

A week to remember

This year's Open was a huge success, in no small part, due to the great work of the home greenkeeping team and the BIGGA Open Support Team







The 2011 Open Championship will go down as one of the most memorable of recent times, as it produced a hugely popular winner.

Darren Clarke, son of greenkeeper, Godfrey Clarke, must have looked at his younger Northern Irish compatriots, Graeme McDowell and Rory McIlroy, who'd won the US Open Championship in successive years, and thought, "That could have been me."

He'd been one of the world's top golfers for many years but slipped down the rankings in recent times and many experts were writing him off.

However, now he, G Mac and Rory will be forever linked as a threesome and will enjoy legendary status in a country which loves its golf.

The other heroes of the week were

the green staff, led by Graham Royden, who had his Head Greenkeeper position confirmed as permanent a couple of weeks before the Championship.

Graham was calm and in control throughout, comfortable in the knowledge that his own team, and the BIGGA Open Support Team, could handle everything that could be thrown at them. While the weather was not perfect, with high winds and torrential rain on occasions, play was never interrupted and the condition of the course was universally praised.

Indeed, Charl Schwartzel, the Masters Champion, told Graham that his were the best greens he'd played on all year. Think about that for a moment.

Graham had such confidence in the work of the Support Team that by the weekend he was employing two members of it to double cut the 17th and 18th greens, while they

had also prepared the putting and chipping greens for the entire week.

The team also prepared all 104 bunkers at the start of each day, as well as on dummy runs conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings. Overall in Championship play the team raked 1016 bunkers which were found.

The team has now raked 17,958 bunkers since statistics began being recorded in 1995 (see below).

Congratulations to Graham Royden and his team and the entire BIGGA Open Support Team. It was a job well done.

	1995 St. A's	1996 Lythm	1997 Troon	1998 B'dal e	1999 C'stie	2000 St. A's	2001 Lythm	2002 Mfield	2003 St.Gs
Bnkrs	112	185	84	117	115	112	197	148	106
Rd 1	214	501	344	355	539	148	557	359	388
Rd 2	201	577	272	406	468	164	547	372	405
Rd 3	130	269	107	226	202	65	224	175	149
Rd 4	156	271	136	153	265	71	257	169	181
Total	701	1618	859	1140	1474	448	1585	1078	1123



MAIN PHOTO: The triumphant BIGGA Open Support Team

FAR LEFT: The Royal St George's Team visit the BIGGA marquee

ABOVE LEFT and ABOVE: Billy McMillan and Gavin Robson rake a bunker on the 6th

LEFT: Chris Holdham enjoying his day

	2004 Troon	2005 St. A's	2006 Hlake	2007 C'stie	2008 Birkdale	2009 T'berry	2010 St A's	2011 St G's
Bnkrs	93	112	96	113	123	85	112	104
Rd 1	393	252	352	442	472	272	149	291
Rd 2	371	203	353	482	379	332	200	391
Rd 3	148	100	183	189	219	172	77	175
Rd 4	185	121	204	198	198	185	85	159
Total	1097	676	1092	1311	1268	961	511	1016

Blog highlights

Extracts from blogs which originally appeared on the BIGGA website throughout the week

Anthony Stockwell, Wednesday

On the Tuesday and Wednesday mornings I was on the Prep team and was particularly pleased to be asked to double cut the putting green and chipping green along with Gavin Robson on the Wednesday.

I've just learned that I've drawn the opening match tomorrow so it looks like another early start.

It has been great to meet up with Graham Royden, the Royal St George's Head Greenkeeper. He is very calm and taking everything in his stride. It has also been good to meet the Support Team guys who also arrived early to assist with the Pre runs and I'm looking forward to meeting the rest of the team later today.

Graham Royden, Saturday

I've not had one complaint during the entire week and the players have actually been seeking me out to comment on the course. I spoke with Tom Watson, who said that the greens were fantastic. Unfortunately it was before his hole-in-one as I would have loved to congratulate him on the feat. It was absolutely incredible and a great story for The Open.

Charl Schwartzel said they were the best greens he'd putted on all year and bearing in mind he won The Masters earlier in the year it was quite a compliment. All the feedback has been so positive.

The BIGGA guys have been absolutely fantastic. There has been a team tending to all the bunkers every morning and they've been immaculate. I've also managed to persuade the team to do some cutting for me.

Since Wednesday they have cut the practice putting and chipping green while, today, I've asked them also to cut the 17th and 18th greens. I've checked the lines and it goes without saying that they were true. This has really helped my guys, especially with the double cutting, as it means we can get ahead of the game. I'm going to get them to do the 17th and 18th greens again tomorrow.

Bruce Hicks, Saturday

This is my first time on the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support team and I have been one of the mini bus drivers.

I've been to several Opens as a spectator but experiencing from inside the ropes is just amazing. Walking up the 18th fairway with the stands all full must be like appearing at Wembley for the Cup Final. You get the thrill without the pressure.

