



## THE 2019 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 2019 event took place from 7 to 12 Jul 19; 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 the Army Sport Control Board, Charitable Fund; the AGA is indebted to the event Sponsors for their invaluable support and to Thales as Headline sponsor of the AGA once again. 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 although had recently been cut back to widen some of the fairways but this did not alter the fact that straight driving was a necessity as was good course management; golf ball sales were up once again with the spotters attempting to find the recently sold, lost balls.

### 97<sup>TH</sup> INDIVIDUAL MATCHPLAY CHAMPIONSHIP

2019 saw another full complement of players and for the second year running with a field of 104 male players with 11 reserves, arrived on Sunday 7 Jul 19 to commence the qualifying, for some and practice rounds for others, in the individual matchplay event on the East Course; this was yet again an outstanding field of many of the best golfers the Army has to offer and was testament to the high levels of golf being played up and down the country on a regular basis. 80 players were drawn to take part in the Qualifying round in order to find 40 players to join the 20 who had been balloted out based on their low handicap (the line was drawn at 4.1 which was incredibly low), with the final 4 x places made of the semi-finalists from last years championship. The main Matchplay Championships would commence the following day with 64 players. Sadly for the reserves, no one failed to make their Sunday tee timings. The winners went into the main draw and the 40 losers were to compete in their own Reserve event.

The 4 seeds for the main Championship were the losing two semi-finalists, Cpl Ben Churchill and Fus Lewis Phillips with the winner and runner up: Capt John Howes and Gdsm Jordan Slater Coldm Gd. The remaining entrants were seeded in handicap order, with the draw pitching No 1 Seed playing No 80, 2 playing 79 etc. All was set for an excellent Championship.

There were no surprise results in the first round with all the leading Army players coming through with relatively good scores; Fus Jonny Stevenson SCOTS got off to an indifferent start being down 2 after the first four holes but rallied round to come back and win 2 -up. Likewise Gdsm Jordan Slater, the defending champion, was 4-down after 6, but managed to pull back to win s and 1. There were no further shocks although a number of matches were played out to a number of playoff holes results in a very long day with the light starting to fade.

Day two saw the third round start with an early 0700hrs tee. This saw the only Qualifier left in the main Matchplay competition, Lt Col Mike Cowey, drawn against the current Army Open Champion, Fus Lewis Phillips – he was to have his work cut out. This was proved to be the case with Phillips winning 3/2. Other results saw the reigning champion Jordan Slater winning 2/1 after slipping to 3 down early in the round. Ben Churchill came through

against Stu Hawkins who didn't bring his A-game on the day against one the main contenders for tournament and Jonny Stevenson narrowly winning 1-up on the last.

The 40 players plus the 9 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 8 Jul 19 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. Notably there were no surprises as all the known players won through. All matches were tight and won by the odd hole. The semi-finals saw Campbell play Tamang and Piercy play Williams. Both matches were close affairs with the lead changing frequently, but after some good golf being played by all four players. Campbell and Williams won through to the final both winning 2up. After three good victories, SSgt John Williams RE played SSgt Scott Campbell RA in the final. Both players played very good golf, but Campbell eventually ran out the winner and took the match to win the 2019 Keith Seddon Trophy.

In the Plate competition, held for the first-round losers in the Main Championship, there were no clear favourites with some extremely good golfers in this competition. All was set for another tight and enthralling event with consistency likely to win the day. Farnworth reached the final after some comfortable victors in the earlier rounds whilst Malla had to work slightly harder on the way to the top. The final was to be a very close affair with both players working hard to hold the lead, but after another tight match Malla won the match 1 Up to become the 2019 Army Plate Champion.

There are two subsidiary Stableford events off handicap on Tuesday and Wednesday for those knocked out of the Matchplay events; both took place on the West Course off the White Tees. On Tuesday, the difficulty of the conditions and the course kept scores fairly low with the highest posted score being 34 pts by Ryan Wootten and Adam Haywood; Martin Hassell and Gary Waugh posted 32 pts each, Paul Bennett scored 31 Pts and then followed fours players on 30 pts; the CSS was 71 against the SSS of 71.

