

Crunchies Blog – Jack EuroPro The Diamond X Open at Cumberwell Park

Day 1

Ok so I have been lucky enough to be asked again by Jack to work for him at Cumberwell Park, Bath in the EuroPro tour this week. It's a little different this week as we both can stay at home if the tee times are good as it's only an hour away from our house. Also a slight change to the schedule is the Pro Am for this event is on Monday not the usual Tuesday so this helps us as we haven't had a practice round together this season, I have walked most courses on my own while Jack plays them. An added bonus this week is Cumberwell itself, I have played here many times for Gwent in County matches and surprisingly Jack has never played here, he may take my advice then, maybe.

So day one is practice day Tuesday, we leave together in the same car from home, yes yes I know this is new and yes could be fun, we shall see how it transpires. As we all know traffic along the M4 corridor can be a pain but today it was OK. We met Owen Edwards at the club for 8.15am and after a short warm up we were off for our first proper practice round of the year together. There are probably a few reading this who have played at Cumberwell so to be clear we are playing the Red and blue nines (the original 18) and the predominant wind all week is west, south west, west south west, this may be useful later in the blog. So off we go for practise, Owen has fellow Welsh man, professional and nice fella Evan Griffiths on his bag. I like Evan he a good player, not had much luck playing wise but he's a pretty cool bloke and we get along nicely. We get to the first green and I give Jack a few balls to chip and putt with around the green while I study and make my notes, exactly as I would if I was walking the course. "Come on hurry up" Jack states at me, the 4ball in front were still on the fairway we couldn't go anywhere and I had not finished my notes. I stayed relaxed and didn't reply. So we get to the second green and the same thing, he practices while I make notes, "what you doing, come on" he asks harshly, "wow calm down kid I am doing my job, making notes" I don't think he was too happy with my response but I had to do my notes properly, it's my job. We weren't holding anyone up and there was a 4ball in front so I didn't rush. Anyway we carry on and all is good, the course is quite nice and plenty of decent birdie chances if you drive the ball well. Greens are OK but can snake a little especially later in the day after they have had a little growth. It started to rain on the 8th and we were contemplating going in for food after 9 and letting the rain pass but it blew over by the time we got to the 9th green.

It's now I need to mention and thank my new best mate, Peter "the snitch" Malpas. Recently Jack had let Peter use one of Jack's old putters, this putter he had given to me previously. I was putting poorly and needed a new look at a putter so when I went to get this putter out of the garage it wasn't there, so I borrowed another one of Jack's putters, it didn't work so well so I put it back but I did show it to Peter who of course had the one I wanted to use, then at the County Strokeplay last weekend I borrowed another but that didn't work to well so I put that back. So we are walking and playing this practice round and out of the blue Jack starts having a go at me for using his putter, he was not at all happy. I defended myself by saying Jack had given "my putter" to Peter, but of course it's not my putter is it, it's still Jack's as he stated quite clearly, then he told me young Peter had told him I was using his other putter as well. Oh great thanks young Malpas, drop me right in the doo doo cheers tiger. Anyway it sort of all blew over when I said I wouldn't do it again!!!!

We continue the practice round where Jack drove the par 4 tenth, hit drive and 9iron to the par 5 eleventh and played very nicely from there to the clubhouse. All good all in order nicely. I was very

happy walking from the course. So it was a very pleasant drive home and we even called over Llanwern on way back to pick up a parcel for Jack and have a chat to Scott and the boys in the club. I was actually that happy and confident in the way Jack played I gave Scott ten pounds to put a cheeky bet on Jack for me. I had a good feeling!!!! So we went home, no beer for me as I am staying at home this week and trying to be good. Roll on tomorrow first round 12.49pm.

