



## Welcome

### NO MORE INTIMIDATION

There can only be one way to start this month's column. Let's hear it for Billy McLachlan and his team at Royal Troon! I can't recall another Open Championship where the course has come in for no criticism whatsoever.

It provided a fair but demanding test of golf and the set-up was just what was required.

Let's face it the pressure was on with The Open, coming so soon after the US Open at Shinnecock Hills, for which the USGA was vilified for demanding a course which ended up so tricked up that greens had to be watered to slow them down on the final day... after the first few groups had already proved that they were all but unplayable. How can that be fair?

So we needed a sensible Major Championship and Royal Troon provided it.

Of course there will be those who look at the record books in a few years time and say Todd Hamilton succeeding Ben Curtis as Champion doesn't exactly smack of identifying true Champions.

However, in each case many of the top names were there or thereabouts and had their own chances to win.

If you look back through the ages there are very few Opens which have produced unheralded Champions. More often than not it has been those regarded as the superstars, who have prevailed.

The argument is that the strength in depth is now so great it just needs one of the superstars to be slightly out of sorts on one round and his chance has all but gone. I've got a different theory and, if you'll permit me, I'll bore you with it.

It used to be all but about 10 players teed up knowing they were never going to win, not The Open Championship.

Now, many more go in with a winning mentality. If they play their best why can't they be Open Champion? I think The Open may have lost its ability to intimidate the field.

I've watched many Opens in my time and seen unheralded – it would be unfair to call them run-of-the-mill - players play out of their skin only to come a cropper on Sunday's back nine.

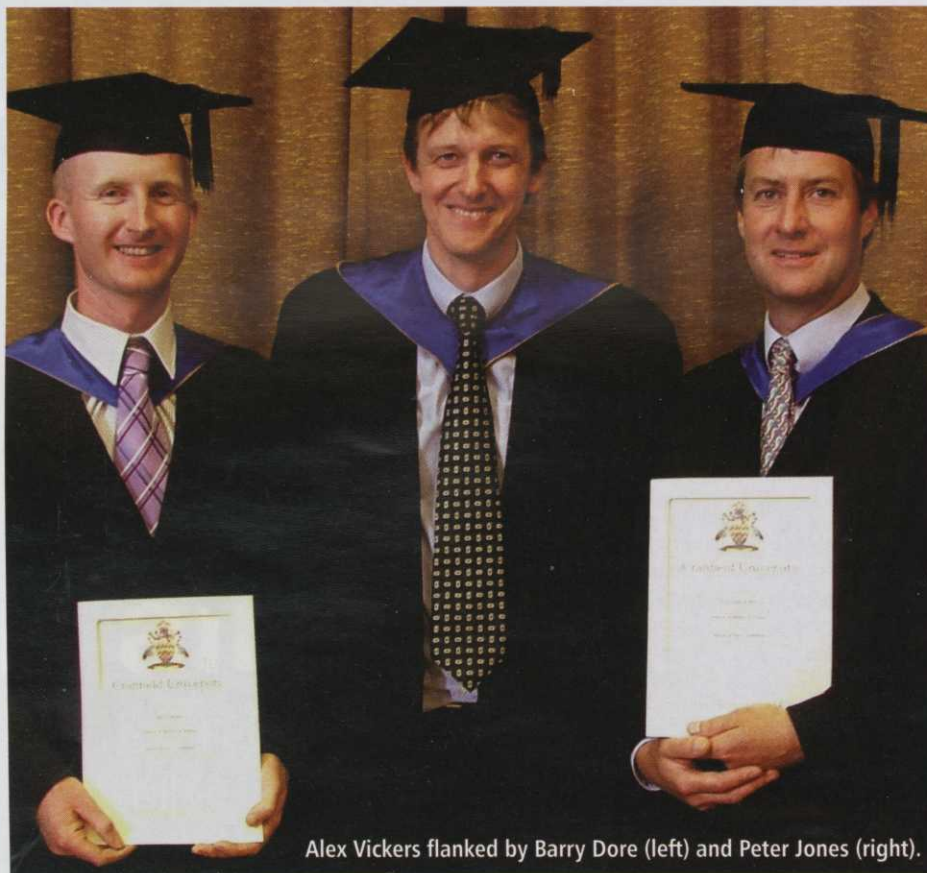
And it wasn't necessarily the big name player sitting just below them on the leaderboard but the sheer enormity of what they were about to do that caused the stumble.

There are several which spring to mind. New Zealander, Simon Owen, looked set to win the 1978 Open at St Andrews only to let Jack Nicklaus in.

You could add Doug Sanders to that list from eight years before that. The most famous missed putt in history, but since then he's recovered from the disappointment. He can now go five minutes without thinking about it.

Nowadays the fear of winning The Open is not as great for some reason - perhaps the sports psychologists can take some of the credit - and you get Ben Curtis and Todd Hamilton able to play their best golf without the intimidation factor that existed within their older colleagues.

Scott MacCallum, Editor



Alex Vickers flanked by Barry Dore (left) and Peter Jones (right).

### QUALIFIED SUCCESSES

The first of the BIGGA Higher Education Scholars, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen Ltd were presented with their degrees at a graduation ceremony at Cranfield University in July.

Barry Dore and Peter Jones donned gown and mortar board and received the applause of a large audience as they were presented with their Msc degrees from the Chancellor of the College.

An additional BIGGA Scholarship graduate, Eoghan Buckley could not attend as he was undertaking an internship in the USA.

Both were given substantial financial support in achieving their qualification through the scholarship scheme which was set up by BIGGA two years ago.

Barry was the first to mount the stage and spoke later of the pride he felt in his achievement.

"The graduation seals the completion of the MSc course and is very satisfying indeed. Receiving this qualification means a great deal to me. The training I have received has greatly improved my knowledge of sports turf science. It will also allow me to consider employment options in the future that I would never have been in a position to consider before," said Barry.

"I can't thank BIGGA and Ransomes Jacobsen enough for the support they have given me during the course."

Peter Jones, who runs Peter Jones Associates Ltd, was equally delighted.

"It was a proud moment for me to appear on stage at Cranfield University, complete with gown and mortar board to receive my degree. It more than justifies the many, many hours spent studying and writing assignments. I am greatly indebted to BIGGA and Ransomes Jacobsen for the wonderful support they have given me and my fellow scholarship winners and I would encourage others to take advantage of the generous support there is out there for people attempting to better themselves through education," said Peter.

Accompanying Barry and Peter at the ceremony was a very proud Tutor, Alex Vickers who had guided each of them through their course.

Among those receiving Honorary Degrees at the same time as Barry and Peter was Sir Donald Curry, Chairman of the Food and Farming Strategy, DEFRA, who had been charged with developing a policy to minimise the damage of the Foot and Mouth Epidemic two years ago.

"The scholarship scheme has enabled 48 greenkeeper members of BIGGA to enrol onto Higher Education courses including the Masters Degree at Cranfield University. Greenkeepers now have access to a full range of qualifications enabling them to move their careers to an even higher level and compete for better salaries," said Ken Richardson, BIGGA's Education and Training Manager.