

Chairman's Column

I had the pleasure of attending the Open Championship in July, my first for some years. The last time I was at an Open was at Troon in the late 90s, so it was with eager anticipation that I set off for the hallowed links of Carnoustie. I had given the wee ones their instructions about what they could and couldn't do; parties were ok but not to make too much noise as to annoy the neighbours. The kitchen was bulging with every kind of food imaginable, with meals planned and contingencies for running out of anything in place, so I was happy to leave them for the week. I was up as usual in time to leave for work and, unlike usual, all the wee ones were up waiting to say goodbye to me before I left on my latest adventure, Summer was still asking to come with me and saying she would be no bother, "Honest, daddy". Shannon being all grown up said -"See ya dad, don't forget to bring me some shortbread back" and Billie was keen to see me out the front door so she could return to her bed.

A dilemma when travelling is always what to leave out of your suitcase. I had to be prepared for every event but it was impossible to take everything, if say, I was getting there by car. So I was packed and ready with an impressively small bag for the week and set off to the airport from Tyrrells Wood.

Travelling, as I have found over the past few months, is mostly a pain in the buttocks, as you seem to, when flying anyway, spend more time sitting around or standing in queues than you ever do on the plane. I arrived at Edinburgh having left almost an hour late - on time, how did they manage that! With a bus ride and then train to Dundee, I took the chance to ask a local how to find the University of Abertay, "That's easy son. Just turn left as you get out of the station and it's about five minutes up there on the right, you cannae miss it." As she said it was on the right, but a wee bit further than predicted. I went to reception and enquired about my room and was duly told were to go and given a map. So there I was waiting and the time was ticking away. Surely someone would come along soon I thought, and open the door to let me in, and then my phone rang. At last I thought, someone has remembered I was here. It was Scotty MacCallum, "Were are you? We're all here and waiting for you to



get booked into your room." Well, thing is I, was in the wrong part of Dundee and, in fact, at the wrong University trying to gate crash the BBC's accommodation.

We soon headed off for the course and to have a look around the BIGGA Marquee. It was my first time at Carnoustie, so as you do, you have a wander onto the grass and see how it's doing; I was already impressed before getting too far onto the course, by the immaculate conditions. Years of heartache, hard work, love and attention to detail had been bestowed on it. It was now almost late evening and the shadows were just falling over the course, it was truly a magnificent sight and I knew then we were all in for a real treat during The Open. Now I could wax lyrical for years about the course it was in superb condition but I would just like to pay tribute instead to a few people that made my time in Scotland more special than it could have been.

To John Pemberton and his team that organised every second of my time, ensuring I was in the right place at the right time, they have my heartfelt thanks. To Scott, Rachael, Melissa and everyone at BIGGA HQ that helped make this

event tick with all the precision of the finest timepiece ever crafted. Well done to you all. Well done to all those Board members: Kenny Mackay, Tony Smith, Gavin Robson, Richard Whyman, and Jeff Mills. Also Peter Later, Peter Boyd and Bert Cross, and the Pod leaders and drivers, for your dedication in ensuring everyone was there in good time and able to perform as required. I would like, without reservation, to thank the Support Team greenkeepers from around the world who had taken holidays and time to muck in and give of their time to help rake bunkers, divot tees and fairways and do anything that was asked of them with great spirit. To you all, I can't put into words how proud you all made me feel during the week. To the locals, you know, Walter and Caroline, Andy and Clare, George - I could keep going - no Open would be complete without the dastardly duo of Cecil and Jimmy sharing tales of the past.

But make no mistake, we were but a side salad to the main event because without doubt the main act of the week for me was John Philp and his team, ably supported by Paul, Sandy and all the Greenstaff at Carnoustie. They, in my opinion, prepared a test of golf of such quality that made, I'm sure, every greenkeeper in the British Isles very proud indeed. So well done you lot.

An event the size of The Open Championship is dependent of the services of so many people, from the professionals to the normal member from a neighbouring club, giving of their time and energy, to man a scoreboard, to move cars into a field, to marshal thousands of spectators around - It is truly an amazing thing to see. So to the R&A with another well run and successful Championship under your belt, well done and roll on next year.



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