

So Nearly a Miracle!

Scott MacCallum, reports back from Turnberry on the work of BIGGA's Open Support Team

Had Tom Watson not struck his 8-iron to the final green quite so purely and left himself 20 feet from the hole rather than through the back, against the collar of rough, we would have been talking about the greatest sporting, not just golfing, achievement of all time.

That 8-iron left him with a trickyish up and down which, under the pressure of the occasion, increased the difficulty factor by quite a bit. That aside his third shot, a putt, wasn't great and the eight footer it left him to win the Championship was certainly no gimmie. Under the circumstances holing it would have taxed even the great Tiger but Watson will be disappointed by his effort – a dribbly one, reminiscent of one of mine, which didn't threaten, or even reach, the hole.

Tom's disappointment was matched by that of the gallery, who had willed him on, not just over the Sunday afternoon but on every one of the 72 holes, and although everyone there still held out some hope it was inevitable that the redoubtable Stewart Cink would prove too tough a nut to crack in the play-off.

So it proved – Cink's 2 under-par for the four play-off holes would have won against most players and certainly a nearly 60 year-old, who had dealt with the stresses of being on the upper reaches of the leaderboard since day one.

Cink played extremely well to get into the play-off, birdieing the 15th and 18th, and had it not been that he deprived Watson, and the gallery, would have been much more warmly received as Champion.

While it was "What might have been" for Watson it was very much a case of "fulfilment" for George Brown. George arrived at Turnberry in November 1985 just before the '86 Open, and over the 24 years in charge, together with his team, has built on the quality and presentation of the Ailsa Course to the extent that it was the real star of the show.

The players had nothing but praise for the course and the television pictures, particularly the aerial shots, were absolutely stunning.

George did a wonderful job and looked proud as punch as he stood on the 18th green at the presentation ceremony. As a send off it couldn't have been bettered and he retired a short later to take up a consultancy/ambassadorial role. He is succeeded by Euan Grant, who joined Turnberry in January and supported George over the last seven months.

BIGGA's marquee was a change from the norm. Instead of being positioned in the tented village alongside the Home Unions and the Stewards' Association this year it was to be found in a unit of the hospitality village. It was certainly less easy to find than usual but was

Ed Ainsworth and his young scoreboard carrier pose for a picture





George Brown talks to the Support Team during the Wednesday evening briefing

a super facility, with reception area and raised decking and the finest toilets to be found anywhere.

Guests were welcomed from all over the golfing world and enjoyed the hospitality on offer.

As usual The Open Championship provided members with memories they will keep for the rest of their lives.

The players are very good at handing out balls to those who walk around with them and there are many Support Team members who have gone home with golf balls from the top players. Some are signed and some carry identifying marks that indicate who they belonged to. Stuart Appleby's balls all carry a stamp of a bee and an apple for example while Tiger Woods' balls are all printed with his name.

The man with the honour of walking with the first match on the opening day was waved off by his colleagues as he headed to the 1st tee for the 6.30am match. He had to be called back though as he'd forgotten one thing – his rake! No names mentioned but his picture is elsewhere in this feature.

The winner was brought home on the final day by John France, of Fursticher GC, in Germany while the man who walked with Watson and raked the one bunker he found was Douglas McIntosh, of Cathkin Braes GC.

Friday was a big day in the life of Paul Jenkins, of Westridge Golf

Centre, on the Isle of Wight. A 50th birthday doesn't come along very often and Paul spent his on the 1st tee of the Open Championship sporting his 50 badge. He was presented with a card signed by the entire team, plus Ryder Cup Captain, Bernard Gallacher, who happened to be in the Hospitality Village.

Keith Kemp was minding his own business on the 18th fairway on the final round when Luke Donald gestured over. Keith looked behind him thinking Luke may have been waving to a friend in the gallery but no, it was him.. He walked over to Luke, wondering what it might be for, to be told "Walk beside me and you'll get yourself on television."

Board Member, Jeff Mills, showed a Tom Watson-like ability to defy age and drew the admiration of the younger members of the team on Saturday night in the Auchincruive College bar with his skill in the beer bottle game. The game involved keeping feet still and crawling out across the floor holding beer bottles before stretching out and placing one of the bottles as far out as possible. Then, holding the single bottle, the idea was to slide back to where you. Showing the core strength of a man half his age Jeff left most of the fellow competitors on his wake.

Many thanks to all the Support Team members who gave up their time to work at The Open.

Under the spotlight. David Harfield rakes the bunker found most during the week at the rear of the 15th on the final day after both Jim Furyk and Retief Goosen found sand



Turnberry man, Denis Tweedle, shows the Support Team how they want the bunkers raked



BIGGA Titbits

A mouse ran in front of Luke Donald as he prepared to play his second shot to the 10th and nearly up a camera man's trousers.

Information supplied by Douglas McIntosh, of Cathkin Braes Golf Club and a member of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

Bryce Molder's putt on the 11th green stopped on the edge of the hole and after about 20 seconds dropped in.

However the referee said that it had passed the time allowed to wait for a ball to drop and he had to make do with a par instead of a birdie.

It was an eventful day for Molder as he also hit a spectator full toss on the head and compensated the victim with one of his gloves.

Information supplied by Aaron Small, of Donaghadee Golf Club, County Down and a member of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

A ball spotter working on Colin Montgomerie's match was removed from inside the ropes after walking in the Ryder Cup Captain's line twice and then arguing with him when Monty confronted him.

Information supplied by Terry Crawford, of Clondeboye Golf Club, and a member of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

Ryo Ishikawa lost his ball on the island bunker on the 10th hole. An army of helpers converged from all angles to help find it leaving the poor BIGGA Support Team member to rake the entire bunker of footprints once the ball had been located.

Information supplied by (that poor greenkeeper) Robert Sandilands, of Elsham Golf Club and a Member of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

Azuka Yano's approach to the 5th struck a lady spectator on the head and bounced over the back of the stand. A medic was called and a young spectator passed out while watching the lady being attended.

Information supplied by Oliver Pennington, of La Moye Golf Club and a Member of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

An over excited spectator following the final match on the 12th hole shouted at the players in the group, stole a bin and ran off laughing.

Information supplied by Scott Gibson, of St Enodoc GC, and a Member of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.

Brandon Grace birdied the 13th hole after driving the 410 yard hole and two putting.

Information supplied by Philip Cooper, of Milton Abbey School, and a Member of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team.





ABOVE LEFT: The Support Team
 INSET LEFT: Paul Jenkins celebrated a significant milestone on the Friday.
 BELOW LEFT: An unusual sight. A promotion for a gin company created some attention
 INSET ABOVE: Dale Robertson had the honour of taking the first game on Thursday
 RIGHT: Robert Meikle leads the way on the Friday.
 BELOW: Complete Bunker Stats since 1995

	1995 St. A's	1996 Lythm	1997 Troon	1998 B'dale	1999 C'stie	2000 St. A's	2001 Lythm	2002 M'field	2003 St.G's	2004 Troon	2005 St. A's	2006 Hlake	2007 C'stie	2008 Birkdale	2009 T'berry
Bnkrs	112	185	84	117	115	112	197	148	106	93	112	96	113	123	85
Rd 1	214	501	344	355	539	148	557	359	388	393	252	352	442	472	272
Rd 2	201	577	272	406	468	164	547	372	405	371	203	353	482	379	332
Rd 3	130	269	107	226	202	65	224	175	149	148	100	183	189	219	172
Rd 4	156	271	136	153	265	71	257	169	181	185	121	204	198	198	185
Total	701	1618	859	1140	1474	448	1585	1078	1123	1097	676	1092	1311	1268	961