

The 4th Bad Etiquette Classic !

Introduction

Following considerable expansion of the Bad Etiquette Classic last year from 4 to 5 rounds and from 4 to 8 players, this year's event was one of consolidation and included few significant changes to the format. Further expansion of the field to, for example, 12 is frankly unthinkable until such time that someone has worked out a suitable schedule, not for the additional matches, but for the additional paperwork between rounds.

Last year's winner John Casale was unable to make this year's event (for which we are eternally grateful) but six of last year's players did return and were joined by two new faces on the BEC tour, Richard Powderham and Andy Slamin. Speedy approval of their nominations can be put down to surnames alone; the former's being not dissimilar to that of the founder member, and the latter's taken to be indicative of pacey putts and a probable lack of golfing etiquette attributes of an ideal BEC nominee.

Having successfully reposted a second year of strong lobbying from the committee's leading Francophile who again proposed to take the BEC across (or worse, under) the Channel to the land of chateaux, bouillabaisse and underground nuclear testing, the Bad Etiquette Classic traveled this year to Norfolk for a near perfect mix of links (Sheringham), parkland (Royal Norwich) and nine-hole (Mundesley).

Plans to rendezvous at Mundesley Golf Club were scuppered when it became quickly evident that the club was unable to raise a couple of rounds of sandwiches at the best of times and particularly not on a Sunday when confronted by three BEC hopefuls with a combined height of 19' 7". So instead the eight of us gathered at the nearby Ship Inn for the customary pre-BEC beers and banter.

The Bad Etiquette Classic Tea Pot

Unveiled this year was the newly acquired Bad Etiquette Classic Tea Pot, a magnificent trophy made possible only through an historic & remarkable partnership between two of the most famous names in the world of sports trophies; Weingeists of Cockfosters and Elms Trophies of Enfield. Elegantly combining a blue & white china tea pot (in the shape of a bulky leather golf bag) with a handsome wooden base, there can be little doubt that the tea pot will in time

come to be the prime focus of every BEC golfer and regarded alongside the likes of the British Open's Claret Jug and the US Masters' Green Jacket.

The trophy's base, adorned with 4 brass plaques, will provide sufficient space for the names of winners well into the next millennium. By then today's BEC participants could theoretically be "shooting their age", but present form doesn't indicate that this is likely in (or indeed without) practice.

BEC tradition, it seems, is destined to become ever more sophisticated. Immediately following the unveiling of the remarkable tea pot it was proposed that the match schedule be determined by depositing the traditional screwed-up paper balls into the tea pot and then "pouring" ferociously until a player's "name" emerged from the narrow spout. Not surprisingly this proved even more time-consuming than the extraordinary coin tossing spectacles of years gone by.



The Bad Etiquette Classic Tea Pot

Mundesley Golf Club

In the same manner as last year the first round took place on a 9 hole course; this time Mundesley, an attractive course with a par of 68. In great condition, with the possible exception of the rock-hard 1st/10th green, and despite being quite short, Mundesley proved to be a true test of golf with some short long holes and long short holes. An indication of how tough the short holes were is that only 2 nearest the pins and 4 par 3's were recorded in a total of 48 attempts!

Richard Powderham got the 1997 BEC underway striking his debut tee-shot to the heart of the opening par 3 green (158 yds). This was followed by three further well played shots to the fringe (from the rest of the group, not Richard) which clearly struck fear into the hearts of the following 4-ball.

In the opening match, Mark & Richard R playing against David L and Richard P reached the turn all square with all 4 players showing good form. But thereafter Mark and Richard romped home in emphatic style winning 4&2 underpinned by Mark's gross 79 nett 66 including 5 nett birdies and a nett eagle.

In the match behind, Julian & Pete versus David G & Andy reached the 14th all square. But at the next two holes Andy notched-up his 4th and 5th nett birdies providing a sufficient psychological blow to take the match 3&2 at the next.

Sheringham Golf Club

On Monday we were blessed with marvelous weather and unusually for Sheringham there was little or no wind all day. That left only the coarse rough and treacherously deep bunkers to contend with.

In the first of the morning matches Richard P & Dave G unexpectedly found themselves 3 up with 3 to play against Andy & David L (we must try to find 8 players with unique first names next year!). However, their hopes were dashed when Andy finished birdie, par, par to rescue the match and complete a second highly remunerative round containing a nett eagle and six nett birdies.

