



SHORT GAME TOURNAMENT AT SAFFRON WALDEN GOLF CLUB

Chris Standen, Assistant Manager at Saffron Walden, gives details of the successful new Short Game Tournament arranged this year.

Secretary at Work: October 2012

In order to officially celebrate the opening of our brand new £50,000 short game practice area, Club Professional Philip Davis and Marketing Manager Chris Standen devised the idea of holding a Short Game Championship.

The idea was to get as many members as possible down to the club to participate in an enjoyable, yet competitive atmosphere to compete for excellent prizes. Between us, we devised the format we wanted, and then had to work out whether it was actually feasible or not!

After a short battle on the practice area (Philip doesn't like to be reminded about the result!), we were happy we could accommodate a maximum of 80 golfers on the day. To whittle the field down whilst trying to ensure maximum enjoyment and shock results, a series of matchplay games took place until we ended up with our final 10.

To get to this stage, we saw numerous Category 1 and 2 golfers being eliminated by mid/high handicappers, who loved the battle and experience of playing with those elite golfers. The biggest surprise on the day was the success of Philip Holmes, a 26 handicapper, who said "Never in my wildest dreams could I imagine beating someone off 3, 12 and 7 en route to the Final! Whilst always knowing I had a reasonable short game, I didn't think it would hold up so well under the pressure of the competition".

Once the final 10 had been decided, a 10 hole strokeplay competition was held to decide who would compete for the top prize, trophy and, most importantly, bragging rights for a year. Former Club Champion Ian Macdonald qualified in second place, one shot behind relative newcomer to the club Michael Brookes.

After a tense battle, which included Ian losing a ball whilst trying to play a tough long approach shot, Ian proved victorious, edging Michael out by just 1 hole. Ian said of the event "This really is a fantastic format and a brilliant idea. I never



expected to win the competition and, despite not having my handicap on the line, the pressure I felt under during the Final was like when I won the Club Championship 10 years ago!”

The event was greatly received by all members and spectators on the day and provided a great chance for new members to meet and play with others in a friendlier atmosphere. A free BBQ was provided by the club, together with a drinks voucher redeemable when the Final was taking place, which ensured players stayed at the club even after being knocked out of the competition. A number of members also appeared to watch the latter stages of the competition unfold and add their vocal support to players.

Chris Standen commented “While knowing the format of the competition was there to produce some shocks, we never envisaged quite what would unfold on the day. We had chip ins, lost balls, shouts of “fore”, playoffs and plenty of shock results throughout the day.

We saw many mid/high handicappers playing who don’t normally enter into competitive events, and we haven’t heard one negative word about the day. In fact, the average handicap of the finalists was a shade under 13, so this was by no means a competition dominated by low handicappers. Before it started I was asked if any shots would be given to reflect the difference in handicaps; after watching the day unfold, I am delighted we politely declined their requests!

Whilst the building of such a unique facility in the middle of a recession was questioned by some, it has been used frequently every day since opening, and the tournament was a definite highlight of 2012.

We were fortunate enough to receive significant sponsorship through Higgins Homes, and Titleist provided a free ball and wedge fitting on the day, but this just added to the occasion. We have plans already in place for the 2013 competition and are investigating implementing an Open competition to members of clubs in the surrounding area.”

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