



National double for Gordon

A hole-in-one, a single shot deciding the winner over 36 holes of golf, glorious sunshine, low handicappers pushed to the limits – the 2013 BIGGA National Championship sponsored by Charterhouse and Kubota had it all. Steve Castle reports



Over eighty BIGGA members headed to the Red Course at Frilford Heath Golf Club with the aim of conquering 18 holes which had held European Tour qualifying just days previously – but most failed as the tough but fair course with its slick, undulating greens provided a superb test.

The players woke on the Monday morning to a brooding mist drifting across rural Oxfordshire – and last year's champion Oly Browning from Stocks Golf Club hit the first tee shot with some of the clouds still lingering. But these dissipated within half an hour to allow perfect golfing conditions to prevail. The official starters provided by the club was a lovely touch and really added to the sense of occasion as each competitors' name was announced, even if a few stray drives at the first betrayed the early nerves of some!

Gordon Sangster, reigning Scottish National Champion and third overall at the National at Irvine Bogside last year, was arguably the favourite heading into the tournament and showed why with a stunning two under par opening round of 70 – on a course he'd never previously played.

The plus two handicapper really hit his stride on the back nine, dropping just one shot and finishing with a flourish in the shape of three birdies.

One of the real highlights of the tournament came late on the first day, when Paul Davy from Porters Park Golf Club scored the fifth hole in one of his career on the 186-yard 9th. He said: "I hit a six-iron just short of the green, it bounced a few times and dropped in. It's always a good feeling to get a hole in one, but I had mixed feelings with this one. It's great to do it at the National and on a course like this but I'm really worried about the bar bill – it's a busy day!"

Antony Kirwan from Playgolf Colchester spoke for many of the competitors when he praised the condition of the course, and in particular the slick, undulating greens which had tested the pros the previous week and were now bewitching BIGGA members.

He said: "It's really tough, the greens are very, very quick. But ultimately it's great fun to play on a course like this and test yourself against it."

Dale Housden from Caddington Golf Club said: "I'm going to try and bring as many of the guys from Caddington across next year as possible, that's how much I've enjoyed it. The course is superb,

you have to be so accurate on the greens but that's how it should be. There's a lot of low handicappers here who want a challenge and it's certainly provided that."

The club, extremely welcoming throughout, then hosted the evening dinner, during which BIGGA Chairman Tony Smith presented Course Manager Sid Arrowsmith MG with a tankard, and complimented both the superb course and excellent hospitality. Tim Yates, Dealer Manager at Kubota, then presented the first day's prizes with Paul Davy's ace being rewarded with a bottle of champagne. The Midlands Region represented by David Grant, James Egerton, Oly Browning and Harry Larkins won the Team Championship trophy, presented to the Region with the lowest aggregate total of their four best scores.

The next morning the greenkeeping team were busy double cutting and ironing the greens as brilliant early morning sunshine gave way to a more overcast afternoon. Plus one handicapper James Dair from Toft House & Golf Course put himself right in contention for the coveted BIGGA Challenge Trophy – and £500 first prize – by carding a sensational 70 featuring five birdies. But Gordon held his nerve, securing pars on the testing final two holes to pip James by a single shot with a total of 147 – three shots

RESULTS & PRIZES

BIGGA CHALLENGE TROPHY - Best gross score

- 1) Gordon Sangster (Cathkin Braes Golf Club) - 70, 77 (147) £500
- 2) James Dair (Toft House & Golf Course) - 78, 70 (148) £300
- 3) Gary Burgess (Grange Park Golf Club) - 78, 71 (149) £250
- 4) James Egerton (Welwyn Garden City Golf Club) - 74, 76 (150) £150
- 5) Oly Browning (Stocks Golf Club) - 75, 76 (151) £100

BIGGA CHALLENGE CUP - Best nett score

- 1) Daniel Scott (Woburn Golf & Country Club) - 68, 72 (140)
- 2) Terry Cheese (Sandwell Park Golf Club) - 75, 73 (148)
- 3) Alastair Higgs (Windlesham Golf Club) - 73, 75 (148)

BIGGA CHALLENGE PLATE - Stableford Day Two only

Stewart Rogers (Orsett Golf Club) 36pts

BIGGA CHALLENGE BOWL - Affiliate

Andrew Cornes (BMS Ltd) 87, 88 (175)

HANDICAP WINNERS DAY ONE - Nett

- +2 - 5 David Grant (Cherwell Edge Golf Club) 67
- 06 - 12 Daniel Scott (Woburn Golf & Country Club) 68
- 13 - 24 Anthony Thacker (RAF Marham Golf Club) 77

HANDICAP WINNERS DAY TWO - Nett

- +2 - 5 Gary Burgess (Grange Park Golf Club) 68
- 06 - 12 Daniel Scott (Woburn Golf & Country Club) 72
- 13 - 24 Lee Whyte (Bowood Golf & Country Club) 73

NEAREST THE PIN (9th)

Day One - Paul Davy (Porters Park Golf Club - hole in one!)
Day Two - Dan Norsworthy (The Richmond Golf Club)

LONGEST DRIVE (15th)

Day One - Antony Kirwan (Playgolf Colchester)
Day Two - Leigh Mordy (Knowle Golf Club)

TEAM WINNERS - Day One Only

First - Midland (David Grant, James Egerton, Oly Browning, Harry Larkins)
Second - South East (Jason Hunt, Ron Christie, Mark Harvey, Paul Davy)



over par overall. All the prizewinners were then presented with their trophies and souvenirs by Colin Henna, Sales Manager at Kubota,

The champion said: "It's always good to win, I played the National at Irvine Bogside last year and I think I probably drove a bit better this time round. But at this level it's just a couple of putts here and there that will make or break your round. On my first round I got on a good run on the back nine and that was pleasing."

"I'm especially happy because this is a different type of course to Largs where I won the Scottish National. Both Largs and Frilford Heath are superb, the green staff have got them in phenomenal condition. The greens here are the fastest I've played on all year, it's a tough but fair test of golf."

Sid Arrowsmith added: "It's been a wonderful couple of days and a real pleasure to host so many BIGGA members, many of whom travelled great distances."

"Having the opportunity to play golf and chat to so many green-keepers from all manner of courses across the UK and beyond was a real highlight for me."

Dates for your diary next year

Challenge for the title at Liphook Golf Club in Hampshire, 6/7 October 2014.

Andrew Cornes, Danell Scott, Stewart Rogers



Tim Yates, Dealer Manager at Kubota, presents champagne to hole in one man Paul Davy



Tony Smith presents a tankard to Course Manager Sid Arrowsmith