

Richard Bland – The Journey of a champion Part 1

In 1985 golf was a game played mainly by middle aged, middle class men who seemed to enjoy wearing brightly coloured clothing to go along with their rather full heads of hair. Den and Ann



Bland who had relocated from Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire played golf at Dibden Golf course and had joined Bramshott Hill golf Club. They encouraged their two sons Heath and Richard to take up the game and join the growing Junior Section at the Club. The Junior section had some fantastic young players already playing at



very high standards and having some very low handicaps. One such

Junior golfer was Mike Smith who was later the winner of the British Youth Championship, a great

golfer, who was tragically killed in a car accident. Other members of the Junior section including Mark Mills and Trevor Ball



went on to become golf professionals working not just in England but going on the ply around the world. Surrounded by such golfing talent, having a brother who himself was a very good golfer, a mum and dad very keen on the game and a highly regarded resident teaching

professional (Alan Bridge) certainly helped Richard begin his journey to becoming a Champion. It would certainly not take long for this young golfer

to be winning events and trophies.



Richard's golfing ability was quickly identified by Alan Bridge, who had already helped develop the talents of the likes of Clive Bonner, Nigel Graves and Mike Smith. With the help of Alan's expert knowledge and coaching Richard's handicap kept tumbling and the trophies just kept coming and in 1989 at the

age of 16 Richard became the youngest golfer ever to be Club Champion of Bramshott Hill Golf Club, also being Junior Club Champion in the same year. Club success soon turned to County honours as

Richard became Hampshire Boys Champion in 1990 and repeated this success in 1991, when he was also voted best prospect in the

County. In 1992 went on to represent the County at both Youth and Men's level. He also became Hampshire Youth Champion and

narrowly missed out on becoming Hampshire County Champion,

finishing runner-up. County success led to national and

international success when in 1993 he became Under 21s European Masters Champion, runner-up in the English Match-

play and represented England against Scotland in a Youth's International Match. These achievements led to Richard being

included in English teams featuring the likes of golfers who went on to go on early success on the European Tour, such as Lee

Westwood.

