



# Britain's Finest

The Volkswagen Masters 2008 is now in full flow with five more Regional Finals played on some of the very best layouts in the UK.



The breathtaking 9th at Gullane No 1

Venues in England, Scotland and Wales hosted Volkswagen Golf Masters Regional Finals this month. Some of the best golf in the history of the competition was played and 15 more excited competitors booked their place at Turnberry for the UK Final.

## Royal St David's

The Volkswagen Masters added another fine links course to its Regional Finals rota with a trip to Royal St David's. A visit to Harlech offers a fascinating test of pure links golf where it is easy to imagine people playing on the rolling fairways as far back as 1894. With Harlech Castle looming over the links and Snowdonia as a backdrop, Royal St David's should be on every golfer's must-play list.

The 6,591-yard par 69 proved one of the most difficult courses on the Regional Finals rota thanks to fiery greens and hard fairways combined with a difficult breeze. Ann Lewis became the first female UK finalist of 2008 finishing one-over-par off a handicap of 2. The Royal St David's member finished one ahead of Lee Jones, who battled to an impressive round of nett 72 playing off 1.

Group B highlighted the difficulty of the course where Ken Harley was victorious with a round of nett 76. The 11-handicapper from Llandrindod Wells beat Nigel Williams from Henlys Golf Club after a count-back.

The most impressive score of the day came from Steven Devereux in Group C. The Conwy member scored 36 Stableford points to finish five ahead of his nearest competitor, Malcolm Horsfall.

## Liphook

Liphook is a superb *Golf Monthly* Top 100 track that's always in tip-top condition, and with the club championship the following day, it was just

about as good as it gets. Arthur Croome, who worked with Fowler, Abercrombie and Simpson, is credited with its design – the only course that actually bears his signature. It is an excellent heathland design where five par 3s and three par 5s make up a par of 70.

Perhaps in response to the excellent conditions, the lowest handicappers, Group A, produced a nett score of 65, five-under-par. This was achieved by Dave Lucking from nearby Cowdray Park, playing off 6, in his first visit to Liphook in 15 years. It was a family affair as the two runners-up included Dave's son, Steve, as well as scratch golfer Kevin Hickman from Waterloooville, who both finished on 69.

Group B was won by 11-handicapper and fellow Cowdray Park member and former club captain, Phil Harrison. Three shots behind, in second place, came Kenny Thorpe from Mannings Heath, playing off 12.

In the higher handicap band, Group C, there was a very close battle with Sharon Taylor from Royal Eastbourne being unlucky to lose out on count-back. With 32 points and a back-nine of 19, Richard Freedman from the host club was the final recipient of an invitation to the UK Final at Turnberry in September. Richard, who plays off 19, has been a member at Liphook for more than 50 years and counts his win as the highlight of his golfing career... so far!

## Ashridge

Another course in the *Golf Monthly* Top 100, Ashridge is set in beautiful, rolling parkland, with the holes meandering through an old deer forest in a clover-leaf pattern which offers three loops that return to the clubhouse – one of nine holes, one of six, and one of three.

Despite the threat of rain in the passing clouds, there was plenty of sunshine, and as at Liphook just three days before, the scoring was



The delighted winners at Western Gales



Mo Dewji wins again at Ashridge

Words: Paul O'Hagan and Rob Smith, Photography: Phil Mingo

excellent. If there had been any doubt about the all-time best score in the history of the competition, then this was made insignificant by the superb performance from the winner of Group A, Mohammed Dewji. The former Volkswagen Masters UK Champion returned a truly impressive score of gross 73, nett 64. Special mention must also go to runner-up Nick Darnell from Studley Wood, also off 9, who was just one shot behind – a score that would normally be more than good enough to win!

Group B also produced an excellent winner in Nick Calver from Bocket Hall. The 15-handicapper recorded a nett 66 for a four-stroke win over David Bunce from Burnham Beeches. Nick knows the course reasonably well and felt that the excellent set-up at Ashridge helped him to relax and play his own game. The winner of the higher handicap band, Group C, was Danny Marino who plays off 21 at Bedford & County. His 34 points gave him a two-shot cushion over Graham Hayes from Stoke Park. All three qualifiers have seen Turnberry plenty of times before on television and are very much looking forward to their visit for the UK Final of the VW Masters in the middle of September.

## Western Gales

For the second year running competitors in the West Scotland Regional Final were bathed in sunshine for a fantastic day at Western Gales.

Anyone who expected that a calm day at Western Gales would make this stunning links course easy was in for a big surprise at the eighth Volkswagen Masters 2008 Regional Final.

The superb placement of tees at Western Gales means that every fairway seems extremely narrow, giving straight drivers a real advantage. With senior Open qualifying just three days after the Volkswagen Masters, the links was in stunning condition and the rough was extremely thick.



Liphook's challenging bunkers

It proved a great day for West Kilbride with members from the club claiming victory in both Group A and Group B. Ian Hoynes was victorious in Group A with an impressive score of nett 69 playing off 9. Western Gales secretary Barry Knowles finished one shot behind to take second place with Greenock's Kenneth Roy finishing third.

Tommy Saunders completed a solid round of 71 to claim his place in the UK Final in Group B. Neil Ross and George Deveney finished one shot behind with East Renfrewshire's Ross taking second place on count-back.

Ronnie Young will also represent Western Scotland in the UK Final at Turnberry after victory in Group C. The 19-handicapper from Irvine scored 29 Stableford points, finishing six points ahead of William Miller.

## Gullane

With wind and rain across most of the British Isles, competitors were lucky to be bathed in sunshine as they battled for a place in the UK Final at Turnberry.

Gullane No 1 is a stunning layout, and as you play the undulating links you will catch glimpses of at least five other courses. The breathtaking view from the 7th tee includes glimpse of esteemed neighbours Muirfield and on a clear day the Forth Bridge is in full view across the bay. With North Berwick just a few miles down the coast, you really are in the heart of golf country.

Despite punishing rough, competitors were treated to fine conditions and perfect greens. In one of the most competitive events this year many players posted impressive scores. This was highlighted in Group A where a 67 gross from +2 handicapper Mark Lamb was only good enough for fourth place. The low handicap category was won by Hamish McAlpine on count-back. The Alyth GC member produced a superb round of nett 67 playing off 3. Just missing out on first place was Alex Soutar who also shot a nett 67 playing off 4. David Sharp produced a great nett 69 to take third place on count-back.

Scoring was also impressive in Group B with players taking full advantage of the calm conditions. Ladybank member John Duncan secured his place in the UK Final with a round of nett 68 playing off 13. He finished two shots ahead of 12-handicapper Robert Knight of Castle Park Golf Club. Third place went to last year's UK finalist John Foley who made a valiant defence of his title with a round of nett 72 playing off 14.

Players in Group C found the thick rough extremely tough but Dunfirmline member Graham Burt battled to victory with 31 Stableford points. It was another second place for Castle Park Golf Club with Gary Slow scoring 30 Stableford points playing off 21. Martin Imrie of Ladybank finished in third place after a count-back.

**The Volkswagen Touareg**  
Volkswagen Touareg R50 RRP £60,670 urban 21.7 (13.0) - 16.0 (17.7); extra urban 34.9 (8.1) - 29.4 (9.6); combined 28.5 (9.9) - 22.4 (12.6). CO2 emissions 262 - 333g/km.