



THE 2018 ARMY GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS



The Army Golf Championships is the blue riband event in the Army Golf Calendar and has a permanent base at Saunton Golf Club (SGC). The 2018 event took place from 8 to 13 Jul 18; the Championships comprise the individual Matchplay event both Male and Female and the Inter Corps tournament over the final two days. The former were generously sponsored by Boeing and the latter by Heckler & Koch (HK); the AGA is indebted to the event Sponsors for their invaluable support, to Thales as Headline sponsor of the AGA once again and the Army Sport Control Board (ASCB) Charitable Fund. The Championships' weather was superb throughout with lovely warm and sometimes hot sunshine. The course was very hard and it was a true links; the rough was very thick and straight driving was a must as was good course management; golf ball sales were up once again.

96TH INDIVIDUAL MATCHPLAY CHAMPIONSHIP

The highest ever field of 104 male players with 11 reserves, arrived on Sunday 9 Jul 18 to commence battle in the individual matchplay event on the East Course; this was an unbelievable field of golfers and showed huge support for the game in the Army at present. The main competition started the following day with 64 players and to reduce the field to this number there was a pre-qualifying event for 80 of the highest handicapped players. Sadly for the reserves, no one failed to take their Sunday tee timings. The cut for those needed to qualify was a staggering 4.3. The winners went into the main draw and the 40 losers were to compete in their own Reserve event.

There were 4 seeds for the main Championship, Pte David Blick (1) and Sgt Gaz Gurung RE (2), winner and runner up from the 2017 Championships and the losing two semi-finalists; Gdmn Jordan Slater Coldm Gds (3) and Cpl John Brown REME (4). The remaining entrants were seeded in handicap order, with the draw pitching No 1 Seed playing No 64, 2 playing 63 etc. All was set fair for an excellent Championship.

There was three surprise results in the first round; Fus Jonny Stevenson SCOTS narrowly lost on the 18th to lost to Sgt Kevin Ramage RA, SSgt Andy Harriott AGC (MPGS), who had to qualify beat SSgt Adam Hayward RHA 3/1 and Bdr Lee Tyrrell beat LCpl Liam Burrows REME 3/2. There were no shocks in Round 2.

In the third round, in order, Brown J beat Lt Neil Williams Lancs 5/4, a Reservist, who used to play on the Euro Pro Golf Tour but now has his amateur status back, Cpl Ben Churchill RE striving to win for a 7th time beat WO1 Dave Sanby AGC (SPS) as the latter retired with an injury, Capt Jon Howse RLC beat Capt Jack Musgrove RA 2up and Blick beat Paul Robson Int Corps 2/1. In the bottom half SSgt Paul Dickinson R Signals beat Gurung 2/1, Fus Lewis Phillips RRF had a titanic struggle against Maj Bob Pace R Signals on the 23rd hole, Harriott beat Tyrrell 4/3 and Slater just beat Maj Sean Stevenson RLC on the 18th. There will be more on the main Championship later.

The 40 players plus the 11 reserves who failed to qualify for the main Championship, took part in the Reserve Championship event for the Keith Seddon Trophy. The first part was a scratch Stableford competition on Mon 9 Jul 18 on the West Course, to enable a fair draw and decide the seeding for the matchplay event. The Reserves were unable to qualify but were eligible for the prizes. The favourites were the leaders from the Stableford, namely Gnr Adam Williams RA and Cpl Jit Thapa RE. However neither proved their seeding as

they lost in Round 1 and 2 respectively. After three good victories, LCpl Gary Adams RLC played SSgt Dell Farr R Signals in the final. Adams played very good golf and took the match convincingly 7/6 to win the 2018 Keith Seddon Trophy.

In the Plate competition, held for first round losers in the Main Championship, the clear favourites were Stevenson J, Burrows and Hayward but all were in the bottom half of the draw. In the top half WO1 Jeremy Ansell CAMUS, who had lost in the 2017 Plate final was the one to watch. Both Ansell and Stevenson reached the final after some comfortable victories. The final was to be a very close affair but with Ansell hitting an excellent shot into the 18th green after being one up, he became the 2018 Army Plate Champion.

