

The 23rd Bad Etiquette Classic



The Courses page of the becgolf.co.uk website had for quite sometime revealed an absence of Bad Etiquette Classic golf between Scarborough and Dunbar; for that reason alone, Northumberland was selected as the host venue for the 23rd BEC. Now, an Area of Outstanding Net Birdies (AONB) that 178 mile stretch of the British coastline may be, but blessed with great golf courses it is not. Despite purporting to be 'jewels in Northumberland's golfing crown', Alnmouth, Hawick, Hexham, Seahouses and Slayley Hall were all (following rigorous assessment) deemed to fall short of the minimum standards demanded by the Bad Etiquette Classic. Indeed, our itinerary would take in only the very best courses that Northumberland had to offer: Dunstanburgh Castle, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Bamburgh Castle and ... just when you thought it was beginning to sound like a trip suited only to members of the BEC's Medieval Siege Re-enactment Group ... Close House GC near Newcastle for the final round because ... well ... Northumberland only has 3 decent courses.

With Andy still not minded to return to the Tour, Martin out with a bad back and many other former participants still undergoing therapy, assembling 8 able-bodied, able-minded and willing players

presented what has become a customary annual challenge. We were therefore pleasantly surprised when 3 weeks before the off, the last of our 8 berths (*'Maritime sub-section of the BEC's Medieval Siege re-enactment Group is it?'*) was filled unexpectedly by none other than Tony Dixon (the Tour's 6th Emmanuel College Alumnus) whose only concern upon signing-up for the event's 23rd edition was whether just one previous round of golf in his entire life might present a disadvantage. 'Naa, Tony, you'll be fine'.

Alas, we numbered 8 only until the eve of our departure when the Founder Members received an e-mail entitled 'Bearer of Bad News' from 2015 rookie Paul Smith. The e-mail informed us that due to circumstances beyond his control, Paul had no choice but to withdraw because he and his employer, Danske Bank, needed to spend the weekend arranging urgent finance. Disappointing ... very disappointing ... sufficiently disappointing ... to briefly consider the second peace-time deployment of the Founder Member's nuclear e-mail deterrent. But, thanks to revised BEC governance procedures, only the 'These things happen' and 'Thanks for letting us know' response templates were deployed and the authentication codes required to launch the 'It's not that simple' template were not forthcoming.

So, with our number reduced to 7 once more, we travelled north in a mix of planes, trains and sizeable automobiles for the 23rd Bad Etiquette Classic.

And what a classic it was! Comfortable harbour-side accommodation provided by the Bamburgh Castle Inn at Seahouses; beer, model boats, diving helmets, oars, fish baskets and general revelry available across the road at the Olde Ship Inn; and Northumberland's glorious coastline and blue skies providing the backdrop for another extraordinary chapter of the Bad Etiquette Classic. Extraordinary indeed. The record books rewritten. A new BEC champion ... victorious for the first time at the 21st attempt ... with earnings of £96 ... and the greatest margin of victory ever recorded ... after 4 days on the north east coast, it wasn't only Paul and Danske Bank that were in need of urgent finance.

Net Eagles (all time)

Dave G	45
Pete	44
Richard	43

Net Birdies (all time)

Mark	350
Julian	347
Pete	346





Day 1 - Dunstanburgh Castle GC

This year's BEC hopefuls met at DCGC in good time for their early afternoon tee times. Registering at the pro-shop-come-tea-shop required one's full attention. 'Can I check in seven golfers please ... we're booked in the name of Powderham'. 'That's fine luv, would you like a pot of tea with that?' 'Actually, could we have 7 pints of Sheepdog'. 'No problem at all, you're off at 14.00 and 14.08'. 'And could we have 6 trolleys please' 'Absolutely, jam or clotted cream with those?'

The first tee is 3 yards from a public bridle path and a variety of pram pushers and dog walkers stop to watch the opening action before moving on disappointed.

Out first in the 3-ball Tony spends the front 9 acquainting himself with his equipment and enquiring about the rules. He quickly finds himself 6 down against David L and 3 down against Dave G. Some friendly advice from the opposition (to slow down his swing and desist from using his putter in the rough) helps a little, but not enough to stave off 8&7 and 3&2 match losses.

The 4-ball match behind is more closely contested with Mark & Richard 1 down with 2 to play against Julian & Pete, but turning the tables to win the match Lup thanks to a par 4 from Mark at the 17th and a nerveless putt from 20ft to 6" from Richard at the last.

Overnight David L leads on £22 ahead of Richard on £10 and Dave G on £3



Day 2 - Goswick GC

Our original plan was to play 27 holes at Goswick on Sunday, but the forecast was for late afternoon rain and general opinion was that 18 holes would suffice and provide time for an all too rare BEC cultural excursion across the causeway to the Holy Island of Lindes Farne. "Come to me, all who are weary and whose load is heavy - I will loan you an electric trolley." (Matthew 11-28). But, once on the island, while BEC participants took in the Priory (so to speak), Mark called ahead to Goswick, only to learn that no later tee times were available; it was 10.30 or nothing and in true BEC style we suddenly found ourselves in a hurry.

Out in the 3-ball, Tony improves steadily (if not rapidly), now brandishing a 3-iron in the rough in place of yesterday's putter. There's cause for optimism when he makes his first ever net birdie at the 400yds 8th and a new UK national holiday is declared when he makes another at the 13th. But optimism and national euphoria prove premature as Tony succumbs 8&7 to Pete and 5&3 to Julian.

In the 4-ball behind it's one-way traffic as Richard and his partner Dave G card an outrageous 4 net eagles and 9 net birdies between them on their way to a comprehensive 5&3 win over Mark & David L.