Day 2 - Tournament round 1

Ok so nice leisurely morning, up breakfast and leave home about 10.30am no need to rush. All is going well until we get off at Bath junction on M4, I see an electronic sign on the motorway that says the A46 south is closed, um pretty sure that's our road, yep bugger me it was. Quickly just as we hit the static traffic we search for a diversion, luckily we find one that adds 24 mins to our journey. Just in time we manage to turn off the closed road and head through some county lanes, phew we got lucky and manage to get to Cumberwell about 11.45am still in good time. So we go to warm up, I get the pin sheets and Jack starts his routine. About half way through we get a pleasant surprise and turn round to see Dafydd Rowberry, Luke Bearcroft and Pete "the snitch" Malpas. Fair play the boys have come to support Jacko, nice one lads. Jack is warming up lovely and flushing it on the range. Great stuff, we starting on 10 today so some good chances for birdies early on to get the ball rolling. Just before we leave the range Jack wants to hit a few drivers ready for the 11th. It's a par 5 but if you cut the corner and go over some pretty big trees it shortens the hole tremendously and only leaves a mid to short iron to the green, but the drive must fly high a bit like cutting the corner on our 14th but say another 30 yards back from the tee. Jack did it easy yesterday so should be fine, anyway I throw him a ball on the range and he hits a bullet but a tinge low, "not quite high enough mate" I tell him, so he has another go, then another go and then another go, eventually he got one high enough but it took 3 attempts. At this point I will add, when we were at the chipping Green earlier in his warm up, which is very close to the 11th tee, we must have heard at least 4 people smash it into the trees from the tee. Mmmmm that didn't help his thoughts for that hole. So we go for a putt, final preparations and onto the 10th tee we stroll.

Today we playing with James Walker and Liam (forgot his surname sorry) James's dad is a golf coach, a good one, he is Tommy Fleetwood's coach, that's nice isn't it. He was nice James, we had a good chat at times, so back to the golf and the 10th tee start. "I am laying up" he states, oh right OK probably a sensible shout to start the round, so a fair 5 iron left him 90 yards which he pitched to 6ft, lovely. Shame he missed it. Then 11 he was so conscious of getting his drive in the air he pulled it left into the rough, OK but 225 yards to go off a severely hanging lie, this resulted in a pulled 4 iron into heavy rough, mmm not a great start, he made par but 2 chances already gone. 12 another par 5 this hole he likes and 2 good shots leaves Jack 40ft for Eagle, he missed but holed a tricky 4ft birdie putt. OK we're off and running. There is a leaderboard behind the 12th green and 2 people were tied at 9 under. This didn't help, Jack seems to think if they can be 9 under, he should be 9 under, but we know golf doesn't quite work like that does it. So 13 he missed from 18ft for birdie and 25ft on 14, both great putts that hit the hole but didn't drop. A poor drive on 15 left him struggling to reach for 2 but he managed to get it just short, a clumsy chip though led to another putt slipping by and a bogey. Chances go by on 16 and 17 before he drove it into a fairway bunker on 18, this didn't help matters. He was now getting very frustrated and a slightly clean strike from the bunker didn't help when the ball flew 30 yards over the green. To his credit he made a very very good up and down to save par. Although it didn't help his mood, being level par after 9 when most of the field is under par is not a great position to be in but you try and keep him positive. A missed chance on 1 didn't help, a good par save on 2 was followed by a missed 3ft par putt on 3 after a heavy handed chip. Now very

frustrated and not swinging it great, it was a little inevitable that his drive on the 4th went 30 yards right and behind trees. It was after this tee shot Jack started to question why he was out on the course at all. It is hard golf but when your son/boss is doubting why he is even playing the game it's hard to find the words to support him without getting upset. I tried my best by explaining getting a job and working for a living is no fun either. Not sure that helped either but he managed to get his shot on the green but just missed his birdie putt again. He didn't play 5,6,7 well but managed to make pars. Now as you can imagine he is very down on himself so I was very proud of him when he made a very nice birdie on 8 and hit a beautiful tee shot on 9 a mere 334 yards up the fairway, this left him 248 yards to the front of the green and 275 to the flag. A 3 wood soft fade was required and that's what he hit, shame it went 290 yards through the air and flew the green. When it's not your day it's not your day, luckily he got up and down and finished 1 under for his round. A small smile appeared as we shook hands.

