

# Last Laugh

By Dave Wilber

**T**hey're still talking about John Philp. This time, though, the talk has nothing to do about the Carnoustie Golf Links superintendent allegedly tricking up his Scottish course for the 1999 Open Championship.

They're talking about Philp because he was recently named a Member of the Order of the British Empire in Great Britain.

Think back to the summer of 1999 and the Open Championship at Carnoustie. If you didn't hear the cries from the players as they faced what Gary Player once called "the toughest golf course in the world," you weren't listening.

Rain in the early summer in eastern Scotland had produced a bumper crop of deep rough at Carnoustie. In the middle of it all was Philp, whose task was to condition the course and defend it because some had said it had lost its moxie.

But the players complained about the course and accused Philp of fertilizing the rough. Philp, who denied the charges, gave an impassioned speech about the virtues of links golf and invited players who couldn't handle the course to head home where the work is easier. Philp became the most quoted individual of the 1999 event.

"You can't often go off-line and expect to be rewarded for the effort," he said.

Philp recounted the rains and the density of the rough, but related that "had they played three weeks later, the rough would have died back and there wouldn't have been such bleating from the players."

In her last official duties of 1999, Her Majesty the Queen of England selects a list of honors, including more than 1,500 awards in the Order of the British Empire, called MBEs. The honors included Philp for service to golf in Great Britain. He will have his official audience with Her Majesty later in 2000.

"I got the letter in November and had to be quiet about the thing until year's end," Philp chuckled.

Two other head greenkeepers in the United Kingdom have been recognized in the past. Walter Woods received the British Empire Medal, a medal of the same Order, for his service to St. Andrews Golf Links as links supervisor for 22 years. Jimmy MacDonald, head greenkeeper at Royal Latham & St. Anne's, was awarded the MBE in 1996 after preparing for the Open Championship.

Philp is taking it all in stride, much like he did the summer's criticism.

"Carnoustie is links golf, and it wouldn't be right to make it artificial," he said. "I don't think it was too tough, and the nice people that nominated me for the MBE must have liked it fine enough."

## Quotable

**"You guys want to live on a golf course when you retire? Can't wait. Huh?"**

— Cleve Cleveland, CGCS and CPA, speaking to members of the Carolina GCSA about their plans when the retire.

**"The average male pro golfer can drive the ball 270 yards. Ninety kids came out for my son's golf team and one-third of them could drive 270 yards."**

— Mike Hurdzan, Hurdzan Fry Golf Course Design

**"Fast greens have gotten to the point where they are a bit overvalued."**

— David Fay, USGA chairman



### Golf spreads out

Golf course openings in 18-hole equivalents 1994-1998

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Daily fee	190.5	242.0	238.5	245.0	239.5
Municipal	38.5	45.0	41.5	35.0	40.0
Private	33.5	49.0	39.5	36.0	48.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>262.5</b>	<b>336.0</b>	<b>319.5</b>	<b>316.0</b>	<b>327.5</b>

Source: National Golf Foundation

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