

Swing Low...

A master of the oval ball showed he was equally adept with the small round one by winning the National Championship, supported by Seoul Nassau.

Chris Lomas, Course Manager at The Berkshire, has become the BIGGA National Golf Champion at his first attempt. Chris, playing off a handicap of 5, shot net rounds of 72 round each of Coxmoor and Hollinwell to be the only man to break par in the 87 man strong field.



BIGGA's National Golf Champion for 2003, Chris Lomas

Multi-talented Chris, is a former English Under 21 rugby internationalist and he will no doubt be glued to the television hoping that his colleagues down under can replicate his own success. He raised his game to match the superb tests of golf laid before him. In conditions not conducive to low scoring - Coxmoor was dull and windy with some rain while Hollinwell was bright and windy - Chris was able to beat his handicap by a shot.

"I'm still in shock," said Chris, a couple of days after he lifted the magnificent trophy.

"I'm delighted that the decision to give up rugby to concentrate on golf, and work of course, has paid off," he explained.

Chris had been lured north by the quality of the two venues and the chance to play competitive golf on two of the best courses in the country.

"I've always been impressed with the standard of courses BIGGA have staged the Championship on and these two have been no exception. The greens were as true as they were quick and they were almost too quick when the wind blew. I had heard a lot about Hollinwell from various people and it still exceeded all expectations."

He was also full of praise for the two Course Managers, Kevin Atherton at Coxmoor and Philip Stain, at Hollinwell, and their teams.

"The Course Managers and their teams at both courses excelled themselves. I feel a little lucky to win the tournament at my first attempt.

"I played well and that shows by the fact my handicap has come down by about .7 to 55 but Alan Strachan, John Watts, Elliott Small and Kenny Mackay will all tell you I escaped very well. Almost Seve like! I wish!"

"It was not until afterwards that I found out that the trophy used to be News of The World Trophy held at Walton Heath."

The best gross score was 150 came from two 75s from scratch player and St Andrews Links Trust man, David Leith, who arrived in Nottinghamshire as the recently crowned Scottish Champion. Totally phlegmatic, David's demeanour when he came off the course was such that there was no way of knowing whether he had shot 65, 75 or 85.

The Regional Trophy saw the Midlands break the South East stranglehold on the competition thanks, in no small part, to some fine rounds around Coxmoor by Graeme MacDonald, of Newark GC and Past Chairman, Richard Barker.

A welcome visitor to the two courses was Walter Woods, who spent a happy time as Course Manager at Hollinwell and as a member of Coxmoor before heading to Fife and St Andrews.

As always there were some sob stories to report.

Defending Champion Ian Semple put up a stout defence of his title but, two days before he and the family headed to the Dominican Republic on holiday was somewhat distracted by a lost passport drama back home.

Paul Conway got lost on the way to the Hollinwell on the second day and missed his tee time by 15 minutes. Disqualified he was slotted in later so was able to enjoy the course.

Elliott Small had to withdraw from his Coxmoor round after nine holes through hip problems but doped up he too was able to complete his round at Hollinwell.

RESULTS

BIGGA National Champion for the BIGGA Challenge Trophy

- Chris Lomas, The Berkshire, 144 (nett)
- David Hood, Wexham Park, 147 (On last 18)
- Graeme MacDonald, Newark GC, 147

BIGGA Scratch Champion for the BIGGA National Cup

- David Leith, St Andrews Links, 150
- Mark Nelson, Renishaw Park, 153
- Ian Semple, Old Fold Manor, 155

Coxmoor

- Scratch - 7
Richard Barker, Longcliffe GC, 72
8-15
Derek Cunliffe, Old Thorns GC, 74 (BIH)
16-28
Frank Stewart, Leeds Golf Centre, 77

Notts GC

- Scratch - 7
Richard Andrews, Highgate GC, 74
8-15
Matt Folka, Hawkestone Park, 73
16-28
Nick Bird, Kings Norton GC, 74

Nearest the Pin - Coxmoor

Ross Wilson, Parasampia

Longest Drive - Coxmoor

Andy Peel, Bull Bay GC

Regional Trophy

Midland - 595
Graeme MacDonald, Richard Barker, David Hood, Steve Wood, James Dair, Chris Brown, David Salisbury and Fred Cobb

Runner-up

South East - 601
Chris Lomas, Ian Semple, Derek Cunliffe, Stefan Antolik, Stuart Abbott, Steve Holmes, Ian Willett and Steven Helmsley.



Kevin Atherton with his Coxmoor team



Phillip Stain with his Hollinwell team



Richard Barker accepts the Regional Team Trophy from Coxmoor Captain, Adrian Hill, on behalf of the victorious Midland Team



David Leith, the BIGGA Scratch Champion



The prize winners with George Brown, left, and Hollinwell Captain, Michael Sout, centre