

A DAY TO REMEMBER

The 2008 BIGGA National Golf Championship, sponsored by Kubota, is being played at a fantastic venue which was once looked after by one of BIGGA's favourite sons.

In the mid-80s East Sussex National was known as one of the first high profile golf clubs, which offered superb facilities for those with pockets deep enough to pay the debenture.

More recently East Sussex National, in greenkeeping circles, was associated with Course Manager, Raymond Day, the larger than life BIGGA

Board of Management member whose life was cut short by cancer in January 2007.

It is, therefore, fitting that this October East Sussex National should be the venue for the BIGGA National Golf Championship, sponsored by Kubota, giving BIGGA members the opportunity to see at first hand the course which Ray managed for the final four years of his life and which has since been taken on by Ray's Deputy, and current Course Manager, Scott Litchfield.

It is a truly majestic golfing venue - two courses, the East and West, were designed by Bob Cupp, a former associate of Jack Nicklaus - which will test the finest golfers BIGGA can muster, but also offer ample opportunities for those who succumb to the challenge to relax and enjoy themselves in sumptuous surroundings.

We will make sure the course is prepared to a standard Ray would be proud of, said Scott, as we sat in the foyer of the superb new hotel which opened in 2006 and which is located on the site of the old maintenance facilities.

BIGGA will play on the East, a stadium course, which hosted the European Open in 1993 and '94. The West, is regarded as more of a members' course and is more tree lined.

Scott maintains the two courses in the same manner, treating them very much as 36 holes together rather than two 18s.

"You've got to be sensible and utilise the staff as well as you can so it is a lot better to treat it as one big golf course. If a guy goes out cutting the rough he doesn't just stick to one course he goes around the course using the most economical route.

"We have a lot of competitions and corporate events for which we hand cut. For example we have one of the top amateur events, the Tillman Trophy, and a televised Europro event coming up and we will be hand cutting for them and we will do the same for the BIGGA Championship."

Scott has recently reintroduced the long fescue rough for which the club was known in its early years and which looked stunning. It had been cut back to help improve the pace of play.

"We decided to surprise the members this



FEATURE

ENTRY FORM

Please select the relevant category:

- Greenkeeper Member
 Associate Member

The entry fee of £110 includes all golf fees, lunch both days and dinner on Monday evening. Please note that there is no accommodation provided.

Name _____

Address _____

Post Code _____

Mobile _____

E-mail _____

Membership Number _____

Handicap _____

BIGGA Section _____

Payment method (please tick)

- I enclose my cheque made payable to 'BIGGA' value £110
 Please debit my Mastercard/ Switch / Visa / Delta card with the fee of £110

Card number _____

Start Date _____

Expiry Date _____

Last 3 security digits _____

Issue No. (Switch/Delta only) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Or E-mail your details to sandra@bigga.co.uk but ensure you receive confirmation of entry by return E-mail. Deadline for entry is 8th September 2008.

Completed entry forms should be sent to:
BIGGA National Championship, BIGGA House, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF

The main tournament for the Challenge Trophy will be played over 36 holes, medal play, with the best overall gross score producing the BIGGA National Champion, who must be a greenkeeper member. The greenkeeper player with the lowest nett score will be presented with the BIGGA Challenge Cup.

There will be prizes for 1st, 2nd, 3rd over 36 holes in both the nett and gross categories, additionally after each day of 18 holes there will be prizes for winners of handicap divisions. The BIGGA Regional Team Cup and prize will be calculated from the 8 best nett scores over the first day of play. If you have a poor first day, you may wish to elect to play in an alternative Stableford competition, that will be held on the second day of play.

Rooms are available at the East Sussex National at a rate of £85.00pp B & B for single occupancy, £60pp B & B sharing twin room. To book telephone 01825 880088 and select hotel enquiries then reception options.

year by leaving the rough to grow and we've had nothing but compliments. It is not as close to the fairway as before - we have semi rough and the long stuff is sensibly placed but it does add to the golfing experience."

The team currently comprises of 21, including two gardeners, plus Archie the dog, a team member so well trained he retracts his claws when walking on greens in canine softspikes!

"I have a superb team. Many of them were here when Ray was in charge so they've come through a lot, but they are committed and talented and it is the best team I've been involved with," explained Scott, who just happens to be Archie's owner.

The other major project the team are currently undertaking is the ongoing renovation of the bunkering and there are over 90 on the East and more than 60 on the West.

When the course was built it was constructed to a high spec, part of which was to put a layer of gravel and then a liner between the sand and the base. Over time these have been repaired and patched up and we have taken the decision to remove all the liners and replace all the drainage.

"It is a project we are carrying out in-house, as we do with most projects, But early on we discovered why they had been built that way. As each winter progresses the clay base turns to liquid and mixes with the sand binding with the bottom layer and, in the summer, cracks, bring parts of the base to the surface through raking.

"It doesn't happen with every bunker on the site, but it means those that are affected will have to be redone every few years, maybe

even relined."

Scott is 35, but he was several years younger just a few months ago. That was before fusarium made a major strike on the course late last year.

We got it in November and December and it spread across the whole site and every green. We knew why we were susceptible as we have a very low Cation Exchange Capacity - the ability to retain nutrients in the soil and keep the plant healthy leading up to winter, but it was tough to get on top of it. I called on all my contacts within the industry including a consultant, all agreeing we had tried everything we could and should when you get fusarium.

The real problem was trying to get the members to appreciate the situation, as some of them misunderstood completely what they thought it was. Members were searching the internet thinking they could come up with magic answers.

