

## Donnington day 1

### Travel and practice

So it seems I may have done something right last week as Jack has asked me back this week. OK my rates may be alot cheaper than most for Jack but its work and I think Jack likes me on the bag sometimes.

Yet again this week I have to hire a car. Liz is working all week, Jack is staying with his friend Owen and my bethan needs a car for work and uni. It's OK I got a cheap one from europcar and they gave me a free upgrade as I used them last week. So I collect the car, go home to pack the car up and head for Donnington Grove Hotel and golf course, near Newbury. Jack left on Monday and had a practice round with Owen. To keep my rates down I am going Tuesday to do my prep. Jack is not going to Donnington today as its pro am day and he can't get on the course. Trouble is he has my jacket and yardage book so I have to meet him en route to the club. This we do and I arrive at Donnington about 12.30pm. Nice place, looks posh and well set up. I go see the local pro, get some memorabilia as I do from all the courses I visit then head for the tournament office. I check any rules I may need and get going to first tee. I start making my notes and watch a pro am group go through. I follow them to the second as I am not quite sure where I am going, good idea as the second tee is 700yards from 1st green, bloody hell it's going to be a long walk. I wasn't wrong, the walk from greens to tees is extreme on some holes. Just an example from the ninth green, you go through the car park, passed the clubhouse, passed the hotel, passed some lodges, passed the practice area and eventually you find the tee. The 18th green is not far from tenth tee so you have to do that walk again back to club house. Strange set up but it's a decent track to be fair. There is a helicopter in the overflow car park so there is some money in this place. As I am taking my notes and walking the course I see a few pro am teams obviously and one of the teams had Barry hearne in it, the boxing promoter and founder of the europro tour. His golf wasn't great but he seemed very chatty to his partners and pro. I said hello to him and he said hello back and asked me what I was doing. A short brief chat followed but nothing to get excited about. He then continued his conversation with his partners and they were discussing when they were flying to Vegas for the next fight. I assumed that was fury but I dont know for sure. So I finished my prep and pop in club for a quick Guinness, it was a long walk after all. Nice pint to be fair and some good directions from the barman to my hotel. So off I set and 20 mins later I arrive at my hotel. Its OK, pretty basic but fine, BUT on the plus side it has peroni on tap, so life is not so bad. Oh hang on its £5.25 a pint, well that's just rude. Nevermind it may help me keep the alcohol intake down, maybe!!!!

## Donnington 2

### Day 2

#### Tournament round 1

A nice tee time for Jack, 12.49pm today so nice and relaxed breakfast then I head to course just before 9am. I am going to walk a few holes get a feel for the wind, see a few flags and just generally get a feel. I text Jack to let me know when he arrives and off I set, strangely about 10.30 I get a text from Jack to say he has arrived. I find this very early for him, he likes to arrive an hour before tee off. Oh well I go to find him and we have a coffee. "bloody hell" he suddenly exclaims, "I thought I was off at 11.49, I am an hour early". Ah that explains it, Jack got his tee time wrong so now we just sit, wait and chat for a bit. The cricket world Cup highlights are on in the clubhouse so we watch a bit of that. Alfie plant then arrives and he joins us for coffee. He had just driven up from South London where he lives. No practice round, just arrived this morning. We had a good chat and I shared some

