

Mr President of the English Golf Union, visiting County Presidents, Honoured Guests, Fellow Athletes.

On behalf of the **Staffordshire Union of Golf Clubs** may I take this opportunity to welcome all our distinguished guests here tonight. I would like to introduce our principle guests, and I suggest that if you were to give each the reception that they deserve we would still be here at midnight. I therefore ask you to give them one big round of applause once I have introduced them all.

Gentlemen, from your left they are:-

Mr Roger Fielding President of Cheshire Union of Golf Clubs

Mr **Gordon Rising**, President of Northamptonshire

Mr **John Powell** the President of Warwickshire Union of Golf Clubs.

Mr John Outram President of Derbyshire Union of Golf Clubs.

Next is our guest speaker, **Mr Colin Price** from whom you will hear shortly.

We then have Mr **Bill Harrison**, President of Cambridgeshire Union of Golf Clubs, incidentally Bill and I go back many years, having played in the same Birmingham University golf team in the early 1970's. Not many people know that in his younger years, Bill used to breed and train racing snails. He believed that the wind resistance of the shell was a governing factor in slowing down his charges.

He therefore bred snails whose shell was a minimum, however, it only made them more sluggish.

We then have Mr **Anthony Abraham**, the President of the English Golf Union, who has already addressed you. Anthony's other claim to fame, besides being President of the EGU is that he is a lifelong 'Baggies' supporter, that is West Bromwich Albion. Despite that he is comparatively normal!

Mr **Andrew Blows**, the President of the Midlands Golf Union, who has only recently taken over from **Jim Dean** who I also welcome here this evening.

Next we have the President of Worcestershire Union of Golf Clubs, Mr **Brian Morris**.

and then we have Mr **Alec Shepperton** the Nottinghamshire Union of Golf Clubs President

And finally, but by no means least Mr **Roger Barker** the President of Leicestershire & Rutland Union of Golf Clubs.

Gentlemen, you are all most welcome here in Staffordshire.

There are of course also a number of other guests around the room, County Secretaries, Past County Presidents and guests of members. You are all most welcome and it is doubly pleasing to see you all here tonight.

Sitting on the table with the County Secretaries is our own Secretary, **Martin Payne**. Martin, as usual, has expressly forbidden me from thanking him for all his work, and so I won't. Suffice it to say that he has made my job over my term as President extremely easy, telling me where to be, when, what to wear, and until now what to say. The organisation this evening is testament to his efficiency.

As you will most probably be aware, it is usual for the President to report on the playing year and our achievements in 2010 in this speech. However, before I do so there is also a presentation that is made by the President during this speech. This is the **Len Turner Trophy** which is presented to the individual that has, in the view of the President, done much to further Staffordshire Golf.

This is normally presented at the end of the speech, but I prefer to present it whilst I still have your full attention!

There are so many people to whom I would like to present the prize, but one of the conditions is that no person may win it twice. Thus eliminating many of my initial short list.

The Staffordshire Seniors team was set up initially by our past President **John Loader**, who also did much to propagate Seniors golf Nationally. The Seniors team is generally self sufficient, only requesting help as and if they qualify for the Seniors County Championship of England. The fact that it is financially on a strong foot is down to the efforts of one man in particular.

When the Seniors took over the organisation of the Seniors Competitions from the County Executive they were lucky to

get a dozen or so entries for the Loader Trophy and the Seniors County Championship, hence the prizes were abysmal and the revenue to the Seniors account almost non-existent. Now those competitions together with the Cox Chalise in memory of our past President **Brian Cox**, attract in excess of 100 players each, prize funds are extremely generous and the net revenue means that Seniors County golf is thriving. This success is down to the efforts of one man in particular whose attention to detail and enthusiasm for work is unbounded.

I therefore have great personal pleasure in presenting the Len Turner Trophy to **Terry Henwood**.

Gentlemen, as last year I will not go into every detail of this year's achievements, the winners of trophies etc can clearly be seen on the back of your menus and each and every one of them is to be congratulated.

Last year the year was a nearly year until it turned round late in November when with a quirk of results we won the Midland League. For me, and I believe the players, this was even more a "Nearly" year. In County Qualifying the Juniors actually scored well enough to win, but due to the unfortunate mis-signing of a card, were relegated to second behind Lincolnshire, who went on to win the Junior County Championship of England. Congratulations to them.

The 1st team also came very close, this time behind Warwickshire after leading at lunchtime. However, the Seniors did win their qualifying at Kirby Muxloe, going on to Gog Magog where they finished a creditable third, after really threatening to upset the form book against the favourites Kent

When you realise that each of these qualifying competitions were an aggregate score by teams of 6 players over two rounds for the 1st team and one round for the Juniors and Seniors we really were very close.

