

Open Qualifier Minchinhampton

Ok so Monday morning 4.30am alarm call, very early and a long day ahead. Today Jack and I are going to Minchinhampton golf club for stage 1 of the Open Qualifying. We are on the road by 5am hoping to be at the venue for 6am for a 7.10 start time. All good and with little traffic we arrive in time. Lovely place Minchinhampton I played here many years ago for Gwent v Gloucester in a crucial match to win the Channel league. We lost 10half 4half when a 10-5 loss would have been good enough for us to win the league. I won my singles that day but it wasn't good enough. Anyway we arrive and I get some breakfast for us whilst Jack starts his warm up. Very noticeable on the range, Jack is not happy with his swing. No no it's not going well, right left, thin heavy mmmmm haven't seen him like this before. I ask if he is OK and he says no, nothing feels good at all. We go to chipping area we shall need to be sharp around the greens I reckon. Also playing here today is Ryan Haskell. He is my daughters boyfriend, the assistant pro at Pyle and Kenfig, yes yes I know, the whole family now is full of bloody golfers. Ryan is teeing off just in front of Jack, so I see him and wish him all the best and I hope he plays well. Nice lad!! So we go to the first tee, official starter collar and tie etc all good, it's nice really, traditional, I like that. Jack just didn't look confident at all but managed to get his drive away and on the fairway, it's a par five start and a squirty 4 iron from 220 yards managed to get him on the green and 35ft for Eagle. A decent 2 putt and a solid start. Second is short dogleg par 4, 5 iron from the tee left 100 yards, not a great pitch but a safe par. The warning signs came on the third after a decent tee shot Jack pulled a wedge from 140 yards pretty much dead, but somehow he miraculously got up and down for par. But the wedge was poor. Par 3 fourth was worse a basic 7 iron missed the green by 15 yards right but again he made a fantastic up and down. 5 was a par five and a good 3 wood tee shot left Jack 245 to flag but we thought middle of green was OK. A five iron which wasn't well hit left Jack 70 plus feet for Eagle and a great 2 putt had Jack at 2 under after 5 holes. He took that but we knew he was struggling. He was not in control and it proved on the next a pulled 2 iron from the tee and a skinny 7 iron long left a very awkward up and down which he failed. He didn't play the next great but made a par. Pretty much same on 8, a par but not well played. 9 was a pulled 3 wood tee shot into left rough and a shooting 9 iron went long and again no up and down. Level after 9, he was angry on 10 tee so probably helped in him smashing a 330 yard drive but an average pitch led to a par. An awful 7 iron pull on 11 left him a terrible chip but again somehow he made a par. He blocked his drive into the right rough on 12 but a decent wedge left him 12 feet for birdie, he missed that but it was probably fair. Then 13 came upon us, first drive pull hook left OOB, second drive way right in thick hay, we find it eventually but after a hack at it Jack felt a jolt in his wrist and another hack made it worse. He wasn't going to qualify and we didn't know the state of his wrist so we called it a day. No point risking any damage. We explained to playing partners and swapped cards etc. Jack went to the scorers and I went to the car. I got some ice from the club house and wrapped his wrist for the drive to Bournemouth. We headed straight to the europro event at Bournemouth and the 2half hour drive would help his wrist. He slept for a while in the car and we arrive at Didsbury golf club and go hit some balls and try his wrist. It's stiff but OK. So we hit the range and videos are taken and sent to his coach Neil Mathew's, he with Wales at European Boys but we still manage to get a lesson of some kind from him. It's better but not great so we head to play nine holes. Didsbury is nice but tricky, gotta get the ball in the fairway, a drivers course. We played nine holes on our own and to be fair Jack was a lot better and wrist was OK, probably just a stinger injury. As we play I need to find a hotel, now many years ago I came to Bournemouth on tour and stayed at the Roundhouse Hotel. OK I can't remember much about the hotel but it seemed OK. I booked it anyway and it was 4 mins from Jack's hotel. I drop Jack at his hotel and head to mine. Well it wasn't the best, wallpaper falling from the walls and stains all over the carpet. A shit hole in fact but heh I am here now so get on with it. I arrange to meet Jack for dinner, I walk to him and we go

