



# Stiff Challenge Ahead

Gareth Jones previews the BIGGA National Championship at the home of Robin Hood.



The event of the year for golfing greenkeepers and trade members is now less than two months away. The BIGGA National Championship, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobson, is once again here and all roads point to Robin Hood country, as Worksop Golf Club and Sherwood Forest host the 2005 competition in October.

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Sherwood Forest GC

Section and Regional qualifiers have been played out across the UK during the summer months and they have witnessed many a success and failure as greenkeeper and trade members alike fought it out for limited automatic qualifying places. The scene is now set for the battle to commence to find the 2005 BIGGA National Champion.

Like Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham competing for the hand of Maid Marion, it was Graeme MacDonald and Noel Crawford who brawled for the 2004 title. Still in the balance until the final holes at Alwoodley GC, it was the Newark Course Manager Graeme who overcame his adversary to lift the BIGGA Challenge Trophy, forcing Royal Country Down's Noel to settle for the Scratch Championship.

Such drama is bound to be seen again this year as Head Greenkeepers Barry Lax, Worksop GC, and Kim Kirkham, Sherwood Forest GC, and their merry men set up their picturesque, challenging courses one last time before the winter weather takes hold.

Worksop, which will host the first day of the Championship on October 3, has had a busy season. Its dry, sandy based land has resulted in the course remaining open for the majority of the year and the summer has witnessed the course host the entire programme of Nottingham golf events. From the Nottinghamshire School boys to the Nottingham Match Play Open, Barry and his green staff have been kept busy preparing a top track week on week. If that wasn't dominating enough of the greens team's time, they have also been working on a heathland regeneration programme. However, all this wouldn't put Barry off producing a challenging course for BIGGA's finest.

"We'll set up Worksop the same for the National Tournament as we do for all the rest. In fact we don't change the course too much for competitions as it is set up day to day for the members, as it is already a tough challenge. Worksop is very tight with the fastest greens in the area, the 18th green has a 12ft fall from one side of it to the other," said Barry,

who will have been at the club for 35 years in February 2006.

Day two, October 4, of the BIGGA Tournament will move to Sherwood Forest. Kim Kirkham, fresh from taming Aldwark Manor's course during Rigby Taylor 1's march to victory in the BIGGA Golf Day, will have his course in its typically testing condition. It's been a demanding summer for Kim, but that wouldn't stop the heathland course from being very tight in October, with rough looming at every turn ready to snaffle any stray balls.

"We've let the rough grow more for this season, so the course is even tighter. We've also concentrated on keeping the speed of the greens up and the normal high standards expected by the membership," said Kim proudly.

"I'm looking forward to hosting the National Tournament. It's always nice to have your peers come and play your course and hopefully appreciate it. We've held Section and Regional events at Sherwood before and they have always been very enjoyable. BIGGA events are always a great chance for greenkeepers and trade of all levels to socialise together."

So the BIGGA competitors have been warned, Worksop and Sherwood Forest will take no prisoners, golfers will need to be on their game to survive the two days. So, can the two Headmen offer any tips to help?

"The 9th, 10th and 12th are the biggest tests at Worksop. The period between the 8th and 15th is where scores must be kept together and it's here that will make or break your round," stated Barry knowingly.

"I think the Sherwood Forest back nine will play a major part in determining who wins the National Tournament. If the wind gets up and blows in a certain direction it can be a very different last 9," said Kim.

**There is still time to book your place in the BIGGA National Championship. To do so or for more details contact BIGGA's very own Maid Marion, Sarah, at BIGGA HOUSE on 01347 833800 or via email, [sarah@bigga.co.uk](mailto:sarah@bigga.co.uk).**



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