

The One Armed World Championships - 2025

The town of Redcar is situated on the North-East coast a few miles from Middlesbrough. In many ways it is the classic British seaside town with a long sandy beach, amusement arcades, numerous fish and chip shops and a fair sprinkling of pubs. At the north end of the town sits Cleveland Golf Club, which boasts a rather fine golf course which describes itself as "the only true Championship links and also the oldest course in the county of Yorkshire". In June 2025 the club was the venue for the Society of One Armed Golfers' world championships.

As the event convenor it was my responsibility to write an account of the event and post it on the Society's website shortly after. For various reasons it's taken me far longer than I'd originally hoped to get around to doing this. So, with suitable apologies, I offer some general reflections on the event some 4 months on and I'll try and do better next time.

Partnership with EDGA

Let's start with the format. For those new to the society, the World Championships are our annual competition involving one armed golfers from all parts of the British Isles together with a number of competitors from further afield. Since the COVID pandemic the numbers attending the Championships have, for various reasons, been declining so, in 2024, the Society took the decision to make two key changes to the format of the competition. First, it was reduced from 5 days to 3, and, second, entry was extended to golfers with disabilities which satisfy the European Disabled Golf Association criterion for "arm impairment". This meant that the competition could be advertised in the EDGA calendar of events, and that the results could count towards ranking points for individual golfers.

In practice this meant that we were a larger group of competitors than in recent years. Just under a third were taking part in the championships for the first time. The collaboration with EDGA had resulted in interest from a wide range of disabled golfers. Apart from those who actually attended there were many others who had expressed an interest in competing and who may come to future events. The overwhelming majority of competitors played exclusively with one arm, but there were some in the "assist" or "touch" EDGA categories. They were allowed to compete in the Nett competition but not the Gross.

It is true that there were some teething troubles in reconciling the SOAG format with the EDGA rules and there is an ongoing debate about whether the playing field between one armed golfers and those competing under the "Arm Impairment" categories is as level as it should be. However this did not seem to affect the Cleveland championships in any way. The prizes were won by the best golfers, and the event was thoroughly enriched by the new faces who had joined us via EDGA.

The Venue

We spent the week as guests of the Cleveland Golf Club. Anyone who was expecting a dour Yorkshire reception would have been very pleasantly surprised because, from start to finish, the club couldn't have been more friendly, welcoming and generous. For me, their attitude was summed up by an exchange I had with the Lady Captain. Some of our golf had been a little slow and we were delaying a ladies competition behind us. When I went over them to apologise for this, she said "there's no need to apologise, it's your flag flying over the clubhouse and the course is at your disposal for as long as you need it."

A factor that, without doubt, contributed to the attitude of the club was the sterling work of Darren Grey. This is his home course and he is employed in the pro-shop. He worked incredibly hard in preparing the club for our visit. He raised money through sponsorship, he did much of the negotiation with the club officials and he even ran a taxi service to collect competitors from Newcastle airport. The smooth running of the championships and the warm and friendly welcome from the club owes more to the hard work of Darren than anyone else. Thanks Darren.

A particular feature of the week was the wide range of different members who were happy to give up their time to make the Championships a success. Whether it was a question of guiding us on our practice rounds, lending equipment, giving out scorecards, spotting on the course etc, the members were always ready to help. We really felt that the club were pleased to be hosting us and had entered into the spirit of the competition.

The club's all round facilities were good, but a particular mention must go to the catering staff, the food was good throughout the week but the formal meals - the buffet on the Sunday night and the dinner on the last night were excellent.

The Golf

The golf consisted of the usual SOAG Championship format, slightly slimmed down to fit into 3 days. There were two qualifying rounds followed by matchplay knockout competitions for the top four golfers in each of the Gross and Nett divisions together with Stableford competitions for the non-qualifiers.

The course was, as advertised, a very fine links course, in excellent condition. The weather was mixed - virtually no rain, an occasional glimpse of the sun, early morning sea mists and, most significantly of all, the wind. It was pretty windy on the day of the first qualifying round and the next day it was even more challenging, even members who were used to the conditions admitted that it was unusually difficult. Despite the conditions, some of the scoring was impressive. By the end of day 2 the gross qualifiers were Cian Arthurs (158), Darren Grey (164), Mark Marshall (169) and, playing in his first championships, Matt Gamble (179).

There were two more first time entrants in the top four in the nett category. Herve Perque scored an impressive nett 141 to lead the division, with Patrick Rosenast (149) second. Joining them in the matchplay knockouts were old stagers Bob Jenkins (149) and Steve Hutchinson (151). Steve's nett 74 on the second day was particularly impressive given the challenging conditions and won him the Bob Hughes Cup.

In the other competitions on the first 2 days, Cian Arthurs, not content with posting the best 2 qualifying rounds, proceeded to win the putting competition and then edged out Matt Gamble by inches to win the longest drive. The competition rules meant that he wasn't allowed to enter the chipping competition, however even he would have been hard put to beat the winning chip. Alan Gentry, playing with borrowed clubs as his own had been lost in transit from America, managed to chip in from 25 yards. A great supporter of the SOAG championships and a worthy winner.

And so to day 3. Thankfully the wind had dropped overnight and playing conditions were much more benign, which was reflected in the scoring, particularly from the higher handicap golfers. The stableford competition for non-qualifiers was won by Michael O'Grady who improved his previous day's score by a small matter of 18 shots and won the President's Prize with 45 stableford points. Not far behind was Rihards Valands a first time entrant who had travelled from Latvia to compete, and who scored an excellent 40 points which won him the Cattnach Cup.