of my notes with him for the course. We wished him well and we got into Jack's warm up. Weather is not bad today, bit windy but little rain around. Warm up goes OK, as usual with Jack, then we head to the first tee. Today we playing with an American Sam and Irish fella niall Kearney. We have played with niall before at the Europro finals last year in Spain. He decent bloke. Niall had a caddy so I introduce myself, Joe, he was nialls dad. He was wearing a leinster rugby jumper on, so I had to ask didn't I. It transpired Joe's other son, played rugby for leinster. Ah this was great I had someone to talk to and we had plenty in common to chat about. I wished him luck and we got down to business. So the first hole is pretty straight forward par 4 wind off the left, basically it's an iron lay up and short iron to the green. Well that's how it should be played, obviously if your jack that would be too simple to achieve, let's go way right with a four iron, just miss the bushes and trees, then try hook a 50 degree wedge, with little backswing and no follow through. That will go into further bushes, we find it and we need a penalty drop, we need to call a ref. Bare with me here please. Eventually the ref arrives probs after a 5 minute wait. So picture the scene, cart path with a Bush to the right, Jack ball on edge of the Bush to the right. If we take penalty drop we get 2 clubs lengths relief which could get us on the path, then we can drop the ball on the path, get free relief and get back to the fairway ish. Now the ref agreed, by the way the referee was Simon Edwards, Simon and I played boys home international together at Kilmarnock barrassie golf club in 1988. Simon beat ex llamwern member Andrew Herbert in the final of the Welsh boys at Abergavenny. God small world heh. Anyway back to the drop. So the ref agreed but he pointed out that if the ball stops on the right of the path the nearest point of relief was back in the Bush. Jack asked my opinion, I looked at the drop on the path and actually noticed the path sloping slightly towards the Bush, I said the ball may not stay on the path at all. OK we had to drop the Bush side. This was not great, I ran back down the ninth fairway to see if a drop in line with flag was any good, nope, totally blind, so in the end, some ten mins or so later, we drop in the thick rough just right of the Bush. He now playing his fourth shot and it was not looking good. His best option was to try hit it hard into the slope hope it bounces and kicks to the green. Somehow this is pretty much what happened, the ball shot out, bounce of the slope run through the rough kicked towards the green and finished about 20ft just off the back of the green. Chip and putt later and we got away with a 6. He was happy with that. The 700 yard walk to the second tee helped us to regroup. Jack did well then for next few holes and to be honest was very unlucky. Although he birdie 3 and 4 he played 2 very well and his chip just ran away from him and he hit a lovely 6 iron to 5th that had a big bounce and finished just off the green but short sided. He made pars on them both nothing was going for him. He stayed quite calm until we get to 6th, par 5, 548 yards uphill. A good tee shot has us 227 to the front 248 to flag, downwind. In front of the green is a bunker, miss is short left but its a small entrance to the green. We agree on 4 iron high and let the wind take it. Jack asks if that is a bunker in line with the flag. As we can see sand to the right of the flag, I assumed Jack meant another bunker. So I replied "no mate it's this bunker" and pointed to the yardag book and the bunker. Jack hit a lovely four iron right at the flag, but it disappeared on landing, bunker!! "bunker" he stated quite firmly at me, "yep" I replied not thinking much of it. "I asked you if there was a bunker there and you said no" he said to me in a raised voice, I looked at him and he didnt have the look of love in his eyes. Um I said it wasn't another bunker it was this bunker, as I again pointed to to yardage book. What followed was a rant at me for not giving him the right information and although I begged to differ he was having any of it. When we get there he is on the bank of the bunker, which isn't nice, he played his chip very well but just stopped an inch from rolling down the slope to the hole. He mad par, he was not a happy bunny. I think the poor tee shot on 7 was a result of frustration from the 6th,because it was a terrible 7iron and left Jack a tricky chip and putt which he failed to complete and a bogey was on the card. Obviously he is now very unhappy and the round is slowly going south bound. 8 is a blind teeshot over a mound to a severely sloping down hill fairway. 2iron required from the tee left 172 yards into a vet stiff breeze but all