It was great to have Dafydd, Luke and Pete watching just a shame Jack wasn't at his best. I bought them all a drink and we sat outside putting the round right between us. We all said our farewells and we headed home. Well the boys headed home I took Jack to Owen's, he staying there tonight because of our 7.49am tee time tomorrow, he didn't want the hour drive in the morning and Owen lives in Bristol so a lot closer. So I dropped Jack off headed home, called in Farmers for a nightcap and then bed.

Day 3 - Tournament round 2

So up early 5.30am leave and a good run, traffic free has me at the club in plenty of time. I go grab the pin sheets and a nice fresh coffee, Jack arrives not long after and all is good. He looks good today and is keen to play. Great stuff. He hasn't had any breakfast though so I go get him a bacon sandwich and a coffee. Everything is going to plan, warm up is good, putting is good, food is good, all is good. A lot windier today so scoring should be a little higher. The cut is going to be low maybe as much as 5 under so we need a low one. It's not going to be easy with the wind and cold this morning but we will give it a go.

First five holes, five birdie chances, one taken but the positives are Jack is more positive and it's showing in his golf, very solid today. He hit a poor tee shot on 6 in thick rough left, this will test his metal. He was not happy as he couldn't get it on the green unless he hooked it 25 yards. This is hard off a good lie let alone out of thick rough, he wanted to smash a wedge but I suggested this was not a good idea and if he did manage to hook it that was way too much club and if it didn't hook it was flying in the garbage right of the green. Reluctantly he listened and smashed a 50 degree instead that didn't hook but didn't go in the garbage either. He played a lovely chip and holed his 7ft par putt. As he walked from the green I thanked him. He looked at me a little curious so I thanked him again, for listening and not hitting wedge. He just nodded, that was enough for me. This next bit of the blog is actually very boring because Jack hit the next 12 greens in regulation and played some lovely controlled golf. Unfortunately he only made 1 putt from 7ft for birdie and 2 putted the 12th again for birdie. You could say it was an easy day at the office so to speak but this is working for Jack and nothing is easy. Yes his golf was controlled and a little boring for the spectator but being next to him is most definitely not boring. In fact it was a little scary at times. Not just Jack mind, young Mr Walker was very volatile as well. Come to think of it so was Liam, actually it was a thrilling 3 ball. Liam was shouting at spectators 175 yards away to stand still because they were in his line of sight, James was lobbing his irons and bouncing them off his trolley but Jack had the best reaction to a poor shot by far.

So as you can imagine the pressure is building hitting all these greens and watching chance after chance slip by, add to this he is right on the cut mark when we get to the 14th. Jack has 128 to the flag, the Bushnell reads 130, and wind off the left slightly helping. A 125 shot is required. He says "down off the left" referring to the wind, I reply "yes but more off the left", "125 shot?" he asked "yes mate left of flag". He hit a 125 wedge but it drifted right as it started a little straight. Now the pin was perched about 6 yards from a slope leaking all the way to the front of the green. Yep you guessed it Jack's ball drifted, pitched on the flat but with the spin and it coming in left to right it just started to move on the green and finished 65ft away. As he starts to walk he turns glares at me "you said it was f*****g downwind, 125 shot you said, I f*****g hit it 125" and proceeded to Bury his wedge into the fairway toe first and deep past the hossel. Very impressive to be fair. He stormed off. I must thank him now, because it gave me the opportunity to feel like a king, yes a king, I was King Arthur, extracting Excalibur from the stone. I took a good grip, slight bend of the knees and with his bag already on my back, released the wedge (Excalibur) from the ground and held it aloft in glory of my great feet. No one laughed, in fact I don't think any of the 3 even saw it. Disappointed was an understatement. Anyway I cleaned all the mud from the club and quickly got to the green to catch the ball being fizzed at me to be cleaned. Good job I am a good catch I can tell you. He did 2 putt but it didn't help his mood. By the time we finished Jack was fuming and at 4 under for the tournament I wasn't best pleased either as I thought we were one short to make the cut. Just a note here, James Walker 3 putted the last to finish on 4 under a swell and a tirade of abuse was hurled at his putter and clubs as he walked off.

