



LYTHAM LEADS THE WAY

Recently, news broke that the USGA has finally abandoned the 18-hole play-off in favour of a 2-hole play-off, highlighting a surprising link to the Lytham Trophy.

When in the Lytham Trophy was instigated in 1965 advice was sought from many distinguished persons in British golf. One of whom was the doyen of the amateur game Gerald Micklem. He was no fan of play-offs of any kind and indeed to this day if the Brabazon Trophy (English Amateur Strokeplay) finishes in a tie then a tie it remains with two or more winners.

The Lytham Trophy followed suit and needless to say the first event in 1965 produced a tie between Michael Bonallack and Clive Clark.

What is more a 4-way tie followed in 1970 and another tie in 1973. Over the first 9 events, there had been 14 winners.

Not only was there the cost to the Club of a replica for each winner but it was heard said that soon the Secretary would have to announce who had not won rather than who had won!

Much thought was given as to the way forward and the concept of a 5-hole play-off (Holes 1-4 and 18) was devised. To be followed if required by sudden death. In 1975 future R&A Captain George Macgregor defeated Peter Deeble in the first play-off after a tie over 72 holes. Other play-offs have since followed.

That same year saw the last 18-hole play-off in the Open Championship when Tom Watson defeated Jack Newton at Carnoustie.

Shortly after this the R&A dispensed with the idea of the 18-hole play-off the next day in favour of a 4-hole play-off on the same evening. However, it was not until 1989 at Royal Troon was there a tie requiring the new play-off system.

One can't help wondering where the R&A and the USGA got the idea from...