	224	175	149
Rd 4	156	271	136	153	265	71	257	169	181
Total	701	1618	859	1140	1474	448	1585	1078	1123

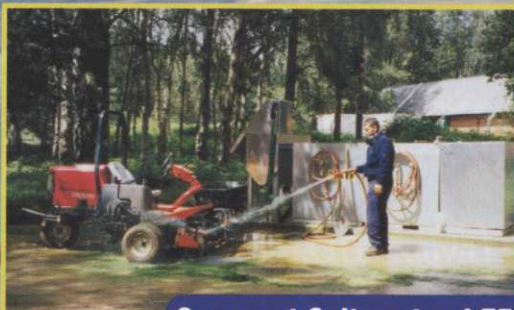
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