

2004 John Deere National Team Championship Final

Steve Mitchell reports on a successful National Final and John Deere's contributions to BIGGA's educational funds.



Course Manager David Norton (seated front right) with Tony Jenkins of John Deere dealer Adamsons, and the club's greenkeeping team, pictured at the 16th hole.

Worfield Golf Club, from Shropshire, has won the Great Britain and Ireland National Final of the 2004 John Deere Team Championship, held for the first time at Forest Pines Golf Club, Brigg, North Humberside.

Worfield's net score of 56 - 17 under par - in the modified scramble event was two shots ahead of Bingley St Ives Golf Club, from Yorkshire, in the GB field. Downpatrick Golf Club, of County Down in Northern Ireland, carded 60, beating Kanturk Golf Club, of Co Cork, on countback to become the Irish champions.

As overall winners, the team from Worfield - made up of club chairman Trevor Williams, secretary William Weaver, professional Steve Russell, greenkeeper Mike Fowkes and John Deere dealer salesman Pete Worthy of John Osman Groundcare, Oswestry, Shropshire - will be travelling to America in November to play in the World Team Championships at

Grayhawk Golf Club, Scottsdale, Arizona, against teams from North America, Canada, Australia, Germany and Sweden.

"We are naturally delighted to be representing Great Britain and Ireland in the USA in November," said Trevor Williams. "Everything just gelled on the day, we always thought we were playing very steadily, and just tried not to give a shot away to the card at any point. I think the key to our success was that everyone played their part. We all got our drives away, so we weren't putting ourselves under pressure at the back end.

"We also had a very good professional in Steve Russell, and with him playing well it gave us all confidence. Mind you, we did cheekily suggest to our dealer player Pete Worthy that if we won, Steve had to give him some free lessons!

"I first played Forest Pines about five years ago, and I have to say that the course is a credit to the owners and to Course Manager David Norton and his greenkeeping team. For a young course like this to present such good quality in its layout and finish is exceptional.

"The attitude and friendliness of all the hotel staff was excellent, and the club's head professional David Edwards made the day go extremely well. I'd also like to pay tribute to John Deere for its support, particularly through the financial contributions it makes to BIGGA and GCSAI," added a delighted Trevor.

Like Worfield, Downpatrick's team - club captain Fred Hamilton, competitions convenor Gerard McStay, professional Robbie Hutton, golf course superintendent Emmett Curran and John Deere dealer salesman Ricky Neill of Johnston Gilpin & Co, Lisburn - thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"We thought 13 under around Forest Pines was a great score. We played really well as a team. I think we really only left two shots out on the course, and with only two teams making better scores I think we did the best we could," said BIGGA member Emmett Curran.

"We could not have caught the winning team, their score was terrific and we wish them well in the Grand Final at Grayhawk. The John Deere Team Championship is a great format, and Forest Pines is a great course. We're certainly glad to be the top Irish team, and we'll definitely enter again."

Altogether 24 John Deere dealerships organised regional qualifiers for this year's tournament, with a total of 426 teams competing across Great Britain and Ireland. Donations are traditionally made to greenkeeping associations in all the countries which take part in the Team Championship, and this year John Deere Limited has contributed a total of £10,650 to support the educational activities of BIGGA and GCSAI.

In the battle of the Associations the GCSAI team, comprising Patrick Holohan, Terence McShea, Alan Mahon, Barry McElroy and John Deere Limited Managing Director Alec McKee, reversed last year's final placings



▲ The BIGGA Team, from left to right; John Pemberton, Iain McLeod, Ian Semple, Past Chairman George Brown and John Deere's Malcolm Jackson.



▲ What a Team! - The Worfield golfers receive their winners' prizes from MD Alec McKee (centre). They are, from left, William Weaver, Steve Russell, Trevor Williams, Mike Fowkes and Pete Worthy.

The Championship Course

Forest Pines Golf Club, near Brigg in north Lincolnshire, was established as a brand new championship course in 1996. It features three challenging loops of nine holes fashioned out of mature woodland by golf course architect John Morgan.

Course Manager David Norton and his greenkeeping team are now using a fleet of over 30 John Deere machines, supplied by Adamsons. This has almost doubled in size since the course first opened.