The Junior team this year well to did win the West Midlands League with victories over Warwickshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire. However, they then had to play off with Nottinghamshire, winners of the East Midlands League and lost out by 8 matches to 7 with no fewer than 9 matches going down the 18th where only one changed hands, and that not in Staffordshire's favour! **Alec**, Congratulations on what was a phenomenal year for all Nottinghamshire teams.

I realise that Nottingham may have been minus a couple of players. However, I would like to point out that **Robert Burlison** of Oxley Park and **Cameron Long** of Drayton Park could not play for Staffordshire that day as they were on duty representing England in an U16 match against Ireland, where Rob was in fact the Captain. It would have been good to see both of them here tonight, but unfortunately neither could come as they have both now been called up to join the England Under 18 Squad this weekend at Woodhall Spa. Congratulations to both players.

I can say that they have specifically asked me, in their absence, to personally thank Anthony Abraham for his support of the England Under 16 team over the last year. Anthony your constant encouragement of these juniors is greatly appreciated, not only by our lads but by the whole team.

At this stage I must thank **Roger Waite** our toastmaster this evening, who this year relinquishes his post as County

Junior Organiser after many years. Many thanks Roger. His Junior Committee should be congratulated, on the exemplary conduct of the juniors at all levels. Many of you may not realise but whereas the 1st team play 5 league and 2 non-league matches annually, there are no less than 17 junior matches at U14, U16 and U18 levels in addition to a couple of round robin tournaments and the County Qualifying. The Junior Committee of **Jim Whitehouse, Mike Tunnicliffe, Les Hancock, Charlie Birchall, Les Burlison** and **Steve Downes** are certainly kept busy and must be congratulated, and thanked for all their hard work. **Mike** we wish you all the ebst for the coming years, and I am sure that **Roger** will be on hand should you need help formulating the foursomes pairings.

Incidentally watching how these juniors play the game reminded me of **Bobby Jones'** comment about **Jack Nicklaus** back in the 60's, they play a game with which I am not familiar. Honestly the standard of golf is unbelievable – especially considering their age. Having said that the same can be said of **Prof Dave Thomas** the standard of his golf is unbelievable – again considering his age!!!

The County membership has continued to prosper this year and again we have to thank **Barry Whittaker** for his efforts on that front and on the County Card Scheme. This scheme is doing well, and it enables members of participating clubs to enjoy discounted green fees at countless courses nationwide. It does mean that your club would also have to offer similar discounted green fees.

Barry is intending to concentrate on the County Card Scheme and therefore in May of 2011 will relinquish his office as County Membership Secretary. Barry we thank

you for your work over many years, and we wish your successor **Bob Simkin** of Calderfields G.C all the best for the future.

Our 2nd team, ably led by **Kevin Beattie**, had a mixed season, finishing mid table in the second team league. I cannot help feeling that having team members 'pinched' at the eleventh hour to play for the 1st team as often as has been necessary this year cannot help. Kevin, we do thank you for the invaluable job you do in helping to bring on new 1st team players. Kevin will be the new 1st team captain next year, and so should be able to benefit from the fruits of his endeavours with the 2nds. Kevin, we do wish you all the very best.

Finally gentlemen, what of our first team? As I said at the beginning, was a "nearly year".

The match against Worcestershire came down to the wire and ended in Worcestershire edging us out 8-7. Congratulations **Brian**.

All this meant that we had to beat Warwickshire in our final match. In the event, even without Andy Sullivan, who turned pro immediately after the Walker Cup, they proved too strong and we had to accept that the league went to Nottinghamshire.

Thus our "Nearly Year" ended. Many thanks are due to **Dean Porter** for two excellent and competitive years as captain. Good to see so many of the team here tonight, well done lads, it has been fun supporting you over the last two years.

I cannot finish without congratulating our three County Champions for their performances on the Hodgkin Course at Woodhall Spa in their respective County Champions Tournaments.

On a windy and very difficult day for scoring when the CSS was raised to three over par, **Ryan Cornfield** was only 2 shots of tying the Junior Championship with rounds of 76 & 74 = 150.

The next day **Dave Whalley** was 4th with an aggregate of 1 under par 145. Our Seniors Champion, **Nick Copestick** also finished creditably. Congratulations to all three.

It only remains for me to wish everyone the best for 2012 and to ask the Gentlemen of Staffordshire, to please be upstanding and drink with me, the toast is "Our Guests".