There are two subsidiary Stableford Strokeplay events off handicap on Tuesday and Wednesday for the losers in the matchplay events; both took place on the West Course off the White Tees. On Tuesday, 7 players scored a creditable 36 pts or better; Sgt Scott Campbell RA won the Mickey Bryant Memorial Trophy with 38 pts with WO2 Carl Wray REME on 37; the CSS was 72 against the SSS of 71. In the Wednesday competition for a new trophy, generously presented by Mr Chris Bartley and Maj (Retd) Jim Taylor, 101 players took part and scoring was impressive with 12 scoring 36 points or better. Dickinson and LCpl Dean Farrimond RE had 38 pts, WO2 Gary Waugh Scots scored 39 but the strokeplay round of the tournament was the 40 pts scored by Blick, who plays of +3; his scratch was 43 pts, a gross score of 64, some 7 under par! The CSS was 72. All scores for the subsidiary Stableford competitions can be found on the "*How Did I Do*" website under "*Army Golf Association*".

Returning to the main Championship and the quarter-finals. Churchill thrashed Brown 7/5, Howse somewhat surprisingly beat the 2017 Champion Blick on the 19th, Phillips beat Dickinson on the 19th and Slater beat Harriott 7/6. In the semi-finals, Churchill was the clear favourite against Howse, but the latter continued his form and after a great tussle won on the 18th green. In the bottom match, Slater proved too strong for Phillips winning 3/2. The final was initially a very close affair with both Howse and Slater trading holes, with the former being one up on the 11th tee. However Slater won 5 holes on the trot to win 4/3 and become the 2018 Army Champion. He will feature for many years to come.

It was without doubt the best individual Championship in memory and bodes well for the future of Army Golf. Congratulations go not only to the winners but to all the players, as the overall sportsmanship was second to none. The key results were:

Army Champion – Gdmn Jordan Slater Coldm Gds
Runner-up – Capt Jon Howse RLC
Plate Winner – WO1 Jeremy Ansell CAMUS
Reserve Winner – LCpl Gary Adams RLC
Tuesday Stableford Winner – Sgt Scott Campbell RA
Wednesday Stableford Winner – Pte David Blick 2 Para
Most Improved Player – Capt Jon Howse RLC

9TH ARMY LADIES MATCHPLAY CHAMPIONSHIP

The 9th Army Ladies Matchplay Championship took place on 11 and 12 Jul 18 on the East Course and once again proved to be a highly successful Championship. Sadly there were only 12 players with four players absent either on a career course or injured; these included the Kennedy twins, the winner and runner-up from 2017 Championship.

There were four seeds based on handicap; Cpl Kim Woodward AGC (SPS) (1), Tpr Bethan Parker QDG (2), brand new to the Army and first Armoured Corps female soldier to pass out into the Field Army, Sgt Becky Mercer AGC (SPS) (3) and Maj Sue Lambert AGC (ETS) (4).

With only 12 golfers playing, there was a qualifying matchplay event on the first morning to reduce the field to 8 players. Musn Emma Dann CAMUS beat Cpl Becky Powell Int Corps 4/3, Sgt Zoe Burrell-Knipe RLC beat Maj Gina Smith REME in a very tight game on the 18th, Lt Col Karen Fidell AMS beat SSgt Tracey Smith AMS 2/1 and Capt Law AMS beat Maj Stileman RLC 3/2. In the first round of the Championship, there were wins for Lambert, Woodward, Parker and Law; the last match was against the form with Law beating Mercer 5/3. For the four golfers who lost in the Qualifying event, there was a scratch matchplay event for the Saunton Bowl. The semi-final was played on the West Course with Gina Smith beating Powell 6/4 and Tracey Smith beating Stileman 2/1; the name of Smith would be engraved on the trophy, but which one? The final moved back to the East Course on Wednesday and Gina Smith just managed to hold her lead and won 2 up on the 18th green to win the Saunton Bowl.

