

The 26th Bad Etiquette Classic



For 25 years the Bad Etiquette Classic had never returned to a golf course that it had played previously. No matter how spectacular or how enjoyable, an unwritten and seldom discussed rule did not permit return. But in its 26th year this unspoken moratorium came to an end when the BEC returned to the north Norfolk coast to play Royal Cromer, Sheringham, Royal West Norfolk and Hunstanton; four terrific courses, the second of which we had played in 1997.

According to the very trusty 2001 Times Guide to Golf Courses of Britain & Ireland, 'Golf at Royal West Norfolk is for romantic spirits (*I'm hearing you go on*) who can revel in the timelessness of the ancient links (*and in the bottom of cavernous bunkers*). The course occupies a narrow strip of dunes squeezed between salt marshes and the sea (*... the type of golfing challenge for which BEC participants were born and raised*), becoming an island when the tides are at their highest (*... thwarting road access to the club*). Since the course was first laid out in the 1890's, its characteristic qualities of crisp natural links turf (*indeed, peaty but crisp*), huge sleeper-faced bunkers (*gargantuan in fact*) and small, quick greens (*we didn't stay for lunch*) are unaltered. A place for the skilled craftsman who can manufacture shots to order'. (*oh yeah ... bring it on ... if that wasn't the BEC's moto before, it is now!*).

'The Bad Etiquette Classic. For the skilled craftsman who can manufacture shots to order.'

So, I hear you ask (*no I didn't*), which romantic spirits participated in the 26th rendition of the Bad Etiquette

Classic? Well, in addition to the 4 Founder Members, Dave G put in his 24th appearance and Geoff returned for his second. We also welcomed back two of the BEC's finest craftsmen after prolonged interludes; Andy after a break of 7 years and Martin after an interval of 5. Remarkably, eight of us, yes eight! But, we must mention one important absentee (*must we?*), that most romantic of romantic spirits, Richard. Sadly we missed the pleasure of his company as he was unable to make it back from Saudi Arabia thus bringing his 23 year, 121 round and 2,178 hole continuous BEC run to an end (*... I'm sure he'll get over it*). On a brighter note, despite having a full compliment of eight, we were able to welcome rookie Mel Porter onto the Tour (*but that makes nine of you doesn't it?*) for the round at Royal Cromer on the Saturday before Andy was able to join us. Welcome Mel.

During its 26th rendition, BEC records tumbled and milestones were surpassed. At Royal Cromer the BEC's 1000th round and 18,000th hole were completed. At Royal West Norfolk Andy hit the BEC's 600th longest drive and at Hunstanton Pete notched up the Classic's 299th net eagle (*since when has 299 been a recognised milestone?*). As our new motto required of us, remarkable shots were manufactured to order: Pete's spectacular 8-iron holed from 125yds at Royal Cromer's 15th, Dave G's opening shank on to the Sheringham club house patio and Martin's bunker shot to 'within a leather' from an impossible lie deep in a fortified bunker at Royal West Norfolk's 18th. Off the course, there were records too: the most expensive ever meal on Tour and, simultaneously, the first theft of a BEC participant's umbrella. Yes, all this and more unfolded at the 26th Bad Etiquette Classic.



Saturday Royal Cromer



Match 1A - Martin & Dave G vs Julian & Geoff

- It's nip and tuck until Martin makes birdie 2 at the 148yds 9th to put he and Dave 2up at the turn
- At the 12th the lead increases to 3up, but Julian & Geoff fight back to all square after 16
- Having watched his partner play 16 holes in just a T-shirt (*really?*) and without waterproofs, Geoff offers Julian the use of a spare umbrella that he has had in his bag all along
- The match reaches the last all square, but there Julian & Geoff lose their drives and the match

Match 1B - Mark & Pete vs David L & Mel

- According to the BBC Weather app there is a 21% chance of rain, but afterwards we are 100% sure that there were at least three torrential downpours
- David is all smiles on the 1st tee, but at the 3rd (to the untrained eye) he looks a little less happy as he takes 3 shots to get out of the heavy rough
- Mark & Pete play the better golf, win the match comfortably and pocket £16 and £24 respectively
- At the 15th Pete holes an 8-iron from 125yds for birdie net eagle
- and at the 16th Mel hits a magnificent drive, great iron and 12 foot putt for a birdie net eagle of his own; his first taste of the lavish rewards available on the BEC Tour
- No sooner have we finished, than Mel offers a hasty thanks and departs setting a record for the shortest ever appearance on Tour (6 hours, 7 minutes and 23 seconds)

Pete leads the BEC on £24 ahead of Martin on £17 and Mark in 3rd place on £16

Après Golf

After a quick beer we drive 2 minutes to our accommodation at the Cromer Country Club, collectively create a serious fire hazard by piling our sodden golf equipment onto the electric heaters in our rooms and then walk to 'The Grove'. Located in a Georgian family-run hotel, it's possibly the most unique restaurant we've been to on Tour. The food is terrific and reasonably priced.

