

# SPLISH, SPLASH. I WAS...ER, PLAYING GOLF?

**The National Championship, sponsored by Kubota, didn't enjoy the best of weather but when it came to the golf the cream certainly rose to the top. Scott MacCallum reports from East Sussex National GC.**

First things first. No-one drowned or was blown away. I say that because the weather on the opening day of the 2008 BIGGA National Championship, sponsored by Kubota was such that either scenario was perfectly feasible.

The rain and wind combination was truly horrendous and it is a tribute to East Sussex National's Course Manager, Scott Litchfield and his men, that they got the West Course playable at all.

As it was, the two day medal competition was

shelved and became a Stableford on the opening day with a one day medal on the second, over the East Course.

The rain had begun on Saturday night and didn't stop until the middle of the Sunday afternoon but it didn't stop the greenstaff from preparing a superb test for a field of very talented BIGGA members. With preferred lies in operation tee shots were producing splashes of water when they landed and balls were plugging all over the course. It makes it all the more remarkable that the greens were as fast as they were true. Countless players were racing their ball past because they couldn't equate the horrible conditions with greens of such pace.

The Championship was sponsored for the second successive year by Kubota, who were

represented by Sales and Marketing Director for Tractor and Groundscare Products, Dave Roberts, and Colin Hennah, the local Area Manager. Colin had to stand in on the photographs when Dave had to leave on Monday morning for a meeting.

But despite everything some great golf was played and history made as +1 handicapper, David Simpson, from Crieff GC, became the first man successfully to defend the BIGGA Challenge Trophy, and thus become the Champion Golfer of the Association for the second time in a row.

Playing with two other +1 handicappers David emerged on top with a fine round of 74 giving him a two shot advantage over the rest of the field.

"I wasn't expecting to win as I'd been poor most of the season but I'm absolutely delighted to become the first person to defend the title.





Neil Geiring, Archie, and Scott Litchfield enjoy a laugh



Kenny Mackay tees off

"I'd much rather have played it over 36 holes but the weather was against us but I'd say it was a better test of golf than last year and the field was stronger with more low handicappers in it," said David, who along with his work colleague and fellow competitor, Tom Adams, had a 12 hour drive to get home, arriving at 7.30am the next morning.

David scrambled well over the early holes until he got into the swing, but he felt that he had missed a few opportunities on the way home.

"The greens were superb, but extremely tricky to read," he said.

"I am hoping to return to Burnham and Berrow next year to try and make it three in a row but it will be a tall order," said the 30 year-old.

With the destination of the Challenge Trophy

being fought out among the elite golfers in the field, the Challenge Cup for Best Nett was a realistic target for the majority of the field, and it was a closely contested affair.

The man who emerged with the spoils was 14 handicapper, David Fellows, Course Manager at Cocks Moors Wood GC, with a score of 70.

Ironically the first time I saw David play during the Championship was on the 3rd of the West Course the previous day when he four putted. He obviously used that day to hone his game for a determined assault on the main event the following day. It worked!

Fellow David – Fellows – had finished in the prizes a couple of times in the last four years but this year rose to the top.

"It's the biggest thing I've ever one. Anything

with the word "National" attached to it is special while it's against my peers on some very special golf courses," said David.

He was five over at the turn and in good shape and then went par, bogey, par bogey to give himself a real chance but a double bogey, double bogey finish meant he just scraped home.

"I'd targeted bogeying every hole on the way home but it didn't quite happen but that's why I'm a 14 handicapper."

On that four putt the previous day David took the positive from it.

"I knew then that it was all about the putting and getting the speed of the greens and I worked on that. It was down to hard work and luck on the day," said David, for who next year's venue of Burnham and Berrow is one of his favourite courses.



All the trophy winners

The Associate Competition was a real nail-biter! Andrew Cornes, of Acorn Golf, finished like a train, with a magnificent final four holes, including a par at the intimidating final hole par-4, to claw his way to the top of the leaderboard and lift the inaugural BIGGA Challenge Bowl.

The Sunday Stableford actually suited the players closer to the rear of the field as the weather improved dramatically after lunch and Brian Robinson, of Belton Woods GC, took advantage with a superb 37 pts.

The Regional Team Trophy was played for over the second day and the South East Region

made full use of home advantage clinching an eight shot win over the Midland Region.

Next year's BIGGA National Championship will be played at the superb Somerset links of Burnham & Berrow GC, near Weston-super-Mare, on October Monday 5 and Tuesday 6, 2009.

"It was great to be involved with the National Championship again this year, to see some familiar faces as well as meeting many new competitors. Although the weather did its best on Sunday, there was no dampening the commitment and enthusiasm of the players in the competition, and they were rewarded with some great weather on

the Monday," said Dave Roberts.

"Congratulations to David who won the consecutive title for the first time I believe. I am sure that made the long journey home to Crieff much shorter. The organisation by BIGGA and the excellent facilities at East Sussex National, made this a special event again and all of us at Kubota were very proud to sponsor the tournament again," said Dave, who showed his own golfing prowess with a few holes in the slightly better weather on the Sunday afternoon in the company of John Pemberton and myself.



BIGGA Challenge Cup winner, David Fellows (left) and BIGGA Challenge Trophy winner, David Simpson (right).

## RESULTS

### BIGGA Challenge Trophy (Best Gross)

- David Simpson, Crieff GC, 74
- 2. Lawrie Tremlett, Lewes GC, 76, (BIH)
- 3. Gary Burgess, Grange Park GC, 76

### BIGGA Challenge Cup (Best Nett)

- David Fellows, Cocks Moors Wood GC, 70
- 2. Darren Burton, North Foreland GC, 71
- 3. David Badham, Stockley Park GC, 73

### BIGGA Challenge Plate (Stableford)

- Brian Robinson, Belton Woods GC, 37pts
- 2. Antony Kirwan, Lexden Wood GC, 36pts
- 3. John Ganley, North Warwickshire GC, 35pts
- 4. Chris Bitten, Stoneham GC, 34pts

### BIGGA Challenge Bowl (Associate Prize)

- Andrew Cornes, Acorn Golf, 82 (Nett)

### Handicap Prizes

- +1-5 Mark Blacknell, Nottingham City GC, 73 (Nett)
- 6-12 Graeme Millar, Pitlochry GC, 73 (Nett)
- 13-24 Stuart Playle, Sandy Lodge GC, 81 (Nett)
- Nearest the Pin, Mark Blacknell, Nottingham City
- Longest Drive, George Morgan, The Mendip GC

### Regional Team Trophy

- 1. South East. 445. J. Hughes, 76; B. Wallis, 76; M. Henderson, 75; D. Badham, 73 G. Branchett, 74; D. Burton, 71.
- 2. Midland. 453. S. Scott, 76; J. Ganley, 78; K. MacKay, 77; M. Blacknell, 73, B Holt, 79; D. Fellows, 70.