

Welcome



Thanks Nick!

Sometimes a positive can come out of a negative. Perhaps a cliché, but like most clichés there is some truth to it.

That's what I feel about this year's Ryder Cup. If Europe had performed to the level expected of them the 16.5-11.5 scoreline could easily have been reversed. If that happened the Americans would have experienced four defeats in a row, three of them thumpings and the excitement levels would have dropped. Not to the same scale, of course, but it would have harked back to the days of American dominance when it was more an exhibition of great golf than a contest.

That was remedied when the rest of Europe – Seve, Bernhard et al – were brought in and the matches from '83 to 2002 became the most exciting events in all of sport, Nip and tuck, no-one could have made a fortune by predicting the outcome and that goes for the overall match score as well as the individual games.

But thanks to Nick Faldo it's levelled the playing field and it's game on again.

Right from the off, and his omission of the in-form Ryder Cup specialist, Darren Clarke, Faldo made a right pig's ear of his Captaincy. There were the photographed pairings which he described as sandwich lists; his David Brent-like speeches; his bizarre pairings – fourball specialists playing foursomes and rear-loading his singles when a fast start was required.

And what was he doing while his guys were in need of his support on the final afternoon? He was tossing cans of beer to the gallery and discussing matters with one of those men known only by one name – not Seve, Monty, Woosie, Ollie or even Tiger. Faldo was seen picking the brains of Spooky! Whatever the outcome of that particular Brain's Trust it didn't change the course of events and Europe went down with a whimper. Only General Custer could really look up to Faldo in terms of leadership.

But the good news is that when Terry Matthews and Jim McKenzie welcome the teams to Celtic Manor, it will be a much more inviting contest. America will be fired up to retain the Cup and will have Tiger Woods back in the team, while Europe will be looking to return to the form which made them dominate the early part of the Millennium. It's an exciting prospect.

One thing that does disappoint in terms of the Ryder Cup is that only those people with access to satellite television can watch the matches live. I know Sky paid for the rights to watch but it's a shame that it leaves the majority of the population to listen to the excellent Radio Five Live coverage or wait for the highlights which are on either extremely late at night or even the next day.

Golf would receive a huge popularity boost if the Ryder Cup, one of the greatest sporting events on any calendar, could be watched by golfers and non-golfers young or old.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott'.

CRICKET GROUNDSMEN HONOURED AT LORD'S

Four groundsmen were honoured recently at the home of cricket as they each received a Cricket World & Pitchcare Cricket Groundsman of the Year Award for 2008.

The awards, now in their fifth year, recognise the hard work and high standards achieved by cricket groundsmen in the recreational game and are split into four categories – ICC Europe, educational establishment, private club and local authority.

Treble the nominations were received for this year's awards compared to last year.

The presentations were made to the winners Ian Vautier, Phillip McCormick, Les Stephens and Graeme Flett by Head ECB Pitch Advisor Chris Wood and Director of ICC Europe, Richard Holdsworth, in the presence of sponsors and invited guests. In the morning, the winners took to their Executive Box seats to watch the Cocks spur Cup Club Cricket Final between Malden Wanderers and Kibworth and enjoyed lunch at the Lord's Tavern. Unfortunately, the weather closed in during the afternoon and the match will be replayed, however, the winners were taken on a behind the scenes tour of the ground facilities by Chris Wood which was an experience of a lifetime.



CAMPAIGN URGES INDUSTRY TO CHECK YOUR SPRAYER

The importance of well-maintained and carefully calibrated spraying equipment is being emphasised in a new campaign by the Amenity Forum.

Launched at this year's Saltex show, 'Check Your Sprayer' is aimed at everyone in the amenity sector whose job involves the spraying of pesticides.

The Amenity Forum has received sponsorship from Scotts to produce a leaflet, sticker and dedicated website to assist managers and operators in this key component of 'Best Practice'.

The leaflet and website contain essential information on how to comply with the Code of Practice including when equipment should be checked, who should check it, what training is required and what to record.

The Knapsack Operator Checklist stickers can be affixed to their sprayer where they will serve as a reminder to check the equipment each and every time it is used.

More comprehensive information is available at www.checkyoursprayer.co.uk