Highlight of the evening is when Pete asks 'Have you got any desserts with ice cream?'. The waitress looks puzzled and then responds 'Perhaps I could suggest the Selection of Home Made Ice Creams'.



Julian (left) and Mel (right) try out the BEC's newly acquired Longest Drive Tracker™ technology while BEC participants (centre) enjoy a beer, a chandelier and some fine drapes in the drawing room at The Grove.

Sunday Sheringham



Match 2A - David L & Martin vs Dave G & Andy

- For the first time in its history, the BEC returns to a golf course it has played previously - Sheringham
- Despite umpteen apps forecasting dire weather and an 80% chance of rain, we play in sunshine and remain dry
- At the 1st, Dave G gets proceedings off to an inauspicious start, shanking his tee-shot on to the club house patio
- David & Martin reach the turn 4up and maintain that lead for a comfortable 4&3 victory at the 15th
- At the 322yds par 4 16th David's approach miraculously skirts the greenside bunkers to find the fringe from where he sinks a putt for birdie net eagle
- Martin pockets £25 largely at the expense of Andy who gets his 2019 campaign going with losses of £19

Match 2B - Julian & Mark vs Geoff & Pete

- Neither Mark nor Geoff show any sign of form at all effectively reducing the contest to a singles match between Julian and Pete
- Having very nearly been 3up after 3 (Mark having squandered a 4ft putt at the 3rd), Julian & Mark somehow contrive to lose the front 9 one down
- On the 10th tee Geoff has an uncharacteristic air-shot and then nails his second down the middle with frightening ferocity
- Julian is metaphorically 'on fire' round the back 9, returning in 41 gross with 3 NB's and an NE and winning the match 1up



Martin leads on £42 ahead of Pete in 2nd place on £20 and Mark 3rd on £16

R&A

Rule Changes

In 2019 the R&A and USGA implemented sweeping revisions to the rules of golf. Many of these changes were introduced at the 26th BEC with the following results:

USGA®

- ✓ Time to search for a ball reduced from 5 minutes to 3 minutes - BEC participants agreed to reduce search time by the recommended 2 minutes ... from the current BEC Tour standard of 30 minutes down to 28 minutes
- ✓ No penalty for a ball striking the flagstick - whilst rarely that accurate, BEC participants welcomed the change
- ✓ Abolition of 'stroke-and-distance' for balls lost or out-of-bounds - whoop, whoop, terrific! How much time have we wasted over the years trudging back to the tee for no benefit? (or worse to lose another ball OB)
- ✓ Unplayable ball in a bunker can be dropped out of the bunker for a 2 shot penalty - mixed emotions about this one. Had this rule change been made years ago, many 'Hamlet Moments' and match-play catastrophes might have been avoided, but equally we would have missed out on some of Dave G's finest moments on Tour!
- ✓ Ball may be dropped from knee not shoulder height - not considered to make a whole lot of difference and still considered to be a rule deeply discriminatory against taller players on the Tour
- ✓ Pace of Play - whoever is ready should play provided the way is clear and should take no more than 40 seconds to make a stroke - no, no, no; that is just not going to happen on the BEC where participants necessarily require 6 practice swings and for all others to be watching intently and in awe as the shot is performed



Monday
Royal West Norfolk



Afternoon

- Andy is 'off games' with a bad knee as a result of which the Founder Members see fit to dismantle long-held traditions and permit both foursomes and 'golf not contributing to the overall outcome of the event'
- **3-ball** - Out first, Julian, Geoff & David L hastily cobble together an American Doubles format with a better-ball pair taking on a single and the partnership rotating each hole. Got that? Geoff plays an amazing recovery shot at the 4th from within inches of the wooden ramparts (pictured above), and some very bad etiquette is reported at the 13th when the foursome behind skip the 12th and push in front
- **Foursomes** - The BEC's first ever foursomes match is seen by some as a format with potential, but by others as a sad deterioration of BEC standards. All square after 7 and having skipped holes 8 to 12, Mark & Dave take the lead with a brilliant par 4 at the 13th and another at the 16th. They head down the last dormy 1up and are firm favourites to win the match when Pete leaves Martin an impossible greenside bunker shot. But, Martin plays one of the most amazing BEC shots of all time splashing out to 12 inches for par net birdie to steal the match half