downhill. The flag is tight right near the bunker, loads of green left. I am not sure if Jack was intentionally going at the flag or if he pushed his 7 iron a little but it wasn't what was needed at the time. Especially after the wind drifted his ball into the bunker, plugged and short sided. Brilliant!!!! He did play the bunker shot well but 30ft was as good as he could do. Another bogey. Now he 2 over and fuming. Luckily we had to get buggies to the next tee so while I was stood on the back holding the clubs Jack could chat to the volunteer member driving. Maybe that helped him a bit. 9 is a 335yard par 4 slight dogleg left, OOB left, bushes, trees right, fairway slopes left to right, big bunker 200 yards and a green side bunker. Lay up 4 iron and wedge is my plan. Not for Jack he wants to hit driver. We are discussing this whilst his playing partner both play and lay up. No he hitting driver, he needs to hit driver. Now it's not that I don't think he can hit the shot, it's just I felt his mental state was not right, but after a wait for the green to clear and the buggy ride maybe he was in the right mental state. I walked to the side of the tee to help my view of the ball landing and crossed my fingers. He hit a decent drive to be fair just catching the green side bunker. We discussed the shot and agreed as long as flag was accessible the driver was OK, if flag was back right the driver was not good. Anyway he almost holed his bunker shot and an easy birdie. The walk from 9 to 10 is miles as stated before so it gives us time to chat and we got on quite well which was nice. We agreed to try get a few birdies on the back nine as the scoring didn't look that good on the leader boards. 10 is a brute of a hole 638 yard par five wind into from the right. Trees down the left, OOB left of the trees, bunker up the right starting at 248 going all the way to 324. That's just the tee shot. The second shot had a huge oak in the fairway 111 yards short of the green so laying up was difficult. So Jack hit a decent tee shot just held into the wind a finished in the trap. A good 5 iron lay up missing the tree left him 114 yards. A solid pitch left him 10ft but sadly that putt slipped by.

Day 2 continued

So we move to 11, probably the worst hole for Jack all week not so much for scoring just frustration and pure bad luck. Today round 1 it was downwind from the right, 4 iron tee shot left 156 yds, he hit a lovely 9 iron looked great then just fell out of the sky and finished 15 yards short. Unexplainable, we both didn't know why it happened but it did, he made par but its frustrating for him. Probably leading to the 340 yard drive he hit on the next into wind. Luckily it went straight and left Jack 67 yards to the flag. A good pitch but missed the putt, luckily an easy 2 putt for birdie on 13 helped calm him down. Now he missed from 8ft on 14, 10ft on 15 and 12ft on 16 to remain level par which honestly led to a poor tee shot on 17 leaving Jack a tough up and down, the chip was good but his putt slipped by again. You may think his putting is costing him but I can assure you his putting is decent at the moment just some Putts are not dropping for him. Although he holed a nice 14ft birdie putt on 18 to finish the day at level par and not a bad start to the tournament. We trudge off towards the clubhouse he not that pleased but a birdie on 18 has helped. He finishes in the scorers hut and he wants to do some range work. I agree and we head to the practice area. Jack has a good hour on the range working on his swing, he finally finds something to work on for tomorrow, phew. Its late ish now and he has an hour drive back to Owens. I must add the pro golf is very slow, 5 and a half hours that first round took, but we did take 25mins to play the first I suppose. So Jack asks if I want to join him for food before he goes back to Owens. OK let's go, we find a local pub and enjoy dinner together. He much nicer to me after golf, I bought the beer he got the food. Nice!! We chatted briefly about the round but not in depth not mid tournament maybe between tournaments is better to reflect we don't want to push our relationship further during a tournament do we.

We finish eating and head our separate ways, early start tomorrow so best get back get some sleep. I get back to hotel about 9pm quick pit stop at the bar for peroni and then back for a shower and bed, nothing more to say really.

