

ROYAL BIRKDALE 2008 ...WHAT A WEEK!

FEATURE



Our BIGGA Open Greenkeeping Support Team once again provided this year's Open venue greenstaff with some amazing, much needed help.

Travelling from as far a field as Hawaii, Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden and Portugal, the Support Team consisted of 60 greenkeepers, who spent the

week assisting Royal Birkdale Course Manager, Chris Whittle and his team with course preparations before and after play and bunker raking during the Championship.

As any member of the Open Support Team will tell you, it's a long week but a great one. This year our volunteers had heavy downpours and

gusty winds to contend with but that didn't stop them from smiling.

"The Open Championship was a fantastic opportunity for greenkeepers up and down the country to experience the greatest players in the world battle it out for the famous Claret Jug.

"It was hard work sometimes, with long days and



early mornings, but as greenkeepers we should've been used to that by now," said Jonathon Evans, Head Greenkeeper at Carden Park Golf Club.

Asa English, greenkeeper at Charnwood Forest Golf Club, Leicestershire, was the fortunate greenkeeper picked at random to work with the last game of the Championship, alongside this

year's winner, Padraig Harrington, and old favourite, Greg Norman:

"To be included in the Open Support Team was a privilege. To work inside the ropes gives you a great buzz and to get so close to the play allows you to see the true skill of the players. It is a hard, demanding week but the whole experience

is second to none. There was a great team spirit within the camp!"

Despite the wind and rain in Southport, attendance figures for the Championship were up compared to when the prestigious event was last played at Royal Birkdale in 1998 and the practice days in particular seemed to draw in spectators.



THE GREAT BIGGA BUNKER COMPETITION

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) has provided support at the Open Championship since 1984.

Since 1995 the team has collected data on

the bunkers raked during the Championship and has now collated bunker related information for the last 14 Opens. During that time the team has raked all 15,470 bunkers that players have found, and established which courses provided the greatest bunker threat on the Open rota.

Each year the media is invited to estimate

how many bunkers will be found each day and the overall winner this year, Paul Trow from Pro Shop Europe, received a golf bag supplied by Ransomes Jacobsen. The Support Team and staff also take part in the competition, winning a bottle of whisky. This year's overall Support Team winner was Ian Gould from Chapel-en-le-Frith Golf Club.

| 1995 St. A's | 1996 Lym | 1997 Troon | 1998 B'dale | 1999 C'stie | 2000 St. A's | 2001 Lym | 2002 M'field | 2003 St.G's | 2004 Troon | 2005 St. A's | 2006 H'lake | 2007 C'stie | 2008 Royal Birkdale |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 112 | 185 | 84 | 117 | 115 | 112 | 197 | 148 | 106 | 93 | 112 | 96 | 113 | 123 |
| 214 | 501 | 344 | 355 | 539 | 148 | 557 | 359 | 388 | 393 | 252 | 352 | 442 | 472 |
| 201 | 577 | 272 | 406 | 468 | 164 | 547 | 372 | 405 | 371 | 203 | 353 | 482 | 379 |
| 130 | 269 | 107 | 226 | 202 | 65 | 224 | 175 | 149 | 148 | 100 | 183 | 189 | 219 |
| 156 | 271 | 136 | 153 | 265 | 71 | 257 | 169 | 181 | 185 | 121 | 204 | 198 | 198 |
| 701 | 1618 | 859 | 1140 | 1474 | 448 | 1585 | 1078 | 1123 | 1097 | 676 | 1092 | 1311 | 1268 |

(Below) Alan Magee, from Remedy Oak GC



(Below) John Maree, from Bolton Old Links GC





(Above, central) John Keenaghan from Chipping Sodbury GC

Golden Nuggets supplied by BIGGA Support Team

Thursday....

Jeff Quinney broke his driver in anger, smashing it on the floor on the 17th tee after tee shot. He then went on to have a birdie on the same hole. Information supplied by Open Support Team Member, James Blacklock from Ellesmere GC.

Despite concerns about fading light and finishing at 945pm, Yoshinobu Tsukada played wearing his sunglasses all the way round. Information supplied by Open Support Team Member, John Berry from Dunheved GC, Australia.

On the 10th Paul Waring's 2nd shot went wide, right off the green landing and was found inside a spectator's umbrella. Information supplied by Open Support Team Member, Asa English from Charnwood Forest GC.

Friday...

On the 8th hole, as Colin Montgomerie arrived on the green, the crowd shouted 'give us a smile Monty', he gladly obliged after sinking a 20' footer for a birdie 3 – a smile bigger than a Cheshire cat. Information supplied by Open Support Team Member, Anthony Davies from Prestbury GC.

On the 12th, Lucas Glover's tee shot landed straight in a spectator's pocket. Information supplied by Open Support Team Member, Andrew Williamson from Delamere Forest GC.

Saturday...

A bunker on the 10th had to be raked due to Kevin Sadler's caddie's cap blowing into it. Information supplied by Open Support Team Member, Frederik Seeger from Kuamby GC, Sweden.

Due to windy conditions, a kind marshall fell over trying to stop Scott Verplank's scorecard from blowing away. Information supplied by Open Support Team Member, Jon Evans from Carden Park GC.

Sunday...

On the 16th Ernie Els asked the ref: 'Have these greens been cut? Can you find out.' Information supplied by Open Support Team Member, Jeremy Hughes from Vale of Llangollen GC.



Past chairman, Billy McMillan with board member, Tony Smith



Greenkeeper at Charnwood Forest Golf Club, Asa English, among the media at the last game of the championship



James Blacklock from Ellesmere GC, with a signed Pdraig Aarrington ball