

HERTFORDSHIRE GOLF UNION

2005 BOYS ORDER OF MERIT REPORT

The Hertfordshire Boys Order of Merit continues to grow thanks to the increasing interest in county clubs organising junior open competitions. Dwindling adult membership makes it even more important for clubs to encourage junior membership and support competitions where youngsters can pit their competitive instincts against their peers in an environment that promotes good sportsmanship. The number of opens increased to 20 with Brookmans Park, Broxbourne and Welwyn Garden City all running-qualifying events for the first time.

The merit table is based on points awarded to boys finishing position in these junior opens during the year. The winner of the order of merit is the boy, based on gross scores, with the 6-best combined position points in junior opens, plus his position points in the Boys County Championship. Experience has shown that this table favours the low handicap player.

In 2005 a second order of merit table was introduced for the first time based on competitors net scores. This allows wider opportunity for higher handicap players to receive recognition and encourages younger golfers competing in junior opens.

One of the benefits for clubs in registering their open as a qualifying event for the Order of Merit is that the competition is promoted to a wider audience as all events are listed in the county fixture diary and in the Events section on the county website. Entry forms can also be placed on the website for competitors to download. From the county perspective it helps selectors by giving feedback on boys performance throughout the season and enables them to monitor progress, and to identify any promising players for county coaching. Additionally, it reveals the younger up-and-coming boys who are keen to broaden their golfing experience by playing courses other than their home club.

The HGU are grateful to those clubs who run junior opens and who provide the results promptly to allow the BOOM tables featured on the county website to be updated regularly for the interest of junior golfers.

SCRATCH

This years scratch BOOM was again closely contested with the early season form of Matthew Youngs of West Herts allowing him to get a head start with good performances in the first few events especially after winning the Bushey Hall open. However he could not maintain his good start and Matthew eventually finished 5th.

He was overhauled by the mid season performances of Alan Glithero of The Hertfordshire who won at Brocket Hall and South Herts and tied first at Letchworth and third at Berkhamsted. Alan had to withdraw from a couple of events towards the season end due to his selection to represent Hertfordshire boys in the South East group Inter-County Foursomes at Worthing where he performed admirably, and to represent his club's men's team in the Daily Mail knockout which The Hertfordshire ultimately won. Eventually, Alan with 154 points finished runner up overtaken by Stewart Mitchell of Brickendon Grange almost over the last few hurdles. After finishing second in 2003 and 2004 Stewarts has finally shaken off the mantle of always being the bridesmaid. His persistence and talent finally achieved the reward he duly deserves in his last season as a junior boy. He showed the most consistent form in opens throughout the season. He was well placed in earlier events finishing second at Aldwickbury and Brocket Hall, where he was defending his title, and fourth at Letchworth. He won at Welwyn Garden City and had late successes at Broxbourne, and Porters Park in horrendously wet conditions, to steam past Alan to secure the 2005 Boys Order of Merit.

Stewart finished with 162 points an improvement on his 2nd place, in 2004, when he had 153 points, and 135 points in 2003.

The N. E. Foster Cup will be presented to Stewart at the Junior Delegates Meeting at Welwyn Garden City Golf Club on Tuesday 7 March.

There were several other notable performances with Chris Barnes of Mill Green finishing 3rd in the table with 125 points after some consistence results but without recording a single victory. Jack Woods, formally a member of Aldwickbury and now of Mid Herts, won his previous clubs' open and was victorious at nearby Harpenden Common and finished 4th in the table with 123 points.

Perhaps not surprisingly several boys won their HOME club open including Tom Shadbolt at Mid Herts, Tom Speyer at West Herts, Joe Smith at Letchworth and Chris Peters at Great Hadham while Glen Portelli now of Brickendon Grange was triumphant at his previous club, The Hertfordshire.

Glen finished in 6th place recording the most finishing points in 10 junior opens a feat matched by Will Chambers of Redbourn. Perhaps names to look out for in 2006!

During 2005, 153 boys recorded BOOM points, a substantial increase on the 122 boys in 2004 and 115 boys 2003.

HANDICAP

2005 saw the introduction of a Handicap BOOM table with competitors obtaining points for the finishing positions based on their net scores. It was thought that this would create more interest for young and higher handicap competitors. Perhaps unsurprisingly Stewart Mitchell and Alan Glithero finished 4th and 3rd respectively in this table demonstrating that they performed close to their handicap. However some emerging young talent occupied the top ten places in the table amongst them being Ashley Alderman from Welwyn Garden City, Josh Newmarch of Brickendon Grange, Daniel Banbury from Letchworth, Andrew Banks from Harpenden Common and Will Chambers of Redbourn. These are boys to look out for in the next few years as they, like a good wine, can only get better with age and experience as they are all under 15 years. There was not one competitor who won the Handicap prize in more than one junior open unlike the Scratch BOOM.

Glen Portelli of Brickendon Grange recorded points in ten events and finished 2nd with 105 points to Shaun Brown of The Hertfordshire who played the most consistently to his handicap throughout the summer. In 7 events Shaun recoded points and finished with 120 points as his 6-best combined total. 163 boys recorded points in this table showing how much more compact the scoring was.

There is one significant lesson learned from seeing these results and that is that these young golfers are unaware of their duty to report to their HOME club their AWAY scores in handicap qualifying events. Nor are they aware of their responsibility to reduce their handicap immediately when they have recoded a score better than their existing handicap. Some clubs do not issue a complete list of scores for the competition nor do they notify competitors HOME club of the result or calculate a CSS. Many of the boys are looking to reduce their handicap and it's important that they learn the CONGU rules as soon as possible otherwise they may find themselves disqualified for failing to play to their correct handicap. It is unlikely that this is done deliberately. To assist them the county has produced a handicap record sheet for them to update and use to report back to their handicap secretary. This is issued to boys attending county training days and is available on the website.

The new Boys Order of Merit – Handicap Cup presented by C G James will be awarded to its first ever winner, Shaun Brown, at the Junior Delegates meeting.

2006 BOOM

Last year Verulam ran a junior open for the first time but as it was a stableford competition it could not be granted BOOM status. They have advised that this year they will be amending their competition conditions to ensure it will be a qualifying open so we shall be up to 21 junior opens when only 4 years ago we started with 11. A full list of all events is on the county website www.hertsgolfunion.com

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