In the other morning match Mark & Julian played against Pete J & Richard R in an encounter so closely contested that on the 18th hole the former pairing found themselves dormy up on the match yet dormy down on the back nine. Mark's regulation par 4 looked good enough to halve the nine, but was miraculously halved by Peter who from a wayward drive found a deep fairway bunker with his second only to recover to 20ft and sink the putt for a sandy par nett birdie!

In the afternoon Andy & Mark who were clearly the players on form (lying in 1st and 2nd place respectively) quickly found themselves 3 down after 4 against Julian and David L who had until then been struggling with their games. Andy staged a strong single-handed counter-attack while Mark tried to set a new BEC record for the most consecutive bogies (finally managing 10) which did little for the match or personal earnings. Andy & Mark just never fired on all cylinders and finally succumbed 3&2.

The high handicappers David G (28) and Richard R (26) came up against Pete J & Richard P. The prospect of having to go visor in hand to Tina to explain "losses" which were already amounting to £8 clearly galvanised Pete into action as he carded a nett eagle, four nett birdies and a longest drive on his way to a clean-sweep on the match and catapulting himself into the red with takings of £25. Judging by the score card the two Richards and Dave G didn't play much golf (or rather played too much of it) with 2 pars between the three of them.

Royal Norwich Golf Club

After six hours sleep and a few too many pints (*see Accommodation and Apres Golf*) we were a weary looking bunch as we assembled on the 11th tee at Royal Norwich. But the weather was looking good and after all this was the third and final day of the 1997 Bad Etiquette Classic.

Julian and Richard P did well to recover from 5 down after 7 to 2 down with 4 to play, before losing to David L and Pete J 4&2. Again it was Pete who did the damage; 6 nett birdies, a longest drive, a nearest the pin and a sandy par for good measure. But David L did some damage too, hitting the ladies' tee box on the 1st tee and ricocheting into a club house flower-bed, only to shank his reload across the golf club car park!

Mark, paired with Dave G and determined to take money from Andy, began strongly with a string of pars to go 3 up after 3. From then on it was tit-for-tat, but 2 up with 3 to play Mark and Dave remained confident of victory. Then it

all went terribly wrong. In a dramatic moment on the 8th (the 16th as we played it) Dave chipped brilliantly to a foot only to see Richard R role an impossible putt down the hill to halve dormy 2. At the next (121yds par 3) Richard found the green, but Mark got inside him (fortunately not within view of the club-house) with a certain match winner, only to watch Reeves hole from 30ft across the green for a nett eagle 2 dormy 1. Inwardly devastated Mark & David barely contested the last, and Andy holed-out for a birdie 4, nett eagle to halve the match.

In the afternoon, the Powderhams paired up against the increasingly despondent Julian Malton (-£29) and ever cheerful David Grimbley (-£55). With never more than 2 holes in it either way, this match went to the "18th" all square where, in a demonstration of immense courage, Richard, Julian and David drove out-of-bounds. And as Mark holed the match winning putt to repost a last-ditched effort by Grimbley, Julian could be seen 200 yards back pitifully refusing to give up the search for his second tee-shot.

All attention, however, was on the other 4-ball in which Andy (+£44) and Pete J (+£42), the lead contenders for the BEC Tea Pot, were ironically paired together against David L and Richard R who found themselves mere pawns in a shoot-out they could little influence. Indeed their role was more one of referee than opposition. From the serious faces of the contenders it was impossible to tell who was winning, but back at the club house Andy was proclaimed victor of the 1997 Bad Etiquette Classic, his 5 nett birdies and 3 nearest pins having finally proved too much for Peter.

Accommodation and Apres Golf

Our accommodation this year was at the Anglia Court Hotel in Cromer, a pleasant *** Victorian hotel with heavy furniture, greasy breakfasts and rooms with the distinct feel of an old people's home.

Sunday evening was a low key affair; dinner in the hotel, a stroll through the bright lights of Cromer and a couple of pints in a pub proffering a loud mouth-organist (as distinct from our own loud-mouth organist) and a smoke-stack of a proprietress.

