

# New format for Saturday – the good and bad

By Missy Jones • @missyjonjones

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There was shock and dismay from many about the R&A decision to play off two tees in groups of three for the third round of the Open Championship at Hoylake. This has never happened in its 143-year history and what may seem like a small change to some has caused a bit of a ruckus amongst the purists.

There is over 16 hours of sunshine in this part of the world at this time of the year making the typical Saturday at Muirfield last year possible. They had tee times in groups of two, running from 8:10 a.m. to 3:20 p.m. and this year we have tee times off No. 1 and No. 10 running from 9:00 a.m. to 11:01 a.m. with Ivor Robson only introducing half the field in his iconic manner! Gasp!

On one hand, I love the tradition and the endless day of golf that we are used to, but as somebody who runs tournaments, I can appreciate the reality of why it had to be done. The forecast called for, as the Brits so charmingly say, “significant thundery activity” with heavy rain, electrical storms and gusty winds off and on throughout the day. The two-tee start gives the officials the ability to accommodate up to five hours of delays if

they need it. That is a big deal and ensures that the round will be finished on Saturday and that the tournament ends on Sunday.

Even before this decision was announced, I heard murmurings from players and caddies feeling that the “luck of the draw” was so huge that the difference between the early/late and the late/early tee times was more unfair than usual on Friday. It was at least a few shots tougher for those that played afternoon/morning compared to those who played morning/afternoon but that factor seems to be a part of what we love about this event. Bad weather comes with the territory of playing and winning at an Open but thunder and lightning are play stoppers plain and simple. The officials needed the wiggle room to stop and start play on Saturday and this format gave them that luxury.