

Captains Report 2018

Wow what has happened to this year. It's gone all too quickly, and many of the things I had planned have simply had to take a back seat.

Many of you know that Captains traditionally get the courtesy of the course at most of the UK's golf clubs, and I had planned on taking full advantage of the situation, as we enter December, I can honestly state that I have only played 1 course where courtesy has been offered!

While you are in "harness" from Jan, the drive in is the typical start of the Captains year, and with my "top" sending the ball only 10 yards, it was an omen that I didn't want to continue.

Before I continue I must congratulate our new Vice Captains Simon Harper & Dot Edwards on their appointments and, of course, my best wishes go to Neil and Anne in their role as your Captains for the coming year.

I also welcome the new Managing Director for the resort, David Steel, and I can already see that our team of Neil, Anne, Simon and Dot will work well with David, James and Nick in the coming months, to develop the Golf club further in the interests of members and visitors alike.

We are very lucky at Portal to have such a fantastic home, with 45 holes to play, any time we like, but also a wider capability of playing other resorts owned by MacDonald Hotels. That opportunity is something we rarely consider and even rarer take full advantage of, speaking recently to two members whom have taken advantage of our free golf at the other MacDonald courses, this is a privilege that more members should take advantage of.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the members of the committees, both male and female, whom spend their own valuable time to administer, run and work on the competitions, handicaps, interclub matches for the betterment of the club and as a complete volunteer, at times a thankless task, I simply want to say that all your efforts this year were completely appreciated. Thank You.

Before this year, I did not personally know the Lady Captain Pat very well, as of late Pat has generally played social golf rather than in the weekend competitions, that said, we hit the ground running, and I have to say that it has been a real delight to work with Pat. I hope she agrees that we have been able to support each other well and have spent our time looking at ways to improve the whole club both for competitive players and also for those whom prefer to play socially.

With a “challenging” AGM, we found ourselves without a President in residence throughout most of the year, however behind the scenes, that wasn’t the case, Rosemary was always available to me, should we need it, always a support and a solid confident and always willing to offer guidance. Thank you, Rosemary, the club owes you a debt of gratitude.

Neil will shortly talk about the new Committee but I would like to add my own personal thanks to the members of the Committee who have served the club so well in 2018.

Two of the long serving members namely Ken Pugh and Rob Cobain are now coming off the committee. Thanks Ken & Rob. Enjoy your rest and the opportunity to concentrate on your own game without distractions. You deserve it.

The same goes for Mr. IPC, Daryl Edwards, who has always been there for me this year, his friendship support and consistent willingness to help has been immense. I would not have survived this year without you. Thank you.

To succeed in the role, The Captain needs to have a very good relationship with the MacDonalds senior management. As the year started the working relationship had started to bare fruit, with significant amount of work being undertaken on the courses.

We had a great working relationship with John Angus, while not always seeing eye to eye, we certainly had a consistent line of communication which was reliable , Glenn had the interests of the members at heart and worked diligently on trying to solve problems, it is a great testament to him so many members remained at the club when they were considering a change, I hope that these members now agree that was the right decision, and the problems associate with PMG have been rectified.

Since both John and Glenn left in the middle of the season, the communication has been more difficult, with Nick Shepard effectively covering both roles, trying to develop the golf offer and improve the golf shops while also trying to action the requests of the members.

With the new MD David Steel, arriving as the season ended we have only recently started to work together. It is evident very early on that we see the future of Portal in the same light as the “jewel in the Macdonald crown” and should be positioned as the best golf resort in the North West. A view that is very encouraging for the future.

In the year there were also changes in the Premier Clubhouse staff and I would like to thank Donna, Ben and Emma for all the warmth, friendship and service throughout the year.

Onto the courses; With Barry taking over as the Estate manager, with a new direction the spotlight was well and truly on the new regime.

Due to the horrendous weather, some of the work undertaken over the winter, couldn't be completed and we didn't see the full advantage until well into the season, however the new layout and sculpting of the course showed a new (improved) layout which certainly speeded up play.

Barry and his team worked hand in hand with the committees and responded to every request we offered, this was especially the case at the Captain's Day event where we had boats in ponds, bullseyes on fairways, ropes and lines with pins in specific places.

His year became more challenging when we had the warmest summer for 40 or more years, just at the time when the main water main in Eaton had burst, reducing our water capability to a trickle.

Having to come into work and water greens at 1 am, and then struggling to fully water all the greens (we had less than 20% of our required water at stages this year) was a serious challenge and his commitment to saving the course was truly above and beyond

Thank you, Barry, the whole club appreciates your dedication, professionalism and support.

This year, Lady Captain and I, decided to split the charities, between Leighton Hospital neonatal ward and St Luke's Hospice. Two local charities which have touch both our lives and warrant our personal support, due to the generosity of members and visitors, we have been able to collect a vast sum, a little over £15,000. An amazing sum Thank you.

Like most Captains I gave myself some targets at the beginning of the year. One of my main ones was to improve my handicap (it raised by 3!), one was to win all of our interclub matches (we won 75% of them) and finally to win more of the grudge matches than Daryl did last year (I achieved this target!)

But mainly to try and encourage more participation and engagement within the club.

Now at the end of the year, I can report that these main points have also been achieved.

We have seen an overall increase in the participation members have shown in competitions (in actual fact in 10 of the 12 months), which bucks a national trend

Secondly participation in social events, from the Masters Night, through Captains Day, The Family Fun Day, The Autumn Charity to the Seniors Xmas Party we have seen a solid growth in participation for the social events, and I would really encourage any member to come along to the social events next year, where you can expect fantastic food, excellent company and a very enjoyable evening, with like minded people.

So finally, I would like to thank you, my fellow members for your support during my Captaincy. It has been a privilege to be your Captain in 2018.

It now gives me great pleasure to handover to your 2019 Captain Neil Tidd

Good Luck Neil, you have my total support and best wishes