for food. We both had a beer and chatted, it was fun. We left about 8.30 and after a quick stop at tesco for water and snacks we went our separate ways. I headed back to hotel to find 3 coaches in my car park and the lounge full of pensioners. The buxom middle aged pub singer was just warming up and the pensioners were getting comfy in their seats. It was worth one pint wasn't it???? So I did partake of one whilst listening to this lady bash out some ancient classics. By 9.30 enough was enough and I headed to bed and rang my wife. A long day completed.

Dudsbury 2

Day 2ish

Europro tour

Ok so a very relaxing morning only disturbed by the pensioners shuffling around the breakfast buffet and getting their feed for the day. To be fair it made me laugh and I did have a chat with a couple of them just to show I can be a nice person. I head to asda, gotta get some toiletries for this trip. Its been raining most of the night so course will be wet today. I collect Jack at 11.15 and we head to the course. On arrival I park near the tenth tee and as I walk to clubhouse I spot Harry Redknapp on the course, King of the jungle himself, he is playing the pro am. Also on the tenth tee is matt le tissier, he too is playing. Right OK celeb watching time. We head to practice putting green, it's quite busy and Jack starts talking to James frazer a Welsh lad on this tour. He and his mate Manuel (not Welsh) are heading to ferndown golf club later as the practice range here is pretty poor. Jack suddenly decides he is going as well. Oh right, "you can stay here mate and walk the course" he states to me. Um OK so he took my keys and off he went. Ah well best get on with my job. I get walking the course, back nine is alot trickier than front nine and it's a bloody good walk. I meet and talk to quite a few players, some walking some playing pro am and to be fair I enjoy it. I watch Harry play a hole and have a chat to matt le tissier, he nice bloke and can play decent golf. I make all my notes and head to the clubhouse, it's quite busy with pro am players so I have a pint and sit and watch the cricket, England v Australia, not going well for England. Harry walks passes and leaves the club through the rear staff door surprisingly but there are a few people milling around the entrance. I sit watch the cricket and wait for Jack. He returns with James and Manuel and they have a coffee, they are going to join us for dinner later so that will be cool. We leave the club, I drop Jack to his hotel and quickly get back to my hotel for a shower and change and head to the restaurant. Owen, James and Manuel all join us for dinner and to be fair it was good fun. We chat about the course and how it was playing along with other golf related topics. It was good to listen and get involved, I did enjoy my dinner. We all say our goodbyes and I pop into oneills for a night cap. I meet 4 chaps on golf tour but I didn't stay as I was tired and didn't want to be knackered for the morning.

Dudsbury 3

Toirnament round 1

Ok decent start to the day didn't get a great night's sleep as it was very muggy last night and uncomfortable in my hotel. Breakfast wasn't great either but enough to get me going. I go to collect Jack for 8am and we head to the golf course. All good so far. We arrive at course and head to the range, Jack starts his warm up, the range isn't good here so it's tough to get motivated and be ready. I leave Jack as I need to use the lavatory and when I return I notice either his routine has changed or he not happy. Usually Jack starts with a wedge, then every other club up to driver maybe 6 to 8 ball