I did expect to work hard this week but it is much more demanding than I envisaged. The days can be very long but the experience of being here more than makes up for it.

BIGGA's organisation of the event is first class – it virtually runs on rails with everyone knowing exactly where they should be at any one time and what they should be doing.

I will most definitely be applying for the Support Team in the future as it really is an experience not to be missed by anyone with a passion for golf and greenkeeping.

To sum things up I would just say that this is one "Sandwich" that you will never get indigestion from, but just the odd bit of backache!

Beverly Blair, Friday

I was very nervous but excited yesterday morning when I woke up at 3.40am. I made some coffee, had a shower and got into my uniform for the day.

I was in the third match out with Gregory Havret, Charley Hoffman and Marcus Brier and we teed off at 6.52.

I raked my first bunker of the day, a greenside one by the 1st, and that settled my nerves. Altogether I had five bunkers to rake which I believe was about average.

It was a real honour to be inside the ropes. You put your shoulders back and walk with your head held high. Experiencing The Open this way makes up for every wet, early morning, when your members don't see all the work you are doing out on the golf course.



TOP: Anthony Stockwell with BIGGA starter prepare for the first game of the week.
 ABOVE: Graham Royden relaxes at The Golf Writers' Dinner.
 BELOW: Martin Wood is congratulated by Andrew Mellon on winning the Everris BIGGA Bunker Competition



RIGHT: Adam Matthews, with one of the early matches
 FAR RIGHT: The Sherriff Amenity sponsored internet points proved a huge success
 MAIN BELOW: Lewis Birch was one of the Support Team members with the honour of cutting the 18th green
 BOTTOM: Jim Croxton addresses the team
 BOTTOM RIGHT: The massive 4th hole bunker gets the Support Team treatment



Support team members, Beverly Blair and Vanja Drasler, get some raking practice in on the Wednesday evening



Open Championship Awards

The Bad Luck Horseshoe – Goes to Martin Dearlove, of Stanmore GC, who helped make the draw for the Sunday Matches on Saturday afternoon. The names of those Team members not with a game on Sunday were drawn out first and the first name that Martin drew was, you've guessed it, – Martin Dearlove.

The Homer Simpson "Doh!" Award – Goes to Adam Matthews, of Minchinhampton GC, who woke up in a panic on Saturday morning thinking that he'd missed his 5.15am minibus. Showing great resourcefulness he blagged a lift on one of the busses taking security staff to the course, only to learn when he got to Royal St George's that, in fact, there wasn't a 5.15am minibus and that he was scheduled to be on the one due to leave at 7.15am.

The Nostradamus Prize – Goes to Martin Wood, of Bedlingtonshire GC, who was only one bunker out in his prediction of how many were found during the week and won the £100 of M&S vouchers in the Everris-sponsored competition. He was so much more accurate than the might of the world media whose champion turned out to be John Huggan, of Golf World, who was 21 bunkers out and won £250 worth of M&S vouchers also donated by Everris.

The Burghley Park Award of Excellence – Burghley Park GC greenkeepers, Gary Salisbury and Steve Hopkins, were both on the team - Steve joined the staff after being selected for the Support Team. While raking during the second round both received rounds of applause from the galleries for their professional work, Gary at the 11th when he raked bunkers for Stuart Cink and Francesco Molinari, while Steve got the same when clearing up after Sergio Garcia and Luke Donald.

The Happy Birthday Cake – Shared by Golf Monthly magazine, which celebrated its 100th birthday with a party at Prince's Golf Club on the Thursday evening, and South East Regional Administrator, Clive Osgood, who celebrated a significant birthday during the week.

The Comedy BAFTA - Billy McMillan for his inspired routine in the University of Kent, Student Union on Saturday night. Billy arranged 20 hydraulic bar stools in a line in front of the bar and loaded up with Support Team staff and some innocent by-standers, facing in alternate directions. He then conducted a reverse Mexican wave as each person released the hydraulics in turn.



BIGGA Titbits

Nathan Green didn't have to look far for a ruling when he hit his tee shot into the back of a buggy on the 18th during the opening round – it was a Rule's buggy! -

Information supplied by **BIGGA Open Support Team Member, Anthony Stockwell, of The London Club.**

Anthony Kim missed the fairway on the 9th and struck the official who was holding the red and green flags square on the head. With blood pouring from the wound Kim apologised and helped by producing a towel from his bag to staunch the flow of blood.

Information supplied by **BIGGA Open Support Team Member, John Keenaghan, of Chipping Sodbury GC.**

Charl Schwartzel thought he'd missed the bunker on the 14th only for a spectator to head it back in. Painful!

Information supplied by **BIGGA Support Team member, Tony Smith, of Teesside Golf Club.**



TOP: Steve Mason brought home the winner on Sunday.
 MAIN ABOVE: The team on the eve of the Championship
 ABOVE: Ransomes Jacobsen rucksacks were as useful as ever
 LEFT: Early morning cutting of the 6th green