



Open Championship shines in the sandstorm

by Gary Richardson

One hundred and forty golfers braved the testing weather conditions to compete in the second RGGB Open championship staged at Dirab golf course on February 4th.

The event which took the form of a four ball Texas scramble saw 35 teams fight for the coveted claret jugs on offer. The early morning starters began their rounds in perfect conditions that were much warmer than expected for early February. However Mother Nature decided that there were too many birdies being scored and responded with a sandstorm that appeared out of nowhere. This halted the early progress that many teams were making and really made recording a low round tough.

The conditions became so testing that some people had trouble standing up. In spite of the conditions there was some incredible golf played on the day which resulted in a really tight finish to the event. Only 1 shot separated the top 5 teams with mathematical equations that would have even confused the tax man required to separate the winners from the rest.

In fact the three teams that finished in sixth, seventh and eighth recorded the same scores the as the third, fourth and fifth placed teams and were only denied a trophy on the count back system.

When all of the sums had been completed and double checked, the team of Ronny Lidman, Talal Saredidine, Michael Tannenbaum and Theresa Wade had won by the narrowest of margins.

In second place on the same score as the winners were Spence Hawthorne, Tom Merkel, Paul Papanicolaou and Lady Vanessa Patey, after both squads tied on 57. Lidman and Co. had a gross score of 67 and a combined handicap of 10, while Hawthorne and teammates had 68 and 11.

The tournament which was organized by Gary Richardson and his team was hosted for the second straight year by Dirab Golf & Country Club had two shotgun starts, 7 am and 12 noon, to accommodate the large number of players that entered the event.

Underscoring the tight battle for honors the next three places in the top five were all decided after the count back with all three teams tying on 58. They all scored a gross 68 and each had a combined handicap of 10. Third place went to the foursome of Peter Donkin, Casey



RGGB SPORTS

Blatch, Richard Davies and Ray Martin. In fourth position were Marty Latimer Cowall, Attila Soki, Rob Stacey and Alison Rogers, while Rajput Surinder, Ed Bulkeley, Sile McIlroy and Matt Martin took the fifth spot.

The prizes for the longest drive for men's and ladies division went to Mark Campbell and Ruby Klawikowski, the closest to pin to Tom Merkel on No. 4 and Iain Blacklaw on No. 11, and longest putt to Ian Morrison.

The evening part of the event was hosted once more by Sir William Patey and Lady Vanessa. Sir William was clearly delighted that he had been beaten by his wife and held no grudge at all that she won a beautiful cut glass Saudi sword trophy, while he remained empty handed. Allegations that organiser Gary Richardson had hand picked Lady Vanessa's team so that she could win a trophy were strongly disputed.

In her speech at the ball Lady Vanessa informed the audience that Sir William had actually instructed the organizers to "put me in a strong team that will win. Just put Vanessa in a team that isn't that bothered".

As well as a fun golf event and evening function the day had a serious side to it. All proceeds from the event were earmarked for the ICING children's charity. After raising SR 110,000 in 2009 Lady Patey admitted that she would have been very happy with a similar amount for the charity to which she is patron.

However after all of the money raised by sponsorship, entry fees, raffles and auctions was added up by RGGB treasurer Marcus Cleverton, Gary was able to present a clearly stunned Lady Patey with a cheque for SR 240,000, this was then topped up to SR 250,000 by Mohammed Subedar and Alistair Mcilroy when the Ambassador agreed to hold their "Sheraton dining experience" prize in the residence at the Embassy.

He also presented Sir William with a token cheque for the Embassies Haiti fund of SR 10,000.

This huge sum of money seemed surreal and a clearly delighted Sir William and Lady Vanessa gave their heartfelt thanks to everyone in the garden.

The evening then concluded with dancing to the tunes of DJ Matt Wobble until it was time to draw the line under another successful event.

The RGGB and ICING would like to thank everyone who was involved in making the event another huge success. We would particularly like to thank our generous sponsors without whom this event could not have taken place, these sponsors are:

SABB, BMI, Olayan, Amex, Crane, Al Saif, Sheraton Riyadh Hotel & Towers, Hotel Al Khozama, Royal Air Maroc, Pepsi Al Jomaih, Arabian Food Supplies, Almarai Co., Trophy World, Axa, Price Waterhouse Cooper, Arabian Shield and Dirab Golf & Country Club.