

Welcome



Let's Sing the Praises of the Game

I listened to comedian Dom Jolly on Radio 5 Live a couple of weeks ago. He was talking about his latest book, "Letters to my Golf Club" in which he adopts the personas of a retired military man and his family and writes to genuine golf clubs making some outrageous complaints and requests.

During the interview Dom, who has recently returned to the game, explained that he loved playing golf but not the rest of what goes along with the game – the clubhouse, the membership and the "stupid clothing regulations". He said that he found it completely bizarre that you could find yourself barred for wearing shorts which were an inch too long, yet while out on the course you could go to the side of the tee and relieve yourself and that was regarded as perfectly normal.

When it's put in such stark language it is very difficult not to agree with him, and to non-golfers all it does is reinforce the stereotypical image of the game – stuffy, middleclass, sexist... those who play the game are sad cases who should be pitied not ridiculed.

But golf is a great game. The values of fair play, self governance and the etiquette, unique to golf, instils in people standards which, if they were to be carried into other aspects of daily life, would make living a much more pleasant experience for everyone.

What other sport else would an accusation of cheating see your social standing plummet to below that of the local house burglar? If a footballer steals a few yards for a throw-in or dives full length to win a penalty; or a tennis player berates an umpire; or cricketer sticks his nail under the seam or indulge in a bit of sledging, it's almost seen as part of the game and those who carry it out lauded as being "streetwise" - more so if they represent your team.

On the other hand you can virtually name and shame those golfers through history who have been discovered cheating. I'm not going to, but those who know the game would come up with a very similar list of names to mine. It is that rare and the consequences for being caught so far reaching.

Shouldn't we be shouting about golf's values from the treetops, not being almost apologetic about the fact that we play, or work within, the game?

But first those old anachronistic club rules have to be phased out.

I'm a golfing traditionalist and, if I'm honest, would hate to see chavs take over our clubs but surely if we shed some of the frankly idiotic club rules the game wouldn't suffer and it would make golf more welcoming to the non-player keen to give it a try. It wouldn't mean a drop of "standards" but might open the doors to a whole new generation of golfer.

Dom Jolly might then venture into the clubhouse in his long shorts, buy a round of sandwiches and some tea.

SUN SHINES ON WENTWORTH

This year's final of the Midland Section Greensomes Knockout Pairs competition, at Wentworth, was blessed with sunshine – A far cry from the wash out that was last year. The annual event, run by BIGGA and sponsored by Scotts, was played for the first time on the Edinburgh Course.

Ed Stant, of Penn Golf Club, and Paul Woodham, of Gay Hill Golf Club, won for the fifth consecutive year. Some healthy local rivalry was brought into play, as one of the challengers was Ed's Deputy at Penn Golf Club, Adam Jones, paired with Rhys Thomas, of South Staffordshire Golf Club. However they were no match for the champions, who pulled off a convincing win.

"We had a fantastic day," commented Ed. "What could be better than a day's golf at one of the country's finest courses? The Edinburgh is wooded, so it's quite challenging, and the greens are the fastest I have experienced in a long time. We also received great hospitality from Scotts. And of course I was delighted to be on the winning team again. Thanks to Scotts for a wonderful day."

Mark Rayner, of Scotts, said, "Another great day at Wentworth, a superb course and not a drop of rain. A big thank you to everyone involved and to Chris Kennedy for letting us play on the course during a very busy time"

MINCHINHAMPTON GOLF CLUB

Minchinhampton Golf Club mature student, Matthew Leeson Magry (left), cuts a cake and receives his completed NVQ level 2 workbook from Adam Matthews (Assessor) in the Minchinhampton greenstaff rest room. Course Manager, Paul Worster, commented "This is a real success story for the NVQ system, allowing "Big Matty" (as he is affectionately known) to complete an industry qualification, without the grind of having to attend college regularly, and sit exams. Matty has worked at Minchinhampton since leaving school and has developed into an outstanding Assistant Greenkeeper - Attaining this qualification is the recognition he deserves." Progress was overseen by Andy Lisle and Chris Pickles from Hartpury College Gloucester, and workplace assessments were carried out by Dave Rosselli, Adam, and Paul.