Meanwhile the matchplay knockout competitions were being played out. In the Nett division the semi finals were very close with both matches going down the 18th. Steve Hutchinson and Rob Jenkins narrowly beat Herve Perque and Patrick Rosenast respectively. This meant that the nett final turned out to be an all-English affair. When the dust had settled it was Steve Hutchinson who emerged victorious 3 and 2 after a keenly fought and high quality final. Well done Steve, but congratulations to the four of you for an excellent contest.

This left just one prize to be determined - the gross matchplay knockout to decide which golfer would be crowned this year's World Champion. The semi finals had been close. Cian Arthurs used all his experience to edge out Matt Gamble 4 and 3. Matt is an excellent young golfer who was generally considered to be a future world champion in the making. In the other semi final Mark Marshall had to play some very fine golf to defeat Darren Grey on his home course 3 and 2. So it came down to Cian Arthurs, current World Champion and leading scorer from the qualifying rounds, against Mark Marshall, who had never won the Championships, but who at 2.4 hcp had the lowest handicap in the field.

And what a final it was! Mark Marshall, playing some truly magnificent golf, raced into a powerful lead. At 5 down there was a real risk that Cian was going to be blown away, yet gradually he eased his way back into the match so that, by the time they reached the 17th Mark was two up with two to play. Cian proceeded to birdie the last two holes to level the match, so we all trooped off to the 1st again. This awkward hole could not separate the pair,

and nor could the 2nd. It was finally on the tricky 3rd green that the deadlock was finally broken and Mark emerged as the winner. It was a truly epic final where the standard of golf was at times breathtaking, Mark Marshall emerged as a worthy first time Champion, and Cian Arthurs had put up a gallant defence of his crown.

So, all in all, a fitting climax to a really enjoyable week. The championships had been thoroughly enriched with a number of new faces many of whom had learned about SOAG via the EDGA publicity. Everyone seemed to have had a good time - certainly I did. My thanks to everyone at the club and in the Society who made it all possible.

The next World Championships will be taking place in Ireland at the Lee Valley Golf and Country Club, a delightful course not far from Cork. The dates will be 15th - 18th June 2026. Put it in your diaries now.

Mike Benaim - Convenor 2025 championships.

RESULTS

Qualifying rounds 1 & 2

Gross		Nett	
Pos			Pos
1.	Cian Arthurs 74 + 84 = 158	68 + 78 = 146	2
2.	Darren Grey 79 + 85 = 164	72 + 78 = 150	5
3.	Mark Marshall 87 + 82 = 169	84 + 79 = 163	15
4.	James McRitchie 83 + 87 = 170	75 + 79 = 154	7=
5.	Matthew Gamble 92 + 87 = 179	84 + 80 = 164	16
6.	Steve Hutchinson 91 + 88 = 179	77 + 74 = 151	6
7.	Bob Jenkins 89 + 96 = 185	71 + 78 = 149	4
8.	Robert Paul 96 + 94 = 190	88 + 86 = 174	18
9.	Herve Perque 91 + 100 = 191	66 + 75 = 141	1
10.	Dave Waterhouse 89 + 105 = 194	72 + 88 = 160	13
11.	Darren Masters 94 + 103 = 197	74 + 83 = 157	7=
12.	Stuart Griffin 98 + 100 = 198	80 + 82 = 162	14
13.	Jim Darragh 94 + 108 = 202	72 + 86 = 158	10
14.	Terry Adnams 94 + 109 = 203	71 + 86 = 157	9
15.	Martin O'Mahoney 102 + 108 = 210	77 + 83 = 160	12
16.	John Armstrong 105 + 107 = 212	79 + 81 = 160	11
17.	Michael O'Grady 110 + 104 = 214	87 + 81 = 168	17
18.	Patrick Rosenast 109 + 110 = 219	74 + 75 = 149	3

NR : David Bailey, Alan Gentry, Hugh Ross, Michael Goodwin, Rihards Valans, Mike Benaim, Chris Young, Simon Jackson, Graeme Mazur

Nett matchplay knockout semi finals:

Steve Hutchinson bt Herve Perque 1 up

Bob Jenkins bt Patrick Rosenast 1 up

Final

Steve Hutchinson bt Bob Jenkins 3 & 2

Gross matchplay knockout semi finals:

Cian Arthurs bt Matthew Gamble 4 & 3

Mark Marshall bt Darren Grey 3 & 2

Final

Mark Marshall bt Cian Arthurs 20th hole

PRIZE WINNERS

Chipping competition	Ness Cup	Alan Gentry	
Putting competition	David Hughes	Cian Arthurs	
Longest drive	Bill Thornton Trophy	Cian Arthurs	
Tuesday stableford competition	Bob Hughes Cup	Steve Hutchinson	
Best gross qualifying rounds	Thornton Cup	Cian Arthurs	
Runner up		Darren Grey	
Best nett qualifying rounds	Sir Ian Hamilton trophy	Herve Perque	
Runner up		Patrick Rosenast	
Best qualifying rounds over 65	Sir David Hume trophy	Terry Adnams	
Stableford competition for non-qualifiers	Presidents Prize	Michael O'Grady	
Runner up	Cattenach Cup	Rihards Valans	
Nett matchplay semi finalists		Herve Perque	Patrick Rosenast
Runner up		Bob Jenkins	
Nett matchplay champion	Dave Mooney cup	Steve Hutchinson	
Gross matchplay semi finalists		Darren Grey	Matthew Gamble
Runner up		Cian Arthurs	
World champion	Rowan cup	Mark Marshall	