On Wed 11 Jul 18, the losers in Round one went in to the Plate competition for the Bowles Trophy; Dann had a real struggle against B-K only winning on the 19th, but Mercer convincingly beat Fidell 8/6, clearly getting some form back after her morning round and recent Club Championship win. Mercer continued her good golf and beat Dann 4/3 in the final. There was a handicap Stableford for the two players that lost in both competitions; Lizzy Stileman took first prize.

So back to the semi-finals of the main Championship. Both matches were won with relative ease; Woodward beating Lambert 7/5 and Parker beating Law 5/3. The final, in near perfect golfing conditions albeit a tad warm, was a much closer match. Woodward attempting to secure her 4th and record breaking title was under no illusion that she had a tough task ahead against the newcomer Parker. And so it proved with no halves until the 10th hole and the score hovering between 1up/1dn and all square until the 12th hole when Woodward moved to 2up. Once again though Parker dug in and managed to pull one back on 15th. The 16th was halved and so onto the testing par 3 17th. Woodward hit a cracking shot in which proved to be the end of Parker's fight and the match ended in a 2/1 win for Woodward and her record breaking 4th title.

We suspect that Tpr Bethan Parker QDG and the returning Kennedy twins will prove a stern test in 2019. Congratulations go to all players for not only the standard of play but also the level of sportsmanship displayed throughout.

The key results were:

Army Ladies Champion – Cpl Kim Woodward AGC (SPS)
Runner-up – Tpr Bethan Parker QDG
Bowles Trophy Winner – Sgt Becky Mercer AGC (SPS)

Saunton Bowl Winner – Maj Gina Smith REME
Most Improved Player – Tpr Bethan Parker QDG

On a slightly different note, Thales, the AGA's headline sponsor, generously provided a golf carry case in a free prize draw for the Matchplay Championships. The first correctly completed draw sheet out of the hat was Sgt Ram Limbu RGR.

46TH INTER CORPS CHAMPIONSHIPS

The draw for the Inter Corps Championship, generously sponsored by Heckler Koch, was made after the AGM on Wed 11 Jul. The field comprised a field of 13 "A" Teams and 3 "B" teams; more on the 2019 ballot later in the report. Infantry and RE Teams, as winners and runners-up from the 2017 Championship, were the 1 and 2 seeds with the remainder being drawn out of the hat. The draw was reasonably evenly matched with Infantry, R Sigs A and RLC in the top half and RE, RA and AGC A in the bottom. Interestingly RLC A was drawn against RLC B and R Sigs A against R Sigs B!!

As usual, the Championship moved completely to the West Course, which whilst already a tricky test had been lengthened over the past 24 months and is as stern a test if not more so than the East. The very warm conditions prevailed on both days. There were 5 lady golfers representing their respective Corps with Capt Kate Law representing the AMS, Sgt Becky Mercer and Cpl Kim Woodward representing the AGC and Tpr Bethan Parker representing the RAC. In Round One there were wins for the AAC (19th hole playoff), RLC A (4/1), R Sigs A (4/1), Infantry (5/0) in the top half and wins for RE (4/1), RA (4/1), RAPTC (19th hole playoff) and AGC B (4/1) in the bottom. The latter match raised a number of eyebrows. Whilst within the rules, but not the spirit of the competition, the REME decided to rest their best 2 players, clearly deciding that the Plate competition was their main hope of success!

In the second round in order, RLC A beat AAC 4/1, Infantry beat R Sigs A 3.5/1.5, RE beat RA 3.5/1.5 and RAPTC beat AGC B 4/1. The semi-final line-up was the Infantry vs RLC A and RE vs RAPTC; could there be a repeat of the 2017 final?