We had some lunch and discussed the possible cut mark. 50 and ties make the cut on this tour but by the time we left the club we were tied 48th with lots and lots left on the course. We drove home and I dropped Jack at Llanwern, I on the other hand had to go get my clubs and kit as I had steam match at Abergavenny to play tonight. Obviously whilst preparing to play I was keeping one eye on the scores from Cumberwell to see how Jack was doing. I play my team my match, it was funny as Rich Tayler and Dan Bearcroft were checking Jack's progress as well so we were chatting and texting going around the course. I looked again on the 9th tee and Jack was tied 51st, aw crap but there was an amateur inside the top 50 so he doesn't count so Jack was actually tied 50th right on the button. I checked again on 11th tee, Tayler has text me, it's gonna be close. Jack is tied 52nd, aw shit I am not happy now. Luckily I am 4 up in my match so didn't really concentrate on the golf. By the time I got to the 15th green my par was good enough to shake hands and check the phone for one last time. Lots of texts but the one I look for is from Jack "I got in". Perfect, Jack made the cut tied 51st. 2 players bogeyed the last for Jack and all the 4unders to get in. Great stuff I can eat my team meal happy but rush home to get to bed for another early start tomorrow. By the way the team won 3.5 - 1.5 away at Monmouthshire.

Final day - Final round

Ok up early again and on the road for 6am, no traffic drama today so we arrive in plenty of time at 7am. We off at 8.10am today and playing again with James Walker and James Webber. We had a brief chat with a few players on the range in the morning, most of them were 4 under same as Jack so the chat was mainly about the terrible wait yesterday for finding out if they were getting in. Some were travelling home, some were out, some were praying. It was fun to listen. Anyway our plan today was to try to get to 10under for the tournament. A realistic plan but it just didn't go Jack's way, especially after a double bogey start after he hit his first tee shot OOB, not a great start and he was pretty down after just 1 shot. To his credit he birdied 2 and 3 and settled into his round nicely. Chances slipped by on 4,5,6,7 and 8 but an easy birdie on 9 got Jack to 1 under for the round. The

two James' were struggling and they had sort of given up really, so the group motivation had gone, they were having a nice chat etc but in my opinion it didn't help Jack. He went for 10 today with a 3 wood but pulled his tee shot into the trees, luckily he had a shot to the green but made par. Finally on 11 he hit a decent drive and finally we had a 9 iron left to the flag and finally it was an easy birdie, hooray, at last he played that hole well. Again another great drive down 12 left him 223 to the flag, a lovely 6 iron all over the flag was very, very, very unlucky. The flag was 3 yards from the back edge but the slope off the back was severe. Jack's ball just missed the hole from 223 and looked to have stopped right behind the flag as we walked to the green then suddenly it disappeared off the green. It finished at the bottom of the slope but should have been 10ft for Eagle. He did get up and down but that sort of summed up Jack's day. He missed the 13th green with a poor 6 iron and didn't get up and down so back to 2 under. His heart was not in it now and motivation had gone. Another bogey came at 15 but that could have been worse if I am honest but he did birdie 17 to finish the day at 2 under and 6 under for the tournament tied 40th. If you look at the positives when he started day 1 before he hit a shot he was tied 97th, after day 1 he was tied 87th, after day 2 tied 51st and after day3 tied 40th. So he improved every day. 3 rounds under par and the game looked fairly stable. It's not far away and I am pretty sure he will win this season.

So we had a beer and sat with a few of the other players putting the world to right. We got on quite well this week and on way home he booked me in for next week. Open qualifying Monday and EuroPro in Bournemouth Tuesday onwards. "Yes" kiddo I am always available for you. So we get home and I quickly pop to the Farmers with my darling wife to chill out and have some dinner. Best I speak to her and be nice heh, only joking she supports us all and it's nice to treat her once in a while.