Morning

- After an overnight stay at the Briarfields Coastal Hotel BEC participants head to Royal West Norfolk for round 3 of the Bad Etiquette Classic
- It's another BEC first as with the approach road completely submerged daily at high tide, we have to park at some distance and walk the mile to the club along a narrow causeway
- Due to the narrow out-and-back nature of the course and a number of shared fairways, only 2-balls or foursomes are permitted
- **Mark vs Martin** - According to the course guide, 'Crossing two stretches of tidal marsh the 8th is a par 5 reachable in two but only if the golf is heroic.' Martin performs the required heroics to reach the fringe in two, scuffs his chip and then holes a 25ft putt for birdie NE. Mark finds form with birdie, par, par from the 11th, but the match is lost 5&4. The back 9 is all square at the last, but Mark scuffs his drive and loses the hole and nine with a bogie 5 to Martin's par 4
- **Julian vs David L** - Julian wins 1up in a match which, reportedly, saw each player strive to out do the other by losing holes from increasingly impregnable positions as the match progressed
- **Pete vs Dave G** - Dave's birdie net eagle at the 438yds 5th does little to stem the tide as Pete romps to a 7&5 victory
- **Andy vs Geoff** - 5 lost balls between them at the 8th might call into question the quality of golf in this contest. But Geoff's 5-wood into the wind for NP / NB at the 187yds 15th and Andy's back nine of 38 gross and round of 81 net 68 suggest otherwise. And if proof were ever required that BEC scoring is a serious business, it is surely Geoff's failure to record 4 of the 5 NB's that he made during the round, personally costing him £12

Après Golf

At the end of a miraculously dry (at times even 'glorious') day, the forecast rain arrives and BEC participants field an eclectic range of umbrellas for the evening sortie to the Titchwell Manor Hotel. There, Pete requests candles to enhance the ambiance as we tuck into the most expensive meal ever consumed on Tour (£75pp), surpassing even the £58pp spent at the imaginatively named Seafood Restaurant, St Andrews in 2008. And if that were not robbery enough for one evening, then the theft of Martin's umbrella from the hotel porch certainly was.

Martin leads on £52 ahead of Pete on £28 and Julian in 3rd on £17



Tuesday Hunstanton

Match 4A - Mark & Martin vs Julian & Pete

- Following 2 days on the Norfolk links that made a mockery of the dreadful weather forecasts, we got our comeuppance at Hunstanton. For the first 6 holes it rained, for the next 6 it blew, and for the final 6, it was cold, wet, windy and, quite frankly, miserable.
- Mark & Martin take an early lead and never look like giving it up, winning 5&3
- While Julian plays from a fairway bunker at the 15th his trolley makes a bid for freedom, blowing down the fairway and crashing to the bottom of the next fairway bunker

Match 4B - David L & Dave G vs Andy & Geoff

- Dave G is also having equipment trouble in the 4-ball behind. His trolley-mounted umbrella is destroyed by the wind at the 2nd and thereafter acts as a spinnaker causing Dave's trolley, bag and clubs to veer about the course uncontrollably
- Andy & Geoff fight back from 2 down after nine to level the match at the 13th. Geoff's par 5 at the 453yds 15th then puts them up in the match for the first time, but a handsome par 4 NE from David L at the 430yds 17th restores parity once again. At the last Andy nails his approach and holes a testing putt for par and a hard-fought 1up victory



Martin wins the 26th BEC

With a lead of £24 over nearest rival Pete Jacobs as he teed off in the final round of the Bad Etiquette Classic, Martin never looked in doubt to record his second Tour victory. A round of 88 net 74, 5&3 match win, 4 NB's, 2 LD's and a sandy par for good measure ensured that he did just that, raising the Tea Pot aloft 9 years after his first win at St Mellion, Cornwall in 2011. Congratulations Martin.



Martin gets his hands back on the Tea Pot (and his arms back in the Pink Jacket) at Hunstanton GC

Records and milestones achieved at the 26th BEC

- First return to a golf club previously played - Sheringham GC (4th BEC, 1997)
- Julian completes the 1000th round of BEC golf in the opening 4-ball with Martin, Gave G and Geoff at Royal Cromer
- and the same 4-ball achieves 18,000 holes of BEC golf at the 15th
- Andy records the BEC's 600th Longest Drive at the 7th, Royal West Norfolk
- Pete notches up the BEC's 299th Net Eagle at Hunstanton's 9th hole (481yds, par 5)
- The most expensive meal consumed on Tour - £75pp at the Titchwell Manor Hotel
- First ever umbrella theft on Tour - Martin's from the porch of the above-named hotel

*See you at
the 27th
BEC*