each club. But when I get back to him he is only using the 6 iron and no other clubs are dirty. He is not happy, his swing doesn't feel good and he has a 2 way miss, that is not good for a pro. If you're hooking it you can play with that knowing you can hook it back, same with a slice, but when you don't know if you're hooking or slicing you can't allow for it!!! A 2 way miss!!! We are last people on the range by quite some time and he is really trying to figure something out. We get to the first tee on time and meet our playing partners, local gent Lee and Keelan from Ireland. They seem nice enough and Lee has a caddy so at least we got people to chat with. OK so the first is 370 par 4 downhill downwind but trees in front of you from the tee if you're going for the green, OOB right and thick rough right and left, the safe play is 5 iron wedge but Jack can't hit a 5 iron straight at the moment so he may as well go with driver. He did and I honestly thought it was gone in the thick rough but we find it 5 yards short of the jungle and in a good position. He chipped up to 7ft but missed the putt, a lovely wedge on 2nd left him 11ft for birdie and he holed it, wow nice start. When he missed the 3rd green by 15yards left with a 7 iron, we knew today was going to be a struggle, missing a 3ft par putt didn't help. He drove it in the green side bunker on the 4th but didn't get up and down. He 2 putted from 48ft for par on 5 and hit drive and 3 Wood just short of the par 5 sixth but again didn't get up and down. Another missed chance on 7 from 18ft didn't help his attitude but it was OK so far. 8th was playing 175 yards, wind about 15mph right to left, just to the left of the green is a lake, a mound on the right but rough was OK. Jack decided to hit a knock down 6 iron trying to hold it into the wind. He didn't do that and it flew into the water with ease. Just can't hit it there just poor. A double bogey was the result, we had words, I basically said he could have hit it anywhere except the water, he told me he wasn't trying to hit it in the water, but I questioned his thinking suggesting if he thought right was OK just hit it right. He questioned my job role and suggested if I didn't trust he was trying then I should leave. We didn't speak for the 9th where he made another bogey from not thinking, in my opinion!!!! There was a small delay on the 10th tee and a few spectators had gathered around the tee. 10 is not a nice driving hole, par 5 but from 260 yards to 300 the fairway is only 8 yards wide. Right is hay, left is hazard. Wind into from the left. Ideally you hit 2 iron, then another and hope to pitch and putt. In front of us Marco Penge was 7 under after 9 holes, quite unbelievable in these conditions. Marco had obviously hit driver because he was miles up the fairway. Jack saw this and pulled driver. At this point Jack is 3 over and 7 under is leading. This is a huge decision to make. I manage to convince myself this is OK, driver is OK as long as he commits, he just hit a good drive up 9 so maybe he will hit another here. I genuinely crossed my fingers as he hit it and it worked he flushed his drive. Right I told him if he gets back to level par he will be fine, it wasn't easy and although Marco was flying the next best was 4 under at the time. OK he agreed, so second shot we had 224 wind off the left, right was fine, long was fine. Jack was trying hard now and I could see his body posture change but the 4 iron approach was not good and he was not happy so the 4 iron was given some treatment and I recognised the sound of the 4 iron being damaged, I looked at him and he asked me "is it broke" oh yes my boy that's cracked in the grip. It was still in one piece but couldn't be used as it only needed a tinge of force to snap completely. I put it in the bag and he walked away slowly. He was upset now, with himself. I said it was OK, it happens, it's all about learning, he had never broke a club before so this was a new feeling for him. His recovery chip was decent enough and he holed from 8ft for birdie. He was relaxed now I think and the world seemed a better place. As an occasional breaker of clubs myself I knew how he would be feeling, strangely it does actually calm you and takes your mind away from the golf for a little while. Anyway we had nearly half a round to go so back to the job. A decent tee shot on 11 led to a solid par and a very good drive on 12 left him 50 yards to the flag and he pitched it stiff back to 1 over and the world is a better place. He playing a bit better now and a 2 iron wedge to 13 left him 12ft for birdie but he missed. 14 is a very strong par 4, 487 yards uphill into a stiff breeze, they did move the tee forward 20 yards but it was still 460 odd. To be fair he probably hit his best drive of the

