



# Arizona, Here We Come!

Four members of Whickham Golf Club in County Durham are off to America after winning the Great Britain national final of the 2003 John Deere Team Championship golf tournament, held in July on the Brabazon course at The De Vere Belfry.



The team, joined by a fifth player from the local John Deere dealership Greenlay (Grass Machinery) Limited of Choppington in Northumberland, beat off stiff competition from clubs across Great Britain to take home the title. With this comes an invitation to Scottsdale, Arizona where they will play in the world final at Grayhawk Golf Club in November, against teams from Ireland, North America, Canada, Australia, Germany and Sweden.

Bill Hopper, Club Vice Captain; Gary MacDonald, Competitions' Secretary; Tony McLure, Head Greenkeeper; Andrew Hall, Club Professional, and Roger Stewart, Greenlay, finished three shots clear of the field on a net team score of 56. It was second time lucky for Whickham, as the club also played at The Belfry in last year's Team Championship finals.

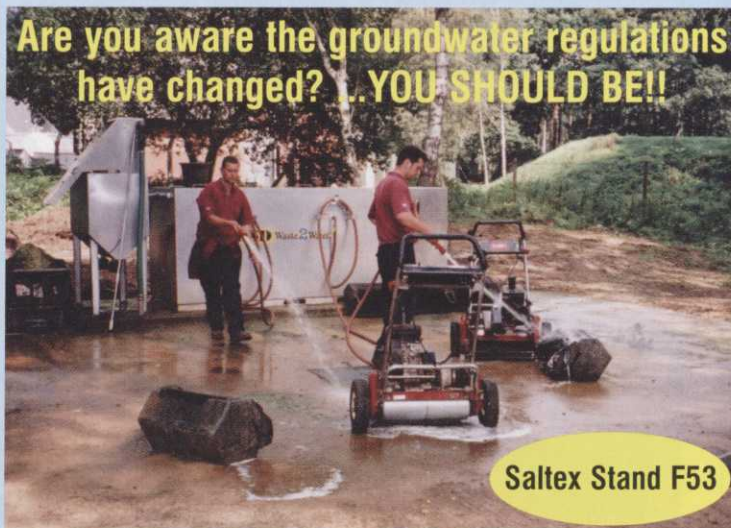
"Playing on the world famous Brabazon course is amazing for a golfer like me," said Roger.

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After reaching the final last year but failing to make the final step Whickham Golf Club will be representing the UK in the John Deere Team Championship.



"I only took up the game 18 months ago and had to buy a new set of clubs for this final. The weather was atrocious, and for the first few holes it felt like I was only there to hold the umbrella!

Now I find myself in a team of very experienced golfers and on the way to a world championship competition in America. I just can't believe it," said a delighted Roger.

"Tony McLure has won a few prizes in the past. He's played for Durham and represented England in the Nations Cup. Also, our young pro – Andrew is just 25 – only joined the club in March. We're all delighted about the trip to the USA.," said Gary.

Last year the UK was represented by Brokenhurst Manor Golf Club, with Course Manager Ed McCabe flying the flag for the Association. While not winning, the team performed admirably in the final, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of playing in such a prestigious event.

Whickham Golf Club was founded in 1911 and has around 700 members. Set in the Derwent Valley, it is a picturesque course with spectacular views, although it is only a few miles from Gateshead's Metro Centre.



18th - The De Vere Belfry

Runner-up in the Great Britain national final was the team from Brickendon Grange Golf Club in Hertford, who won their qualifying tournament, organised by Allen Percival from John Deere dealer, Turner Groundscore, in Dunstable.

Third place went to Sweetwoods Park Golf Club from Edenbridge in Kent; they won the qualifying tournament held by John Deere dealer Palmers Agricultural, who are based in East Sussex.

A Guest team representing BIGGA also played. Led by Past Chairman, Richie Barker and also containing Paul Jenkins, John Pemberton, Scott MacCallum and Malcolm Jackson of John Deere. The team played a straight five man Texas Scramble and shot a bogey free round of gross 62!

*Tony McLure was on holiday as the magazine went to press so we'll hear from him on his return from Arizona on how the team gets on.*



In order to qualify for the national final, Whickham beat 16 other teams in their regional qualifier, organised by Eric Pattinson of Greenlay, and held at Morpeth Golf Club in June.

Altogether 23 John Deere dealerships took part in the Great Britain tournament, with a total of 390 teams (1560 players) competing. The qualifying tournaments ran from April to July at host golf clubs throughout Great Britain, with each winning team going through to play at The De Vere Belfry.

Now in its 17th year, the John Deere Team Championship has traditionally been open only to teams from the USA and Canada, although in recent years invitations were extended to Germany and Australia. Last year saw Great Britain and Ireland taking part for the first time.

At the awards ceremony John Deere Limited also made a donation of £25 for every British team entered, to support BIGGA's educational activities. Donations are made to greenkeeping Associations in all the countries which take part in the Team Championship.



The BIGGA team