



Feelin' Hot! Hot! Hot!

It may have taken 39 years for The Open Championship to return to Royal Liverpool Golf Club - better known as Hoylake - but members of the BIGGA Open Support Team will remember the week for much longer than that.

The straw colour, which greeted everyone when they stepped through the gates, was evidence of a long dry spell in the weeks before the first ball was struck and it provided the sort of links conditions for which the R&A craved. The week itself witnessed temperatures not experienced in the UK for many a long while. Indeed smoking warnings were regularly posted and it was a great relief to everyone that "bush fires" were avoided.

It was in these boiling conditions that Links Manager, Craig Gilholm, and his team had prepared the course and it was in these conditions that BIGGA's Support Team worked harder than any Support Team has done in the past.

For the first time ever the 60 strong team prepared bunkers prior to the start of play, raked bunkers during matches and divoted the courses in the evening after play stretching resources to the limit.

The demands increased with R&A Chief Executive, Peter Dawson, and Championship Chairman, Martin

Kippax, requesting flat raking whenever possible and this was achieved on the two rounds - 2nd and 3rd - which avoided overnight thunderstorms. This proved to be a delicate and difficult task, given the rakes provided to tackle the job, and doubled the time estimated to complete the work. However, it all proved worthwhile with the team receiving compliments for the quality of their work and no major issues with the players.

Off course also proved a memorable occasion for the team, dining morning and night in the imposing Anglican Cathedral, which neighboured the John Moore's University campus were the team was billeted, while the quality of the nightlife in Liverpool, when the team had the opportunity to take advantage, was never in doubt.

Craig, who took over at Hoylake following the sad passing of Derek Green, was quick to pay tribute to his team who had worked tirelessly over the previous five years to ensure that the course met the demands of the



A Support Team member in action

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Final round action



Richard Matteson, USA

modern day professional and it was a tribute to him that he was able to build on the wonderful foundations laid by his predecessor.

If proof were needed you can say that Hoylake was able to identify the finest golfer in the field with Tiger Woods chalking up his 11th Major victory, another one closer to the record of 18 held by Jack Nicklaus.

Tiger was glowing in his praise for the course, explaining that it was great to have a course which could be played in so many different ways. He chose to find the fairways with irons, leaving him short of many of the bunkers and with longer approach shots and who can argue!

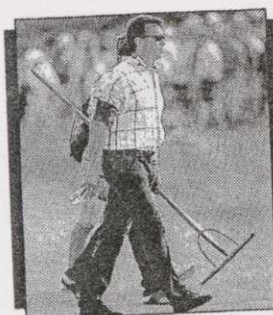
Snippets

NEW JOB FOR O'LEARY

David O'Leary visited The Open the day after he parted company with Aston Villa and through his friendship with Lee Westwood acquired an armband to get himself inside the ropes - I know! He spent some time in conversation with Support Team member Paul Eddlestone and was caught on camera by some of the photographers who managed to make it look as though O'Leary was the man in possession of the rake!



Ernie Els on the 5th



RAKING IT IN....

DAVID O'LEARY has just made a mint leaving Aston Villa and our picture makes it look as if he was raking it in at Hoylake yesterday. At least he probably found the battle for the Claret Jug more fun than his time with Deadly Doug.



Gary Cunningham with Tiger on his final match



Billy Merritt gets close to the action



Chris DiMarco



The Wednesday evening Bunker Masterclass proved very informative.

Photo by Colin Denny



Craig Gilholm (right) has a chance to share experiences with Ewan Grant, Head Greenkeeper at St Andrews who was in the same position the previous year.



Derek Green, who worked so hard to enable Hoylake to be returned to the Open rota but who sadly died before he could see it, was remembered during the week when his old friend Bill Lawson organised a small meeting in the BIGGA Marquee. Attended by Derek's son, Richard, Hoylake's Chairman of Green, Nick Peel, Craig Gilholm, John Pemberton, Scott MacCallum and BIGGA Past Chairman Andy Campbell, Derek's memory was toasted and a few stories shared of Derek and his outstanding work.

DAY ONE
FANATICAL FANS

A member of security's mobile went off as Simon Kahn was over his putt, he missed and two of his fans went after the security man, grabbed his phone and threw it in the long grass. Information supplied by Open Support Team Member Steve Beverley from Cleethorpes GC.

OUT OF BOUNDS

Nick Dougherty, on the 10th hole of tee, hit out of bounds only to hear a woman shout, "Your ball is in my garden" and then throw it over the fence at the marshal. Information supplied by Gavin Robson from Burton-on-Trent GC.

BIG BULLY

A spectator shouted at Ernie Els, "Come on Ernie, oh, and by the way, your wife said you need to lose some more weight." Information supplied by Colin Denny from Heaton Moor GC.



Photo by Colin Denny

DAY TWO
PUTTER SAVED PAR

Jim Furyk used only his putter to get out of a green bunker on the 5th and saved par. Information supplied by Fredrik Seeger from Sweden.

HE JUST COULDN'T RESIST A MR WHIPPY

Sergio Garcia departed for areas unknown only to appear later eating an ice-cream, having held up play for about five minutes. Information supplied by Richard Matteson, USA.

WHEN YOU'VE GOTTA GO...

On the 8th hole Darren Parris was using the players toilet, when a child started rocking it, shouting "Hurry up, hurry up!" Information supplied by Mark Ellis, Spain.

DAY THREE
GOOD WORK

Greg Owen didn't find sand until playing his 50th hole of the championship, clearing nearly three rounds without hitting a single bunker.

TOUGH GAME

Todd Hamilton complained about the pin positions claiming they were "Too hard". Information supplied by Keith Scruton, member of the BIGGA Open Support Team.

IT'S GOT TO BE PERFECT

On the 14th fairway bunker, Casey and Khan were in the same left side bunker. Khan played out first then Casey requested Khan's caddie smooth out the footprints made by Khan. Casey played his shot and failed to get the ball out. Information supplied by Mark Ellis from The Millbrook GC.

THE GREAT BIGGA BUNKER COMPETITION

Members of the BIGGA Open Support Team entered our competition to guess the number of bunkers that would be found each day, and in total, at the Open.

Winner of day one was Paul Johnson from Hankley Common GC who guessed 350 - the actual amount being 352. Friday's winner was Jonathon Evans from Carden Park GC, the number of bunkers visited was 353, Jonathon guessed closest with 367. Kevin Hodges from Longniddry GC, who estimated 188 bunkers would be hit on Saturday, was the winner on day three. 183 were actually hit.

Iain MacLeod, member of the BIGGA board was overall winner of the BIGGA Bunker Competition. He estimated that 1093 bunkers would be hit over the four days - good guess Iain - 1092 were actually found.

Winners of the daily competition received a half bottle of whisky and the overall winner received a bottle of whisky.

BIGGA Bunker Stats

	1995 St. A's	1996 Ly'm	1997 Troon	1998 B'dale	1999 C'stie	2000 St. A's	2001 Ly'm	2002 M'field	2003 St.G's	2004 Troon	2005 St A's	2006 Hoylake
Bunkers	112	185	84	117	115	112	197	148	106	93	112	96
Rd 1	214	501	344	355	539	148	557	359	388	393	252	352
Rd 2	201	577	272	406	468	164	547	372	405	371	203	353
Rd 3	130	269	107	226	202	65	224	175	149	148	100	183
Rd 4	156	271	136	153	265	71	257	169	181	185	121	204
Total	701	1618	859	1140	1474	448	1585	1078	1123	1097	676	1092