Monday evening had a somewhat higher profile when following a curry (during which Richard P dozed and Richard R poured his lager under the table clearly both attempts to remain fresh for Royal Norwich) we returned to the hotel bar. As inexplicably as always Julian found himself at the piano and within minutes was reciting everything from The Wild Rover to Toccata. Indeed we were treated to hymns, ballads, classical, jazz, pop, funk, new-age and rave in what might have been just another of Julian's good old let-your-chest-hair-down-sing-songs had it not been for Angie. Angie began the evening propping-up the bar but having been swiftly impressed by Julian's playing (one possibility ...) transferred to his side to play duets and reel-off a seemingly endless stream of superlatives regarding Julian's skill, panache, touch, feel ... and piano-playing. She was also fixated by his trousers; (*breathlessly*) "Oh, Julian, Julian, those chords, I love your chords". And so it went on ... "Julian, you're fantastic, you're amazing, you're just so talented do you know I want you desperately?" "No, but give me the first few bars and I'll pick it up as I go along".

Julian's piano playing was as usual phenomenal and within 45 minutes (or was it 2 hours 45 minutes?) everyone in the bar was singing along and shouting requests "Do you know Mull of Kintyre?" "Couldn't you make that racket somewhere else?" etc. etc. We turned in exhausted at 1.30am.

Julian Malton

Julian also struggled this year as his nett result of 41 over handicap bears testimony. But only prior to the fifth and final round did the BEC handicap sub-committee show compassion when it approved an increase from 18 to 20. This was regrettable in view of it being an explicit wish of the committee that every BEC entrant play off 18 or less by the end of the millennium (.... some hope!).

Five furthest-from-the-pins and no longest drives are indicative of the inner torment Julian was suffering. Indeed his lack of confidence was no more evident than at Sheringham's 201yds 6th when only at the virtual insistence of the selfless opposition did Julian put away his 3-iron, take a wood and proceed to smack the ball to 8ft for a tidy par 3 nearest-the-pin nett birdie. His past record of being the only player to have made money every year on the BEC tour was shattered with losses of £42, more than his combined winnings from the previous 3 years. From 2nd place in the BEC order of merit Julian plunged to 6th.

But off the course Julian excelled with an extra-ordinary evening's piano playing the likes of which Cromerians (Cromerts, Cromites, Chromosomes?), patrons of the Anglia Court Hotel (Anglians,

Anglicans, Anglers?) and the swooning Angie (Angie, Angie, Angie!) had never seen before. Bravo! Encore!



Participants at Sheringham GC during the 4th Bad Etiquette Classic

BEC's Golfing Greats

Mark Powderham

Mark finally showed some form this year. 8 pars and a birdie at Mundesley was an impressive start, so impressive in fact that the handicap sub-committee immediately cut him from 13 to 12. Although the hard work of the first and second rounds was undone in the third when he made not one par, Mark finished strongly at Royal Norwich to finish in 3rd place with winnings of £16; the first time he has ever finished in the black. Mark's match results: won 3, halved 1 and lost 1 were the best returned and, as he did last year, Mark recorded the most gross bogies (40), the most nett pars (38), the least "blow-outs" (23) and the lowest overall gross (435). But these statistics do little to conceal career losses of £23 and his seeming inability to win the BEC.

David Law

This year we were not treated to the customary exhibition of David's known talent. His graceful practice swings were rarely reproduced for his actual shots and even his trademarks were absent; not a single nearest-the-pin (as compared to 8 last year) and not a par at the opening hole on any round.

On the more positive side, David's knowledge of '50s, '60s and '70s lyrics was remarkable, he had 4 longest drives and was good enough to stay for the whole of this year's event. His saving grace was the afternoon round at Sheringham; two gross birdies contributing to a clean sweep match win, limiting his tournament losses to £9 and keeping his BEC career earnings in the black at £6.

Peter Jacobs

It is difficult to reconcile the differing accounts of Peter's build-up to the 1997 BEC. According to Tina, he spent his final days with Botts & Co. on the golf course and most evenings at the driving range. Contrastingly, Peter claimed to have had difficulty finding his clubs for the event so long had it been since he had last used them. Either way, his opening couple of rounds were unremarkable, but 3rd and 4th round match wins (90 & 91 gross respectively) netted him £50 and put him firmly back in contention.

Regrettably however, there were signs of a return to Peter's chequered past. Able to picture the BEC Tea Pot amongst his rowing trophies and clearly desperate for victory, it was brought to the attention of the committee that Peter might be tempted to employ some of his old tricks; finding "lost" balls, imaginative use of trouser pocket holes, practice swings a little too close to the ball, sudden inability to perform simple addition and so on. All BEC players were asked to be constantly vigilant.

In the end Peter was soundly beaten into 2nd place but can be well pleased with his overall performance which included no less than 18 nett birdies taking his all time total to 74 (well clear of any other player) and earned him £40, elevating him to 3rd place in the BEC order of merit.