In the Wednesday Stableford competition which this year was to be played off full handicap and being played for only the second year, the Bartley and Taylor Trophy was contested by 102 players. Scoring in this competition was very impressive given the conditions with an increasingly hot and sunny and with a stronger breeze, and hardening fairways and greens some, 64 players scored 30 pts or more. At the top of the leader board were in third place on 39 pts on countback was Col Ben Ware Int Corps, Runner-Up also on 39 pts was SSgt Scott Campbell RA, and the winner on an impressive 40 pts and playing off a handicap of 4 was SSgt Adam Hayward RA. In the scratch Stableford competition, incorporated within the Wednesday round, our attending sponsor and life friend of the AGA Mark Snape from Thales scored an impressive 39 pts, but as a guest he was unable to win the competition so with a score of 37 scratch pts was last year's Champion, Gdsm Jordan later COLDUM GDS. 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. The afternoon round saw temperatures rise further with not a cloud to be seen signalling a very hot afternoon; plenty of water and sun block were the order of the day. Wind was once again light although slightly stiffer than had been seen all week which bode well for those able to keep the ball low and straight, with the ball rolling increased distances the door was open for more birdie opportunities. Blick beat xxxxxx Bruce-Smith 4/3, Capt Jack Musgrove, RA beat the

reigning champion Slater on the 20<sup>th</sup>, Cpl Ben Churchill RE striving to win for a 7<sup>th</sup> time beat WO1 Dave Sanby AGC (SPS), who he played in the same round last year only for Sanby to retire injured. This year the match concluded with a 2/1 win for Churchill, his quest for a 7<sup>th</sup> win continues, Phillips beat Stevenson 3/2. There will be more on the main Championship later.

In the semi-finals, there were no clear favourites as all players knew each other's game inside out. Churchill was drawn against Phillips and Musgrove drawn against Blick. In the first semi-final Musgrove took a commanding 4 hole lead against the local boy and former Saunton Golf Club and Devon County member Blick, however he rallied round in the back 9 to pull the match back to level by the 16<sup>th</sup> only for Musgrove to win the 17<sup>th</sup> and hold onto a half to finish. The second semi-final was not quite as close with Phillips taking a commanding 5-hole lead which he managed to hold onto before winning 6/4 against a former Champion Churchill.

The final was set with Phillips the reigning Open Champion playing off +3 and Musgrove the Army Vice Captain playing off scratch. It was to be a very close run affair and a match of contrasting styles of play. Phillips the quicker player, would get to the ball make decisions and play, Musgrove on the other hand played a more methodical round and with his wife on the his bag to help ease the tension when needed. The early initiative was taken by Phillips, but he was unable to capitalise and push on, Musgrove drew level towards the turn and both players were consistently on the money through the back nine until Musgrove won the 17<sup>th</sup> to take the advantage into the last. With Musgrove hitting the 18<sup>th</sup> fairway with another excellent drive the pressure turned to Phillips who was to hit the left hand fairway bunker – pressure was definitely on. Musgrove left himself with a 24 foot putt for birdie, with Phillips closer to the pin, but on in three. Musgrove putted to within 2-foot, so all that was left was for Phillips to concede the hole for Musgrove to win 1 Up and become the 2019 Army Matchplay champion. Although the spoils went to Musgrove, without doubt both these players will feature for many years to come.

This was one of the best individual Championships and with the highest number of entries 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 levels of sportsmanship was second to none. The key results were:

Army Champion – Capt Jack Musgrove RA  
Runner-up – Fus Lewis Phillips RRF  
Plate Winner – Maj Ram Malla INF  
Reserve Winner – SSgt Scott Campbell RA  
Tuesday Stableford Winner – Cpl Ryan Wootton  
Wednesday Stableford Winner – SSgt Adam Hayward RA  
Most Improved Player – Fus Lewis Phillips RRF

## **47<sup>TH</sup> INTER CORPS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The draw for the Inter Corps Championship, generously sponsored by The Army Sport Control Board, was made after the AGM on Wed 10 Jul. With 18 teams entered into the new format for this year, the field comprised a field of 12 "A" Teams (CAMUS did not enter a team) and 6 "B" teams; more on the 2019 ballot later in the report. Infantry and RE Teams, as winners and runners-up from the 2018 Championship, were the 1 and 2 seeds with the remainder being drawn out of the hat. The draw was reasonably evenly matched with Infantry A & B, RA A, RLC A and AGC A in the top half and RE A and R SIG A in the

bottom. Interestingly no two Corps teams were drawn together although both Inf team were drawn in the top half of the draw.