day and it left him 199 to the flag playing 7 uphill and at least 15 into wind so 221ish total, yep you guessed it a 4 iron, well it was either 5iron or 2iron now, we decided hard low hooking 5 iron was better than fairy 2 iron and he did well he got it pin high left for a simple up and down par. Solid par on 15 led us to the risk reward 16th 387 par 4 downhill dogleg left, water short left, water pin high right, trees left, all of Europe short right if you want to lay up.....in my notes I have lay up but at this point Jack was watching Marco in front of us make an easy birdie by driving it just short of the green. Jack wants to hit driver and to be honest I agreed, length wasn't the issue, direction is key. He had hit his last 3 drives very well so I was pretty happy with this choice. Downwind from the right the line for the green was at the green unfortunately it started a little right and didn't draw and finished in the water. He was fuming with me, saying I gave him wrong line he could have missed it way left etc etc. But it was the right line to get it on the green, he just couldn't hit it right!!!! Anyway we drop out of the water and he saved his par with a good pitch to 4 feet. But he wasn't at all happy with me. 17 is a horrible hole par 5 uphill into wind, fairway from 250 to 300 is about 8 yards wide, water left, ditch right, trees and rough right. It's 2iron, 5iron, 8iron ish that's the sensible play. Again we see Marco fire a driver and just about get away with it, lucky. Jack wants to hit driver, OK but it has to be good. No it wasn't, hook left into the lake. Another drop, 5 iron lay up and 7iron to 40ft left him with a bigey. Really not happy which unsurprisingly led to another hook on 18 and a fairway bunker. He played a very good approach from the bunker with a 7iron to 25ft but missed the putt. 2 over he finished and not happy at all. We sat outside for a little bit, just in silence. He was OK he spoke to a couple of players and I chatted with marcos caddy buzz, he said Marco just smashed driver everywhere and got away with it, resulting in a course record 62, along way ahead of the field. We had lunch and departed, pretty quiet car journey if I am honest. Jack was going to the gym and I went for a walk to the beach. His wrist was OK by the way so that's a bonus. We met with Owen for dinner but had to go early as Jack developed a terrible toothache, plenty of painkillers for him tonight. I strolled back to hotel and went to bed, the rooms are so hot it's better to try get some sleep when I can.

Dubsbury 4

Tournament round 2

I feel good this morning, weather is good but windy and I Jack says his toothache is feeling better. I think today is time to get my lucky pants on, we need a good score today at least 2 under in tough conditions, so it's lucky pants time. We not off till 2.24pm today so I decide to go for a walk in sunny Bournemouth whilst Jack attends the gym. I go to Boscombe beach, lovely place and I enjoyed a lovely stroll along the beach and cliff tops with some fantastic views. It was quite busy as well, amazing what about of sunshine can do. I head back to hotel about 12 to change and go and get Jack as he wants to have lunch at golf club. This is what we do, jack didn't eat much of his which was very surprising, he eats like a horse usually. It made me a little worried, why he wasn't hungry. Anyway we have lunch and head to the range to warm up, I know he is not very confident but the warm up seemed to go better today than yesterday, well in my eyes it did. At least he was hitting a little fade with his irons, that's controllable I thought. He had his putting warm up and off to the 10th tee we go. I fill all our water bottles as its going to be warm today. To be fair the club have put extra water dispensers out on the course for the players today which is kind of them. So we stand on the 10th tee and debate his opening tee shot, it's not a nice one, wind into from the left, very narrow fairway from 270 to 300, trouble left and right. We eventually agree 3 Wood, that way if he does manage to hit it straight he can still reach in 2 but should take the big trouble out of play. Jack is last to tee off so it probably didn't help watching the first two hit it right so Jack hit it further right and stuck

