

# WE ARE MACMILLAN. CANCER SUPPORT

## Prestwick to Portrush golf challenge Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2011

I came up with the idea for this event while sitting watching The Masters in April. I had been thinking about doing the "The Etape" Perthshire 80mile cycle in May and by the time I got organised the register was full.

My inspiration was Mark Beaumont the little know Scottish cyclist who recently cycled the Americas climbing the highest mountains in North & South America on route.

I had always wanted to cycle the Antrim coast renowned as one of the most beautiful coast lines in the world but didn't think it merited a sponsored event by itself. That was where Mark's inspiration came in.

I knew that once the idea left my mouth I would have to commit so I phoned Colin my father in law and asked him to name his charity. I was delighted he chose MacMillan as I was aware of their good work and that the funds raised would go direct to source.

Then the training began.....

### 5.15am Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2011

My challenge started in conditions that were more suited to January but I was delighted to be joined by my fellow Prestwick members Stuart Stevenson and Andrew Lochhead.

One of the highlights of the day was while on the 1<sup>st</sup> green we saw a lone walker approach. It was an old friend of mine Derek Davie who had heard of my challenge on Facebook and unannounced turned up to caddy for me.

While I had great visions of burning the course up the way I had seen Rory McIlroy perform the previous evening at the US open it was clear as the round progressed that was not to be. The company was so good that I lost track of time and had to up our pace going round the loop.

Finishing at 8.25 (I don't know how I remembered that!) we said our goodbyes and it was on to the next stage.



### 8.40am

I was met at Prestwick by 2 of my friends Alan & Austin from Ayr Round Table who presented me with a cheque for £250 from part of the proceeds of their recent Burns Supper. This was a welcome surprise and most appreciated.

After a 5mile cycle accompanied by Alan & Austin we arrived at Troon ferry terminal where I met Louise and an excitable Molly and Flynn.

As usual for P&O the sailing went seamlessly and the full Scottish breakfast went down a treat.

12.30pm



At Larne docks I met Louise's cousin Colin McElderry who had volunteered to join me on the hardest part of the day.

We set off from Larne on the coastal route in dry pleasant conditions which unfortunately were to be short lived. After a couple of miles the rain and wind set in and it wasn't long before I was soaked to the skin. Having Colin (a self-confessed cycleholic) with me was an absolute godsend as he set the pace for me and it saved me from getting the map out at every junction.

I had arranged to meet Louise and the kids for a spot of lunch at the halfway point of Ballycastle but by the time we got there Colin was in the zone and there was no stopping him and keen to get this hell over with I wasn't arguing.

My legs feeling like they were about to explode after the infamous Cushendun hill I couldn't believe there were people like Colin who actually did this for fun. The second part of the cycle was slightly more downhill which allowed me to take in the scenery of the causeway coast which even in poor weather was stunning.

On the latter stage we were joined by my friend Simon Clarke at Bushmills. I was glad to see him even though at his sister's wedding 2 weeks earlier I was sure he said he would meet us at Ballycastle.

As the Whiterocks of Portrush approached I looked back to see Simon fading into the distance. For a split second I thought I should wait for him as he had made the effort to join me but as it were only a couple of miles to go I lost that thought and left him to his own devices.

We arrived at the McVicker's at 4.30pm completing the 60 mile cycle in just less than 4 hours. Simon arrived some 10 minutes later looking slightly jaded.



5.00pm

I met up with good friend Chris (Simon's brother) at Royal Portrush who in typical Clarkey style insisted no golf was being played until we'd had a Guinness or two.

Teeing up at the 1<sup>st</sup> I put my drive right down the middle, bladed a wedge and 3 putted for a 5. As the stiffness set in that was to be one of my better holes and I started doing a bit of advertising for Titleist golf balls.

After the hospitality from Chris's parents Hugh & Noreen whose house backs onto the 4<sup>th</sup> the score was to become irrelevant.



The highlight of the round was a par 4 at the 457 yard 18<sup>th</sup> in front of the clubhouse watched by a visiting party from Royal Troon over to play a club match. It was good to show them how Prestwick plays golf!



This picture of the 18<sup>th</sup> was not taken on the day!

### **Thanks**

My sincere thanks go to;

Everyone who has donated their hard earned money to my cause and the above named whose company was second to none, especially Colin who made a windy, wet and hilly cycle almost enjoyable.

Wilma and the committee of Royal Portrush Golf Club who gave me courtesy of the course.

P&O Irish Sea who were my main sponsor and made the trip expense free.