Day 3

Tournament round 2

Early tee time 7.49 so up and out of hotel by 6, no breakfast that early so called into Greggs on the way for coffee and bacon cheese wrap. Nice work crunch. Get to course, bit breezy but sun is out, could be a nice day. Wind is pretty much in same direction so nothing really to worry about today. Get my pin sheet and Jack arrives. He a little later than he usually is so we a little rushed in preparing. Not a worry though. So with 13 mins to go to tee off we head to the 10th tee, a fair trek hence we leaving putting green a little early. All good and arrive bang on time, meet Niall and Sam again and we are away. I decided today I would chat more to Sam. He is from Washington DC, did the college thing, graduated, turned pro and just trying to find his standing in the game. He decent player but not in Jack's class. His step dad and real dad are pretty well off by the sound of it so he having a ball travelling Britain and Europe playing golf for a living. I invited him to Wales whenever he fancied it and I am sure if he came to Llanwern he would get a warm welcome. Anyway back to the golf so 10th 638 par 5, 7.49am and Jack is 40 yards short of the flag for 2, beautiful start. His chip finished 10ft after a little skid off the dewie grass and he missed the putt, nevermind. 11 (our favourite lucky hole) 2 iron from tee today left 136 perfect little wedge, and Jack hit a perfect little wedge, so perfect it pitched in the flag and hole junction, shot across the green nearly into the water hazard. Oh no calm down, he wasn't best pleased after not making birdie on 10 now he really not happy. To his credit he did save par but he wasn't happy and when he pushed his drive slightly on 12 will a less than friendly bounce to make his ball finish under a tree. As you can imagine he was less than pleased. This led to a double bogey 6 and a miserable start that could have been so much better. I said to him walking up the next fairway after he had smashed his ball into the big oak tree, that he was swinging it so well as the first few holes had proved so stick with it and the birdies will come. At this point he is 2 over for the tournament and easily missing the cut. From the on he was superb for at least 12 holes. Honestly without any exaggeration he could have had 10 straight birdies. 13 missed from 5ft, 14 missed from 8ft, 15 holed 15ft, 16 holed 10ft, 17 tap in, 18 missed from 14ft, 1st missed from 12ft, 2nd tap in, 3rd holed 8ft, 4th missed 21ft, 5th missed 12ft, 6th missed from 8ft and 7th 2 putt from 35ft. Now the ones he missed were all good Putts they just didn't want to go in or slight mis reads but he made five birdies as well. Shame he missed green on 8 again in the bunker and didn't get up and down. 9 he was quite lucky, he hit driver again which was not a good swing we found it but he had bushes and trees all around him. He asked me if the branches on the tree would affect his ball if he hit them, as I looked I saw that was a fair question as they were light and thin. I agreed with him that no they shouldn't really hurt the shot so we agreed to go through the tree, he only had 90 yards to the flag and even if they did affect the ball it should still get back to the fairway. The ball did come out as well planned and it got to the front of the green a good result, he 2 putted for par and fished the round 2 under. We weren't really sure how that would finish as we were out so early but we thought it was enough to make the cut. Although he scored 70 and had plenty of chances he wasn't that happy with his game so a little practice was required. We then had lunch and Jack headed back to go to the gym and more practice at the Kendleshire with Owen later. So I have a free afternoon mmmmm right then I have my clubs so I Google local courses, nothing really in my price range but there is a driving range on way back to my hotel cool. So I pull up and I must admit I had second thoughts. It was a farm with a dirt track to a hand written sign "the range" ah well I am here now. 1 other car in the dry mud car park. I get my clubs and stroll towards the range. A shed greets me and a brand new looking range behind the shed. Sat in the little shed is a balding man in his mid 40s. "afternoon sir" I announce just in case he was asleep. He replied nice enough and I asked how the range works. Cash or debit card machine, no tokens £2 for 25 balls £4 for 50, £5 for 75, £6 for 100. Nice I go for 100 well better work up a thirst.

This range is brand new, new balls, new mats, be tees, new nets everything, it was pretty cool and I was the only one there when I arrived. It was great I was whanging balls everywhere for fun, like spitfires dog fighting my balls were diving everywhere but I enjoyed myself. By the time I had finished my balls it was fairly busy. I asked the gent in the shed on the way out what the cracj was and he explained he was a local pro looking for work, knew this farmer who agreed to have the range so the pro had it built but the farmer still owns the land. He said it was doing well as the only other range in Newbury was 20 miles away. Good luck to him but I couldn't stay long was thirsty now. I headed to find a pub with a TV for the cricket without any success, West indies v Australia good game to watch. Eventually after 2 stops I get back to hotel, no sky there either, but free WiFi, so I find a comfy chair, get my peroni and watch the cricket on the phone. Whilst also checking how Jack is doing. At the end of the golf Jack has made the cut easy and has actually moved nicely up the field. The forecast for tomoorw is horrendous so anyone within 2 or 3 of the leaders has a chance. Jack is 4 off but you never know. I have some dinner and shower.