At the end of day 2, Richard leads on £43 ahead of Pete on £12.50 and Dave G on £12





Day 3 - Bamburgh Castle

Bamburgh's written history begins in the times of the Anglo-Saxons with one chronicler citing Bamburgh Castle as probably the most important place in all of England. And on day 3 of the 23rd Bad Etiquette Classic, it was the most important place in all of England once again as further dark deeds and bloody battles unfolded upon its magnificent links.

Out first in the morning 3-ball Richard quickly picks up where he left off on Sunday, mortally wounding the opposition (Mark and Dave G) with 3 NE's on the front 9 and then putting them simultaneously to the sword with a record 4th NE at the 12th. Mark and Dave's blood curdling screams are heard across the course as Richard runs amok with 84 net 61.

The battle behind is initially less ferocious with 3 lost balls and a shared FP at the 1st, but stirred by the cries of anguish from the 3-ball ahead, it isn't long before David L and Pete are also on the rampage. 3up at the turn they show no mercy, tightening the thumb-screws from the 10th to the 12th for a 6&5 victory.

After a lunchtime banquet of venison and wild boar washed down with a tankard of ale we resume battle on the Bamburgh Castle links. In the 3-ball, David the Desperate and Pete the Persistent are in combat with Richard the Merciless. This time it's David's turn to be put to the sword (and right royally shafted in the process, losing both matches and robbed of £30.50) while Peter and Richard fight to the last. 2 down with 3 to play, Richard finishes 4, 4, 4 including gross sandy pars at 17 & 18. Under normal circumstances that finish and the blood-curdling roar he discharges as he holes out at the 18th would have finished off any opponent. But Peter the Persistent is no ordinary opponent; he finishes 4, 4



too for a back 9 of 40 reposting the Merciless onslaught and living to tell the tale of a legendary 1up victory.

Out behind, the BEC's crippled paupers are fighting for scraps; Mark the Maimed (-£42.50) and Julian the Jilted (-£10) pitting their tattered wits against Tony the Terrible (-£78.50) and Dave the Destitute (£1). Tony's air shots on the 2nd & 4th tees do little to strike fear into the hearts of the opposition and, emboldened, Mark & Julian play some fine golf (including 11 net birdies) on their way to a crushing 7&6 victory at Lindisfarne (the 12th). At the 13th, the battle over, the Jilted, Terrible and Destitute slice right onto the green of the par 3 10th whereupon Dave the Destitute is deemed NWP (nearest the wrong pin). And at Kittling Hill (the 17th) the Maimed one takes driver for 3 off the tee, ricochets off a dry stone wall to 20ft and 2 putts to keep his card alive. Both he and Julian the Jilted finish with net 68's.

Overnight, Richard the Merciless leads on £108.50 ahead of Pete the Persistent on £29 and Julian the Jilted on £17.50



Day 4 - Close House GC

Overnight the BEC army marches south to Close House GC, just north of Newcastle. Wow, what a place! ... probably the most sumptuous accommodation we've experienced in 23 years on Tour. According to the Close House literature, as 'Attached Tour Professional' Lee Westwood (no less) wears the Close House logo on his cap and 'attends several events each year'. That's as may be, but he doesn't have a BEC ball-marker and was no where to be seen when we could have done with someone to make up a 4-ball for our final round. Heh, and listen up ... Close House's rectangular tees are apparently 'conceived from the distilled themes of the great English golf architect, Harry Colt'. Well there you go ... and there's me having spent a lifetime just thinking that golf tees are rectangular.

Out first are the overnight leaders, Richard, Pete and Julian. To overcome the £79.50 deficit between himself and Richard, Pete is going to need a miracle or, more accurately, 18 miracles; 2 match wins, 4 nearest the pins and 3 longest drives. Cometh the hour, cometh Pete the Persistent.

Despite the record lead he holds over his closest adversaries, Richard the Merciless appears to be in no mood to ease off (... with a name like that, it would have been somewhat disappointing if he had) starting with back-to-back net birdies. But Julian and Pete find their form forcing all 3 matches down the 'tighter than you'll like it' 18th where Pete beats Richard (1up), Richard beats Julian (1up) and Julian & Pete make Harry Colt happy with an all square finish.

Out behind, the crippled paupers match (now shouldering aggregate losses of £155) begins with a rare BEC Mulligan awarded to Tony the Terrible at the 1st when he tops his tee shot 6 inches. From the 2nd to the 5th neither he nor his partner David the Desperate can string together two decent shots (in fact one decent shot strung independently would have been welcome) allowing Dave the Destitute and Mark the Maimed to move 4up. Then, out of the blue, the Desperate and Terrible win 5 holes in succession from the 8th to the



12th to take the lead 1up. The struggle continues to the 18th where, having each safely found the green and putted up to 3ft, Dave G and Tony discuss an honorable half. But in a moment of madness Tony declares 'But I might miss this' and promptly does so as his partner David the Desperate clubs himself to death at the side of the green.

Richard wins the 23rd Bad Etiquette Classic with £96 ... an absolute king's ransom ahead of Pete on £17 and Julian in third with £14

Records set by Richard at the 23rd BEC

Most net eagles in a year - 7

Most net eagles in 18 holes - 4, Bamburgh Castle AM

Greatest winnings in a year - £96

Greatest winnings in a year before MLI - £105.50

Greatest margin of victory - £79

Greatest handicap reduction in a year - 7.6

First person to win more than £30 in 3 consecutive rounds (Goswick £33, Bamburgh Castle £32.50 AM, £33 PM)



Richard receives the Pink Jacket and an image of the Tea Pot at the Phoenix, London in an authentic re-enactment of the 23rd BEC awards ceremony at Close House GC