"With 27 holes plus a practice area, and very heavy usage of the course all year round, we need a big machinery fleet and a lot of staff to keep on top of the workload," said David Norton.

"All three nine hole loops start close to the clubhouse, so we also need to work quickly around the whole course.

"We cut the greens every day, and the fairways three times a week, depending on the time of year. Because there's so much tree cover, we also

do a lot of aeration to keep everything breathing and draining freely.

"This is why it's such a good winter course, as it doesn't get waterlogged or muddy. It's challenging to get all the holes in perfect condition all year round, though, and that's why the equipment is used to the maximum."

Forest Pines hosts a number of pro-ams, PGA and Euro Pro Tour events and other tournaments, some of which, because of its location, are open to both Midlands and Northern PGA sections, and many of which take place over the winter months – hence the heavy traffic on the course.

As a result, some of the playing areas have recently been overseeded with ryegrass, to maintain the presentation and improve wear, and several tees have been expanded. The club has also invested in a new machinery shed, fuel station and an eco-friendly self-contained wash-off system.

"Obviously we've been very happy with the John Deere equipment, which is why we've committed to an ongoing replacement scheme," said David.

"The machines are comfortable, manoeuvrable and easy to set up and operate. The range meets our specifications, and the parts and service back-up from the dealer is excellent."



▲ BIGGA Chief Executive John Pemberton is presented with John Deere's contribution to the Association's education programme by MD Alec McKee (left) and C&E Sales Manager David Hart (right).



▲ Iain McLeod with his award for winning the amateur Nearest the Pin competition.



▲ The Downpatrick Team from left to right; Gerard McStay, Ricky Neill, Robbie Hutton, Fred Hamilton and Emmett Curran.

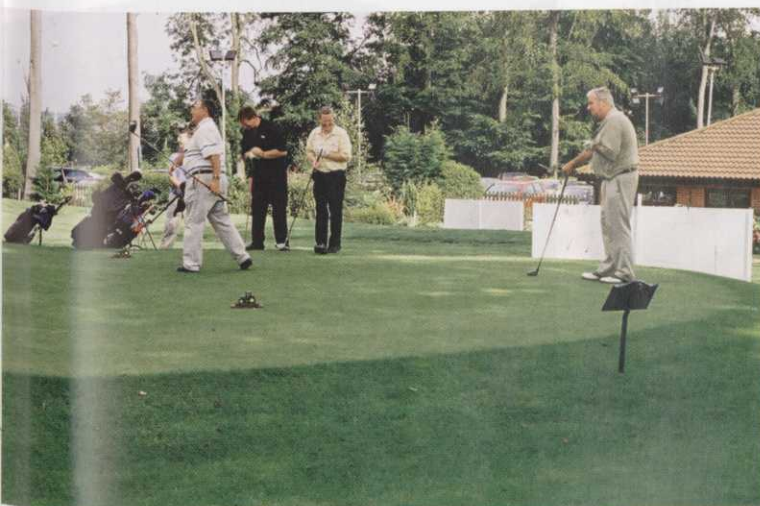
by beating the BIGGA team of John Pemberton, Ian Semple, Iain McLeod, George Brown and John Deere's finance & administration manager Malcolm Jackson by seven shots - 55 to 62.

The BIGGA team did have something to celebrate thanks to Iain McLeod winning the amateur prize for Nearest the Pin.

"The 2004 John Deere Championship has been a major success, and some magnificent golf has been played. Our congratulations go to both Worfield Golf Club and Downpatrick Golf Club on a wonderful

Championship, I am sure Worfield will represent us all very well in the US. Personally the BIGGA team had a good round, but we just couldn't pip the GCSAI this year," said BIGGA Chief Executive John Pemberton.

"On the business side of things BIGGA's educational activities are important to the development of greenkeeping and it is crucial this is supported. John Deere's support and financial contribution is very much appreciated and ensures we at BIGGA can elevate the level of greenkeeping through education," added John.



▲ Past Chairman George Brown shows how it's meant to be done, while his team looks on.



▲ The BIGGA Team look set for birdie.