behind a Bush and trees. He had a shot back to the fairway and that's all he could do. Now his 3rd shot was in my opinion the first sign of how Jack was feeling. He hit a decent 6 iron that pitched just left of the green had a firm bounce and finished 3 yards long. He was amazed how it went long and was questioning me on why it had gone so far. It was only 3 yards long and had a firm bounce but he was convinced it shouldn't have gone that far. It seemed strange he should moan about that so early in the round. His chip was a little clumsy and went 9 ft past the hole but he did manage to knock that putt in for a hard fought par. Shame that hard work was wasted on the next after a terrible 7 iron left Jack with a very hard up and down which he was unable to achieve and a bogey was best he could do. So he is 3 over for the tournament and the cut is looking like level par. As we are last group out on the course it will be pretty easy to get the cut mark correct today from the scorers around the course. Right so we need some good golf from here on in. A very good drive on 12 left Jack 49 yards to the flag but again a heavy touch with his pitch led to a par, when birdie was very achievable. A poor 3 iron tee shot on 13 into heavy rough was not what we were looking for but after hacking out sideways Jack hit a good wedge to 15ft and holed the par putt a very good save. As yesterday 14 was playing hard although the tee was moved up a little it was still 469 into wind uphill. Good par 4. There is plenty of room right from the tee, but Jack pulled it left, OK he got away with it and we had a shot to the green but the tee shot wasn't a great miss. To the right of the green here is jungle, bear country and it really is the only place you can't hit it, I think the shot was at least one less club and try to get the ball to the front of the green, but Jack didn't see it that way and decided to take a 5 iron which he has to hit slightly lower than normal and yes it could jump from the lie he had but he just can't hit it right. So not only did his first ball go right, one bounce and gone, but his second ball went right a swell. As the second ball was heading towards the jungle I sarcastically said we didn't have enough balls in the bag to finish the round. I won't tell you what his reply was. In fact the next 10 mins proved to be our most testing yet. After completing an 8 on that hole we also had a club disagreement on the next tee, he did decide in the end to go with what I thought was the right club but turned his shot into the wind and it stalled and dropped short in the bunker. What followed was not pretty, not pretty at all. It ended with me forcefully standing his bag in the fairway, Jack walked to the green whilst I took 2 steps towards the clubhouse. In a raised voice I turned and told him I wouldn't quit!!!!!! Picked up the bag and continued to work in silence. He drove the 16th and 2 putt for birdie, still not speaking, played 17 extremely well and missed from 8ft for birdie, still not speaking and also just missed for birdie on 18, we spoke briefly. When we get to the first tee there are 2 groups already waiting. Maybe this was a blessing, he went and sat with some other players, I just sat on the wall by the tee. I took out my phone and proceeded to write a message to a friend of mine about what had just happened. I was very angry and upset. And hand on heart this message was not pretty. I was just about to send it, when Jack came and sat next to me, I turned the phone away. We talked, it was good, it was calm and mature. I put the phone back in the bag and never sent the message. By the way, Marco who was still leading the tournament, was waiting on the first tee in the group ahead. To pass the time he and his caddy buzz had a pint, also the lad in front of them, Dan brown had 2 pints, he took his second with him down the first. Although extremely tempting I did not participate, I just don't think I was in the mood at the time. So we play on an easy chip and putt birdie on the first was followed by a 3 putt bogey on the second, a very rare three putt I must add. Another bogey on 3 was followed by an easy birdie on 4, he drove 16, 1 and 4 pretty much today. At this point Keelan was missing the cut so he didn't care but Lee the local pro was around the cut and we had a few spectators with us now, so that was cool. You could see Lee was getting a little nervy he was starting to make a few simple mistakes. A double bogey on the 3rd put him 1 under just inside the cut, he drove the 4th for birdie but bigeyed 5. To be fair he made a good birdie on 6 and parred 7 and 8, so all he had to do was make 6 or better on the last our 9th to make the cut. He did but only just a poor drive, chip out, long third and poor chip left him 10ft for a 5, he missed but

tapped in for a 6. His fans were relieved I think. Jack on the other hand made par on 5, 2 putt birdie on 6, made a right balls of 7 and hit it in the water AGAIN on the 8th. I couldn't believe he did it again, but I laughed this time. He played 9 really well just to prove a point I think but the damage had be done way before that. We shook hands, not alot was said and we went for a beer. Marco and buzz were having a pint so we joined them. It was good to speak to those 2, it helped us chill a bit and we had a good laugh with them. It was getting late so we stayed in Bournemouth, hotels were already paid for so not point rushing back to Newport tonight. Jack went to asda for dinner and he took the car, I picked up a pizza whilst walking back to hotel. He did say thank you before we went our separate ways and I am glad of that. I was a very strange week and as I had my last pint in Bournemouth I really hoped we would not have a week like that ever again. For Jack to play like that was not good for him, and it proved to be very stressful for both of us. No more weeks like that please.