Having come through the nightmare and with a plan in place to build up CEC levels Scott can look back and reflect.

"It certainly made me a better Course Manager and it was probably the first time I really understood the pressures that can be experienced and anyone who thinks it is easy, it is not, said Scott, who has since improved communications with the membership to ensure they are kept informed of course matters."

Scott found his way into greenkeeping via an unusual route.

"I was a trainee manager for Tesco but I was fed up with going to work in the dark, coming home in the dark and not seeing any daylight.





So I quit, went to America and skied in Colorado for four months.

“When I came back I didn’t know what I wanted to do so my mother went to the local college and asked what courses were available. There was thatching and greenkeeping and as I didn’t fancy standing off roofs all day I went for greenkeeping.”



Even if it did come from an exasperated mother trying to find some direction for her son she couldn’t have found a better match. Scott took to greenkeeping like a duck to water and never looked back.

The key to his progression came when he worked at Shrivenham Park in Swindon.

“I worked for a great guy called Jason Taylor, who was very focussed and passionate about the industry. He told me that you never get anywhere if you just sit around. You had to move about.”

Scott took Jason at his word and applied for a seasonal job at Loch Lomond, giving up the full time post at Shrivenham.

“I took a real chance by going to Loch Lomond but after a season Ken Seims offered me a full time position.”

Scott stayed for five years gaining invaluable experience preparing a top 50 golf course for regular televised tournaments rising to become a First Assistant before moving to East Sussex National



as Head Greenkeeper of the East Course. There is longstanding link between Loch Lomond and East Sussex with Ken Seims and Mike Wattam both having worked at both clubs before Scott made the same switch.

When Mike left Ray Day took over as Course



Manager with Scott becoming Assistant Course Manager.

"He was a really tough cookie and the hardest boss I've ever had. He was very demanding and expected a lot from his guys, but he really did care for his staff and had them very close to his heart, although he didn't always show it," said Scott.

The day Ray told everyone of his cancer was one that Scott will never forget.

He insisted on getting everyone together. He stood there and explained the situation. It was very emotional and I had to finish off the meeting for him. You learn how to look after turf, but not how to do these sorts of things. No-one trains you for it."

Looking to the future Ray sat down with Scott and explained how to do the paperwork side of the job and spent a lot of time preparing Scott for a future that he might not see.

"He achieved a lot in the four years he was at the club and definitely left an improved golf course for me to take on," said Scott.

It is fitting, therefore, that the 2008 BIGGA Golf Championship, sponsored by Kubota, is played on Ray's course and that it will be followed the very next day by the Ray Day Memorial Tournament.

"I want everyone to come here and enjoy themselves," said Scott.

Everyone who knew Ray will know that is exactly what he would have wanted.



Kubota (U.K.) Ltd Company Profile

Formed in 1979 and based at Thame, Oxfordshire, Kubota (U.K.) Limited is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Kubota Corporation of Japan.

The Kubota Corporation was established in 1890 as a manufacturer of cast-iron products in Osaka, Japan before turning its attention towards powered equipment in the early 1920s. Kubota is now represented in every continent, is one of the world's largest manufacturers of industrial diesel engines under 110 HP and is recognised as a world leader in compact tractors, diesel ride-on mowers and mini diggers.

Introducing the first compact tractors into the UK in the mid 1970s, Kubota remains the best selling compact tractor in the UK today. The company puts this success down to the highest of manufacturing standards in its Japanese and American factories, product reliability, durability and low running costs as well as excellent resale values.

Although a Japanese corporation, Kubota is keen to ensure that the national subsidiaries are run by the people who know the local market best. Dedicated support for Kubota equipment starts at Kubota (U.K.) Ltd's Oxfordshire headquarters, which house the company's distribution, service and parts support, training and product development and sales and marketing teams.

Over the years Kubota has pioneered new innovations in engine, tractor and mini digger design, put environmental issues at the forefront of its business and, with its dealers, developed a superb after sales programme.

Both commercial and domestic users of Kubota machines are looked after by a network of specialist appointed dealers, many of which are multi branch operations. First point of contact for sales, parts, service and warranty, Kubota dealers are trained to assist customers in choosing the correct machine or power unit for their application and when a Kubota investment is put to work, factory-trained dealer parts and service staff

ensure it is kept operating at peak efficiency. The Thame Headquarters hold an extensive parts inventory and a technical support centre that provides training and practical help to ensure excellent after sales care, regardless of the age of a Kubota machine.

The golf market has always played an important strategic role for Kubota. With so many courses in the UK and Ireland, and the popularity of the game, golf is a superb shop window for the Kubota machines. Kubota (U.K.) Ltd is also the market leader in the golf market for compact tractors and without this sector Kubota (U.K.) Ltd would not have such a strong sales record in the 30-60 horsepower market.

"The golf industry has been very good to us over the past 30 years and what you can't replace in the golf course sector is credibility," explained Dave Roberts, Kubota (U.K.) Ltd's Sales and Marketing Manager.

"As the major organisation for the golf greenkeeping fraternity, we see many positives in being involved with BIGGA and consider it to be a very important part of our business."

"We have always enjoyed an excellent relationship with BIGGA as a Gold Key member and are delighted to be sponsoring the BIGGA National Championship again this year. The opportunity to sponsor the prestigious event for a second year running was an easy decision to make. We look forward to a competitive tournament and meeting up with friends old and new," concluded Dave.

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