Yet again, many thanks to Peter for his impeccable organisation. This year's Bad Etiquette Classic was excellent value for money. Only next year Peter for God's sake if you're going to invite a new member make sure they're no bloody good at golf.

Richard Reeves

It can be safely said that Richard was this year's most improved player. In almost every department his game has improved; 2 nett eagles, 11 nett birdies and a 5 round total of 498 amply illustrate this. His astounding 30ft putt for a match-saving birdie 2 at Royal Norwich illustrates what a fluky bugger he is that he is today a golfing force to be reckoned with.

His etiquette is also much improved; his six-figure Deutsche Morgan Grenfell salary clearly enabling him to take a more relaxed attitude to the loss of golf balls. At Mundesley he did well not to wade into a major third party confrontation when he was almost knee-capped on approaching the third green by a peculiarly unapologetic maniac on the 4th tee.

Also a factor in Richard's considerable improvement was his ability to steer clear of those dreaded "negative extras" (only 2) which cost him so dearly last year (10). A few more "positive extras" would not however go amiss. Only in the final round did Richard let himself down, allowing his losses to slip to £25 and his finishing position to slip to 6th place.

David Grimbley

Possibly the most painful moment of this year's event for David came at the Ship Inn before a single shot was played, when the committee unanimously agreed to increase the threshold for Maximum Liability Insurance from £40 to £50. And indeed, David didn't have the best of BEC's; only 2 pars, 17 bogies and no less than 8 furthest from the pins might suggest that he had not practiced feverishly for the event. However, there was some cause for optimism; his first nett eagle and only 2 lost matches compared to 4 last year. David is yet to win money on any BEC round of golf and under such circumstances he is to be congratulated for his remarkable composure, courteousness and good-humour.

bogies/blow-outs). He also cashed in nicely on nearest-the-pins and longest drives, nimbly avoided negative extras, and showed a remarkable determination to retrieve lost causes; recovering from dormy 3 down at Sheringham, and from 3 down with 4 to play at Royal Norwich.

Andy's total winnings of £62 (£20 of which were forfeited as a deposit on the trophy - a hastily implemented new rule) won him the 1997 Bad Etiquette Classic and made him the first proud holder of the Bad Etiquette Classic Tea Pot.

Richard Powderham

Clearly nowadays Richard takes his golf a lot less seriously than in years gone by when it was not uncommon for games to end acrimoniously well before the 18th (one in particular I remember terminated on the 3rd green). That was to be expected then when playing with someone whose motto was "it doesn't matter whether you win or you lose but on whom you place the blame" and who was not above pretending that he did not see his hopelessly hooked tee-shot, so that you were the guilty one when you informed him of the dire outcome of his stroke!

Not only was his behaviour exemplary (falling asleep over his curry and brawling in the hotel bar excepted) but his golf was also impressive with 18 pars, 40 bogies, 12 nett birdies and a nett eagle. And he made more positive extras than any other participant on his way to a purse of £8 and 4th place in both this year's event and the BEC order of merit.

Worst Etiquette

It is regretful that few nominations were received during this year's event for Worst Etiquette and Worst Third Party Confrontation. Whilst many incidents were worthy of such awards, the hefty associated fines (£3 and £6 respectively) clearly dissuaded offenders from accepting their guilt honourably. A classic example came on the 16th tee during the afternoon round at Sheringham when a player from the following 2-ball approached Pete J and asked, within ear-shot of all of us, that he cease from wheeling his trolley across the greens. When challenged, Pete said that he had merely been asked the time and doubtless the temperature, air-pressure and name of his favourite pop group.

So scarce have nominations become that it is hereby recommended they be combined into a single Worst Etiquette Award to be awarded by secret ballot

annually prior to the prize-giving. Furthermore, it is considered only right that retrospectively the Worst Etiquette Award be bestowed upon John Casale (1996) and Peter Jacobs (1994, 1995 and 1997).

In the absence of any further financial penalty, it is hoped and expected that a lot more bad etiquette will be on show at the 5th Bad Etiquette Classic.



Runner-up Peter Jacobs gets it in the ear from victor Andy Slamin

Andy Slamin

For the second year in succession the BEC has been won by a rookie, but unlike last year's victor, John Casale who played considerably under his fraudulent handicap on his way to victory, Andy succeeded in winning the event without playing to handicap in any round.

The secret of Andy's success was paradoxically the inconsistency of his game (32 pars/birdies & 31 double