As usual, the Championship moved completely to the West Course, which whilst already a tricky test had been lengthened in recent years and given the course is slightly high above the local water table it was considerably dryer, resulting in a longer ball run on the fairways. It was going to be a stern test if not more so than the East. The very hot conditions continued on both days, albeit an early morning mist descended upon the course first thing on the Thursday. There was only one lady golfer representing their respective Corps with Tpr Beth Parker representing the RAC. In Round One there were wins for the RLC A (19<sup>th</sup> hole playoff), RE B (3/2), AGC A (3/2), Infantry A (5/0) in the top half and wins for RE A (4/1), AAC (3/2), RLC B (4/1) & R SIGS (3/2) in the bottom. It was clear that the two finalists were going to be the teams to beat.

In the second round in order, RLC A beat RE B on a 19<sup>TH</sup> hole playoff, Infantry A beat AGC A (4/1), RE A beat AAC (5/0) and R Sigs A beat RLC B (5/0). The semi-final line-up was the RLC A vs INF A and RE A vs R Sigs A; could there be a repeat of the 2017 & 18 final?

In the Plate (Singapore Trophy) for the first round losers, RA A beat AGC B (3.5/1.5), INF B beat RAC (3.5/1.5), AMS beat Int Corps (5/0) and REME beat RAPTC (4/1). This left the Plate semi-finalists as RA A vs INF B and AMS vs REME. The RA A won 4/1 and the REME beat the AMS 3/2. The final was a reasonably close contest, however the REME beat the RA A team 3/2.

In the REME Shield for Day One losers, each team is required to play 18 holes scratch Stableford, with all 5 scores counting. AGC A and Int Corps were strong favourites and scored 130 and 128 points respectively, to give AGC A the REME Shield. The two best scores of the round were 33 scratch points from WO1 Dave Sanby and Cpl Paul Clemerson both from the AGC A team.

Back to the main Championship for the Irish Rangers Bowl and in the first semi-final, the RLC A faced a very strong Infantry team consisting of mostly Army Team players; the later won convincingly 4/1. In the other half, RE A, last year Runners Up were up against the R Sigs A team. The former proved too strong and got through somewhat easily 4/1 with only LCpl Ollie Brown managing to win a point. In the final in very warm and sunny conditions, it was a game too far for the Sappers, with only Hassall winning against Stevenson SCOTS, in the last game 1up. All others had relatively comfortable victories to give the Infantry team victory by 4/1. The Infantry were worthy winners with the strongest team for the second year running; they will take some beating in the future.

The main results were:

Inter Corps Champions – Infantry.

Runners-Up – RE

Plate Winners – REME

Runners-Up – RA A

Stableford Winners – AGC A

Following approval of the AGA Committee at the Mar 19 ACGM the new format for the Inter Corps Championships was introduced for the first time. This meant that the teams balloted out over the 16 drawn into the main Inter Corps Championships would play a

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 would be awarded to the winning team. The entrance fee per team will be abated by 50%.

This new format appeared to be a great success and the two teams balloted out of the 18, RA B and the R SIGS B, really brought into the spirit of the event and played two very competitive rounds of Stableford golf. Prior to the first round both teams contrived to find a name for this new event and came up with the 'The Susan Boyle Trophy'. It is unlikely that the name will prevail longer than this new format, but the eventual winners were the RA B team.

### **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 must go down as one of the better Championships to have been played on this outstanding course and so pleasing to see many new faces appearing on the scene. The introduction of the new CDI booking in and scoring technology system proved a success and will become an integral part of future AGA tournaments. The support and friendship of all members of the Saunton staff was without doubt the best we have experienced at any of our competition venues and invaluable to the AGA Committee who were absolutely delighted to be returning to Saunton until at least 2022, when it will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Men's Matchplay Championship coinciding with SGC's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Capt Jack Musgrove and Maj Kate Law deservedly won their individual Championships and the Infantry their victory in the Inter Corps. Huge thanks go to our sponsors Thales, and the ASCB for their invaluable financial support. Special thanks go to Mr Jon Southerland the General Manager and his assistant Liz Cann at Saunton for their invaluable support during the week. Thanks go to the Tournament Committee, who ran a seamless event and finally to the AGA Secretary, Steve Davis, who survived his first Matchplay Championships. Roll on to the 2020 event from 4 to 10 Jul 20.

*SAJ Davis*

SAJ Davis  
AGA Secretary  
16 Jul 19