



Racing's first but croquet's a close second for Iain

TRACTOR man Iain Shedden (above) will spend hours driving up and down Ayr's famous Gold Cup course leading up to the big race ensuring the ground is perfectly manicured.

But instead of enjoying a long cool pint come Sunday once the race is over Iain, who lives in Dundonald, will relax with a game of croquet!

For the jovial 60-year-old is a stalwart member of Dundonald Croquet Club and has some important matches coming up to ensure he wins the club championship.

However all his thoughts are on the big one – the William Hill Ayr Gold Cup Festival which runs from Thursday until Saturday and is undoubtedly the highlight of the Scottish flat racing season.

Iain said: "Our Head Groundsman Graeme Anderson and the entire team of ground staff are raring to go and there is an air of excitement around the course in the run up to meetings like this.

"We are all totally focussed and my job is to ensure the track is in good shape and cut to perfection and if I have time I'll maybe even cut in some pretty patterns for the television cameras to pick up!

"I've worked at the course for a few years now but my background is working on farms but I love the buzz of the racing industry particularly on big occasions like the William Hill Ayr Gold Cup – its why we work here for the excitement of the biggest races in the sport."

So focused is Iain on the Gold Cup that he even asked his daughter Carol-Anne to change her wedding date so it didn't clash!

Iain explained: "Carol-Anne wanted to get married on September 16 but that's in the middle of the Gold Cup Festival so she switched to last week and we all had a great day."

When the three day meeting ends on Saturday night and the last person has left the track Iain will look back on an exciting week or two and ahead to his next game of croquet.