In the Plate (Singapore Trophy) for the first round losers, RAC beat RLC B 5/0, R Sigs B beat CAMUS 3/2, the Int Corps beat AMS 4.5/0.5 and REME beat AGC in a sudden death playoff between Cpl John Brown REME and SSgt Andy Harriot AGC (SPS); the former won the 21st. AGC A beat the RLC 4/1, Inf B beat the AAC 3/2 and AGC B beat the RAPTC 3/2. This left the Plate semi-finalists as RAC vs R Sigs B and REME vs the Int Corps. R Sigs B won 4/1 and the Int Corps beat the REME 3.5/1.5. The final was a reasonably close contest with 3 matches going to the 18th green. However the Int Corps won 3.5/1.5.

In the REME Shield for Day One losers, each team is required to play 18 holes scratch Stableford, with all 5 scores counting. R Sigs A and the AGC A were strong favourites and scored 136 and 134 points respectively, to give R Sigs A the REME Shield for the second year in succession. The best score of the round was 33 scratch points from Sgt Jason Frost AMS.

Back to the main Championship for the Irish Rangers Bowl and in the first semi-final, the Sappers faced the RAPTC; the former won convincingly 4.5/1.5. In the other half, RLC A was up against a very strong and fancied Infantry side. The latter proved too strong and got through somewhat easily 4.5/0.5 with only Capt Jon Howse managing a halved point

against Sgt Dean Geoghegan Mercian. In the final in very warm and sunny conditions, it was a game too far for the Sappers, with only Churchill winning the first game against Williams 2/1. One match was halved but Slater, Blick and Fus Lewis Phillips RRF had comfortable victories to give the Infantry team victory by 3.5/1.5. The Infantry were worthy winners with the strongest team and they will take some beating in the future.

The main results were:

Inter Corps Champions – Infantry.
Runners-Up – RE
Plate Winners – Int Corps
Runners-Up – R Sigs B
Stableford Winners – R Sigs A

2019 Inter Corps Ballot. Following some hard work by the AGA Vice Chairman, the 2019 Inter Corps ballot will change, subject to final approval by the 2018 AGA Annual General Committee Meeting on 11 Oct 18. Corps may enter a B team as before, but the ballot will take place at the 2019 AGA AGM on Wed 10 Jul 19. If 13 x Corps A Teams enter then 3 teams will be drawn to take part in the main event. Any other B teams balloted out will play in a team Stableford event, comprising two rounds; one on Thu 11 Jul 19 and the other on Fri 12 Jul 19 to be played on the East Course from 1030 hrs each day. Prizes will be awarded to the winning team and to the top three places. The entrance fee per team will be abated by 50%.

Summary.

The AGA is hugely indebted once again to the Saunton Golf Club Committee and members for allowing us take over their club for the week and for their superb hospitality throughout. It was the best ever Championships and so pleasing to see many new faces appearing on the scene. The support and friendship of all staff was invaluable and the AGA Committee is absolutely delighted to be returning to Saunton until at least 2022, when it will celebrate the 100th Men's Matchplay Championship coinciding with SGC's 125th Anniversary. Gdmn Jordan Slater and Cpl Kim Woodward deservedly won their individual Championships and the Infantry their victory in the Inter Corps. Huge thanks go to our sponsors Boeing, Heckler & Kock, Thales, Team Army and the ASCB for their invaluable financial support. Special thanks go to Mr Russell Mayne the General Manager at Saunton for his invaluable support during the week and we wish him well for the future. Thanks go to the Tournament Committee, who ran a seamless event and finally to the AGA Secretary, Martyn Allen, who leaves the post on retirement on 11 Oct 18. Roll on to the 2019 event from 6 to 12 Jul 19.

MK Allen

MK Allen, AGA Secretary
20 Jul 18

Enclosure:

1. Score Sheets for all competitions.



2018 Army Champion – Gdmn Jordan Slater Coldm Gds



2018 Army Ladies Champion – Cpl Kim Woodward AGC (SPS)



2018 Inter Corps Champions – Infantry



L to R – Pte Blick Para, Lt Williams Lancs, Sgt Geoghegan Mercian, Fus Stevenson Scots, Fus Phillips RRF & Gdmn Slater Coldm Gds