Donnington 4

Final day

Bloody early start again 7.10 tee off. This is because of the weather forecast, they splitting the field and having 2 tee start and playing in 3s. I am a little late getting to the course, had trouble checking out, not happy, and also greggs was shut, to early. I arrived at club and went to see if there was any food available. Yes, phew, I ordered 2 bacon rolls and coffee to take away. Got them and met Jack on the range. He brought the big bag today, best choice, plenty of towels waterproofs gloves etc required. It wasn't raining on the range but just as we get to the first tee it's started, perfect. Today we playing with Harry and dermott, English and Irish. Harry had a caddy, dermott no, and I understand now why. Not a very nice chap, miserable, moaning little git, I didn't like him. The other 2 were fine and we had a little giggle over dermottbeing so miserable. Anyway to the golf, it wasn't easy and Jack was pretty frustrated early on he played well enough front nine to be under par, fairways greens easy really but somehow after 9 was 2 over. A short side miss on the first led to bogey and a poor drive on 6 led to bogey but other than that he had some great chances. What didn't help was Harry and dermott were rubbish, hitting it everywhere, but both were beating Jack. I think Harry had 8 Putts in 9 holes for level par and dermott 9 Putts for 1 under. Jack was a little angry now. By the time we got to the 10th tee we were soaked and it was raining heavy, tough Conditions so we discussed trying to get back to level par for the day and hopefully get top 20. OK let's go. I am doing all I can to keep things dry for him, we are on towels 3 and 4 now so it's going well. 10 great chance 6ft missed, 11 (the lucky hole) great approach with 7 iron spins off the ridge 35ft equals 3 putt. Oh god its just not his week, and even I hate that 11th hole now. But 12 good birdie from 16ft, 13 missed chance from just off the green didn't get up and down, 14 holed 5ft birdie, 15 missed 8ft birdie. Now the other 2 are struggling, it's chucking it down and they are dropping shots. Dermott is being a right little prat and Harry and his caddy are just struggling to cope but still talking and making me laugh. The best part about Harry and his caddy is all day the caddy had the brolley, didn't once give it to Harry. I always let the player stay dryish with the brolley, my job is to keep the clubs dry not myself. Harry was drenched, it was quite funny. And golf is a funny game, all the Putts Jack missed early doors came back to him last 3 holes, he saved some nice pars holing good 8,10ft on 16,17 but missed a 15ft birdie on 18. One over 73 in those conditions wasn't too bad. Dermott finished 75 and Harry 77. Jack moved up to tied 13thand another decent week under his belt. Its a shame on this tour consistency isn't rewarded. Jack can finish top 20 all season and win next to nothing yet someone can miss 15 cuts win the last event and get £10000. It seems biased towards one good week rather than one good year. Anyway that's pro golf I suppose. So I

trudge to the changing room. I pinch a dry towel and start drying everything literally everything. Clubs, gloves balls head covers and bag. We then go have some lunch and a beer. We eat with Harry and his caddy and have a good chat. Harry is from Devon so we discussed possible county match meetings in the past and we had met. We say our goodbyes and head back to South Wales. Traffic wasn't too bad and I was back in the farmers arms by 4pm perfect. A couple of swifties then home to change as we all went to the club to support the junior fu d raising night. Good night to be fair and I got lucky and win the raffle, a large bottle of vodka. Nice work jonno crunch. Week off next week so hopefully maybe another blog in a couple of weeks.