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Royal Birkdale wins the Open

The Claret Jug may have gone to the man currently in possession of the Green Jacket, and the hearts of everyone to a 17 year old amateur, but the real winner during the 127th Open Championship was Royal Birkdale itself which had been brought to a peak by Chris Whittle and his superb team.

That there was not a blade of grass out of place was testimony to the course preparation. That the winning score was level par showed that despite the space age advances in ball and club technology in the

hands of the finest exponents of the game in the world, 18 magnificent holes and a testing wind can still produce a stalemate.

The excellent work over the last few years by Chris and his team was complemented by that of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team, sponsored by Stylo for the first time, who provided a divoting team before and after each day's play as well as someone to rake the bunkers with each of the matches every day.

In difficult conditions the Support team produced professional performances on the course, particularly during the play-off - which involved speeding to the chosen holes in advance of the players and raking every bunker from there to the finish - and many stories to take home off the course.

Top of the latter list must come from Russell Black, of Westerhope GC, and Kevin Bell, of Elmwood College GC, who, having missed the last mini bus back to their hotel on the final day, were given a ride back into Southport by none other than Mark O'Meara, the new Open Champion, himself.

The BIGGA Marquee in the Tented Village was graced by visits from the Association's President, Viscount Whitelaw, as well as Jaime Ortiz Patino, President of Valderrama Golf Club.

Great BIGGA Bunker Competition

For the fourth successive year BIGGA ran a competition in the Media Centre to estimate how many bunkers the BIGGA Support Team would rake during the course of the four days. Each member of the team was issued with a score card to record every bunker a player went into which, as well as supplying the data for the competition allowed BIGGA to supply valuable information to the press and media on a daily basis covering how many bunkers were found, which hole had been most and least costly and who, among the players had spent most time in the sand.

As the Support Team members also recorded any incidents which occurred with their match these were also put together in a daily press release which was distributed to the press, BBC Television and Radio Five Live.

A separate competition was also held for the members of the Support team

The Royal Birkdale Bunker Raking Statistics

Day 1.	355
Day 2.	406
Day 3.	226
Day 4.	153 (including one in play-off)

Overall 1140

Chris Whittle, right, and his magnificent men





Action men including (above top) Russell Black, Westerhope GC, raking the bunker from which Brian Watts played his stunning recovery to force the play-off, and (middle) Scott Purdy of Ashbourne GC, and above, the team preparing the 18th for the play-off.

Below: Robert Hogarth, Cathcart Castle GC, after running all the way to the 15th in the play-off!





Left: With the new Open Champion.
 Above: Marcus Hamon, of Royal Guernsey with Tiger Woods' ball.
 Below left: Close to the action.
 Below right: About to receive the acclaim.



Winners Press and Media

Day 1. Anne Wilson, STRI Turfgrass Bulletin, 351.
 Day 2. David Hamilton, Press Association Sport, 401.
 Day 3. John Huggan, Golf Digest, 222.
 Day 4. Mark Garrod, Press Association Golf Correspondent, 160.
 Overall winner Tim Glover, The Independent, 1160.

Tim wins a Hayter Harrier 48 lawn mower. The presentation will be made in due course by Kim Macfie, Sales and Marketing Director of Hayter, who kindly donated the mower.

BIGGA Support Team Winners

Day 1. John Berry, Penrith GC, 354
 Day 2. Robert Hogarth, Cathcart Castle GC, 405
 Day 3. Ian Semple, Old Fold Manor, 224
 Day 4. John Berry, 156.

Overall winner, John Berry, Penrith GC, 1234.

History of the Bunker Data

	St Andrews ('95) (117 bunkers)	Royal Lytham ('96) (185 bunkers)	Royal Troon ('97) (84 bunkers)	Royal Birkdale ('98) (117 bunkers)
Rd 1	214	501	344	355
Rd 2	201	577	272	406
Rd 3	130	269	107	226
Rd 4	156	271	136	153
Total	701	1618	859	1140

Total for four years = 4418

Support Team Snippets

Bob Estes found sand so often during the first round that his caddie asked BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member, Anthony Davies, of Prestbury GC, if he would mind joining the US Tour as their personal bunker raker.

Tiger Woods nipped off to the loo after teeing off on the 11th but finding the Gents engaged used the ladies instead. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member Russell Black, of Westerhope GC, in the north east.

The BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team has provided support to the resident greenkeeping team at every Open Championship since St Andrews in 1984.

This year the team contains greenkeepers from golf clubs including Wentworth, East Sussex National, Royal Guernsey, Clondeboye, in Ulster, and Valderrama and from as far north as Tain and south as St Enedoc in Cornwall.

Mark Calcavecchia came up with an excuse many club golfers would have been proud of during the second round. On the 15th hole he ripped off his hat saying that it was too tight and he couldn't think!

Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member, Terry Crawford, of Clondeboye GC, in Ulster.

Stuart Appleby encountered some of Royal Birkdale's renowned wildlife during his second round. He found the rough to the right hand side of the 16th green but had to wait for a frog to move from beside his ball before he could play. Last year Royal Birkdale was the Northern Regional winner of the BIGGA Golf Environment competition in association with Amazone and Rhone Poulenc. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member, Ian Semple, Old Fold Manor GC.

Darren Lee had a spectator to thank for saving him on the 18th in the second round. He had lost his ball on the right hand side of the 18th but a spectator who had watched it land jumped over the barrier on the left side of the fairway and led Darren straight to his ball. He returned to his place arms raised in triumph to a round of applause from the gallery. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member Chris Sheehan, of West Derby GC.

BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member, Stuart Hogg, certainly impressed one of his players, Dudley Hart, during the second round. Dudley was watching as Stuart raked one of his bunkers and turned to his caddie and said, "Now that's how a trap should be raked." They then offered to take Stuart with them to the US Tour. Stuart works at Fortrose and Rosemarkie GC.

US Open Champion Lee Janzen was cleaning his contact lens between tee and green in Saturday's third round but dropped one near a ditch. Fortunately he was able to find it just before the Rules Man stood on it! Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member, Billy Merritt, of Allerton Park GC.

BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member Anthony Davies, of Prestbury Park, who was with Nick Faldo's match met Prince Andrew on the 17th fairway. The Prince came up behind Anthony and asked what club he thought Faldo would be playing. "A 7-iron maybe?" Anthony replied "Maybe for you, Sir. For Faldo a 9." The Prince agreed. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member, Anthony Davies, of Prestbury Park GC.

Anthony also had to rake a bunker after a Faldo supporter fell into it trying to get a little closer to his idol in the third round.

Justin Leonard called a shot on himself at the 2nd when his ball moved slightly in a bunker. No-one noticed apart from himself and the Greenkeeper Support Team member Robert Hogarth, of Cathcart Castle GC. The referee was called, the ball replaced and an extra shot added to the score. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team member, Robert Hogarth, of Cathcart Castle GC.



Above (top): Tom Woolley of Eastbourne GC on the 7th.

Above left: Chris Kennedy, Gordon Child, George Brown and Walter Woods share a joke.

Above: Some well-known faces share a drink in the BIGGA marquee.

Left: The divoting team on Saturday evening.

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BT Mobile sponsored BIGGA's second golf day, and walked off with some of the top prizes as well...

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The second annual BIGGA Golf Day more than lived up to the standard set by its predecessor as 34 teams put club to ball on one of the few decent days served up by the month of June.

With the ability to enjoy oneself just as important as a talent for holding difficult putts and driving long distances the old adage about it being more important to take part than to win found its true home.

There were more non winners than winners at Aldwark Manor Golf and Country Club on the evening of June 22 but even those who had left their best shots on the practice range had contented smiles of their faces as they watched the wonderful prizes being presented.

The Texas Scramble format with three drives from each player and a maximum handicap allowance of six ensured a tight competition, tight that is apart from the winning team who came from the sponsors. BT2 took no prisoners with a magnifi-

cent score of 56.8, over three shots clear of another British Telecom team, representing BT Internet, showing that for sure if "Driving is for Show Putting is for Dough".

The day was graced by several well known faces with the star guest being Ian Mercer, alias Gary Mallet from Coronation Street. Ian played in the day as part of the Granada Studio's team which would have also featured Phil Middlemiss, Des Barnes to you and I. Unfortunately Phil's show biz lifestyle got in the way of his trip to Aldwark Manor and he had to cry off a week before the day.

Ian thoroughly enjoyed his day and mingled with all the guests even finding time for a few holes the day before and the day after the event thanks to a window in his filming commitments on "The Street".

From the sporting world football, cricket and rugby union were represented with ex-Scottish Internationalist Bobby Moncur, now employed by Aldwark Manor, ex-Yorkshire County Player, Ashley Metcalfe, and our own Midland Regional Administrator, Peter Larter who is, of course, an ex-British Lion.

The day will have bitter sweet memories for two of the competitors who shall remain nameless. Those who know the first hole at Aldwark Manor will recall that it is a par 3 of around 160 yards with a tight entrance guarded by out of bounds and a tree to the left and some trees and the driveway on the right. One player saw his errant tee shot slice off to the right bounce off the bonnet of a car and finish six feet from the flag. The legacy was a fine start for one team and a dirty big dent in the car of another of the players, a man indeed, whose journey to the day the year before had been interrupted by a broken windscreen.

"BT Mobile is delighted to have been the sole sponsor of the 1998 BIGGA Golf Tournament. Judging

by the positive feedback received, not only from our guests but from the other companies that attended this was clearly a successful and enjoyable day," said Gill Shaw, Events Manager, BT Mobile.

"I was particularly impressed by BIGGA on the day, who catered for all the participants' needs, no matter what the requirement, nothing was too much trouble.

I was extremely pleased with the high levels of participation. Everyone appeared to be enjoying themselves and I am now really looking forward to receiving the complimentary video.

"As the UK's leading provider of mobile communication products and services we are committed to sponsoring events such as BIGGA, that deliver our overall business objectives and further develop the strong relationships upon which our business is founded," added Gill.

1st. BT2.

Paul Titman, Eric Black, Stuart Johnson and Phil Purssey.

2nd. BT Internet 2.

P. Monaghan, D. Hinchcliffe, J. Braidy and D. Dwight.

3rd. Turf Mech.

Andy Davey, David Serles, Alister Rowell and Craig Hardy.

Nearest the Pin. Frank Flaherty.
Longest Drive. David Norton.

The day also featured the drawing of the Buy a Brick Raffle which raised a substantial sum of money for the new headquarters which is making great progress a 100 yards from the existing office.

Remarkably the top prize, a set of golf clubs and bag was won by BIGGA Past Captain Barry Heaney, whose name was drawn out by current BIGGA Chairman Gordon Child.

A full list of prize winners appears on page 10.

A passing cameraman is visibly shocked at the amount on the plate of Aldwark Manor's Head Greenkeeper, Richard Gamble





Above: Past Chairman, Barry Heaney receive top prize in the Buy a Brick Raffle from Gordon Child.

Above Right: BT Mobile 2, Paul Titman, Eric Black, Stuart Johnson and Phil Purssey showed the rest of the field a clean pair of heels to take top honours.

Right: Richard Minton, Kim Macfie, Bob Moncur, James McEvoy and David Butler contemplate the day ahead.

