

Lady Captain, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is time for me to say a few words, before we get on with enjoying ourselves. My only brief is to keep it short and keep it simple, I can only promise the latter I'm afraid.

Firstly, I hope you enjoyed the competition earlier today, the weather was relatively kind I thought. At this point I must say a very big thank you to Paul Fenwick, Head of Comps, who has managed the competition from start to finish, and to his CompsCom colleagues who have helped him out on the day;

Trevor Bracken, Cliff Simmons, Mike Wilkinson, Steve Keeble and Steve McManus ??

I presume the course was in good condition today, so my thanks to Craig Earnshaw and his team for giving us a course in such good condition throughout the summer.

Also, thanks to Martin Skinner, our Manager, and his staff for all their hard work, especially the catering team for providing us with such a fine buffet this evening.

Lastly, I must thank Helen Mills and her colleagues on Socom, plus Sue Phillips for the table decorations, for all their hard work throughout the year and especially for tonight.

Right, I've been in office for just under 5 months and there is one recurring question – "how is your captaincy going, are you enjoying it?". A simple question but there is no easy answer.

I started my Captain's year full of great ideas and hopes to improve things to the benefit of the members. What a grand ideal, but then reality kicks in; there are many challenges to be faced and many struggles, as well as lots of enjoyable highlights. In truth I didn't expect a smooth passage and this has proved to be the case so far.

Soon after taking over as Captain I was told that we were to have a new club manager. I had worked with Richard, virtually since he joined and had built up quite a good working relationship and suddenly I had to adjust to a new mind-set.

As I see it, the main problems that I and you face, not in any particular order, are the following:

- 1) An apparent increase in pay and play golf.
- 2) This increase seems to be accompanied by a degradation in dress-code, both on the course and in the clubhouse. I am working with Martin to reverse this trend. I have agreement that something has to be done and am awaiting news on the actions that he is taking. After all, and I quote from Crown's website, "Crown Golf is committed to upholding the great traditions of golf"

- 3) Thirdly, the cost of membership seems to be on an upward spiral, whilst the benefits of membership seem to be on a downward path. This situation cannot continue, as loyal members may soon say “enough is enough” and start voting with their feet. Are we already seeing the start of this to a degree?

Having said all that, I appreciate that Crown Golf are operating in very difficult economic climate, but they must not let their standards drop, nor must they lose sight of members rights and wishes.

On the other side of the coin there are good points to enjoy;

- 1) We are seeing many new members arriving at the Club and there is a good level of integration. I look at competition start sheets and see several new names every time. So the new members are involved in comps, now we need to get them involved on the social side – club nights and social functions. Now theres a challenge for someone!!
- 2) The course, as I said earlier, is in great condition and the greens are superb. Visitors and members tell me this all the time so it must be true.
- 3) The Academy appears to be growing from strength to strength and should mean the club is looking good for the foreseeable future. Well done to Gavin and all his team; this includes all the work that Linda Warren puts in, acting as the link between the Academy and the Club.

And so, onto a couple of highlights of my year to date.

Firstly, the Charity Country Fayre was a great success. Those of you who attended seemed to have an enjoyable time and helped us raise £1300 for the Captains Charity, which as you know is Treloars. Thanks to everyone who helped on the day or donated tombola prizes and a special thank you to Linda and Fred Warren for allowing us to use their garden and grounds for the event and for all the hard work that they put in to make it such a success.

Secondly, Club Championships for Ladies and Men were most enjoyable for me. It was brilliant to see Jenn Luscombe overcome a handicap difference of 9 to become Lady Champion and Handicap Salver Winner. In the Men’s Championship, it was good to see Deu Kumar Rai come through and win the Handicap Salver, even though he went home before prize-giving because he thought he had been pipped at the post. But the highlight was seeing Dimitri, almost lost for words, being quite humble when presented with the Championship Trophy. I’ll never forget the moment when he stripped down to his underpants to take a celebratory dip in the fishpond, what a sight. I just hope he hasn’t set a precedent.

Thank you for listening to my thoughts and memories. In answer to the original question, yes, I am enjoying my year as Captain, it is a lot of hard work, with a few knocks along the way, but the help, advice and encouragement has been uplifting. With your continued support I feel sure we can go from strength to strength.

Thank you!!

We now need to present the prizes from today's competitions so I'll hand over to Cliff to announce the winners.