

THE SWEET SIXTEEN

OPERATION 18TH – Race to the Forest

took place on a beautifully sunny and hot Wednesday in July. Our charity challenge, in support of the Stoke-on-Trent based Douglas Macmillan Hospice saw 4 fourballs set off from different points of the Midlands at 6am, all with the intention of playing as many 18th holes at as many pre-booked clubs as we could get to during the day, before all meeting up at a famous final destination in the evening. Better than that was that we were all kindly lent a spanking new BMW each to travel around in, donated by the very nice people from Knights BMW Stoke.

Our friends from the golf societies who have supported us with the magazine were roped in to take part, we devised four regional routes, North, South, East and West and estimated each team of four golfers could manage 20 clubs in the day, 20 18th holes each. We wanted a closing location to all meet up at, a target we could all time our days to get to. Iain Burns, Director of Golf at Marriott Forest of Arden kindly agreed to be the one, the famous 18th at The Arden Course was our destination and final hole, the only 18th that all teams were to play on the day.

NORTH TEAM – Made up of myself (Phil), Spencer and Bill from the magazine and Gareth Shaw (Staffs County Development Officer) we started the day off at 5.45 am at the magazine's local golf club, Westwood in Leek. The welcome we received set the standard for the day as club chairman was awaiting us in the car park suited and booted and soon joined by club pro James and marketing man Andrew. We took the 18th on, putted out on a dewy green, thanked them for the awesome hospitality and moved on. Through Stoke-on-Trent to Stone, Stafford, Uttoxeter, Lichfield and on to Sutton Coldfield we travelled, and the lovely welcomes kept on coming, buggies on hand, drinks, bacon butties and even a lovely cold beer each at Aston Wood. Gareth and Glenn at Druids Heath practically gave us a guard of honour, then acted as course marshals, clearing

their 18th so we could get round quickly. We were treated like royalty all day and following our 20th visit, Pye Hayes at 7.15 pm, we were ready for the forest. We eventually became to be known as 'Team Awesome' adorned as we were by the colourful shorts donated to us by Royal & Awesome, we thank them.



TEAM AWESOME (NORTH) WITH SUSIE DMH



LOVELY WELCOME FROM ANNA (MOSELEY GC)

SOUTH TEAM – The Caribbean Golf Society, long term friends and supporters of Midlands Golfer were the chosen ones to take on a tricky southern route. Junior, Ronald, Ian and Ansel were picked to represent the society and they did them proud. Also benefitting from a warm welcome, this time from Gaudet Luce boss Alec Fernihough at 6am the CGS guys took the scenic route at first at Ombersley, Cleobury Mortimer and Little Lakes, before they headed to Bewdley, Kidderminster and enjoyed a half way cuppa at

Lickey Hills (pictured), well looked after by GreenKeeper Dave! Across the southern edge of Birmingham they travelled, eventually taking in the famous island green at West Midlands before they headed to the forest, actually turning up last of the four teams, but in enough time to play the Arden.



TEAM WEST (SELFIE)



EAST AT ULLESTHORPE COURT (MID PM)

WEST TEAM – Lilleshall GC was the first point of call for Team West. Paul, his father Brian, Chris and Craig relished the challenge, arriving at their second venue, The Shropshire before anyone was there. One quick hop over the fence each though saw them on the final hole of The Silver Course, nothing was going to stop their march to the forest! From Telford they took in clubs in the Wolverhampton and Walsall area before getting to the centre of Birmingham, going on to actually arrive at the forest before anyone

else did. Team West were the first to play the Arden 18th, and therefore the first to get a beer at the end from the FOA staff. Among many clubs with the red carpet treatment, a special mention to Dan at Calderfields, with a beer and a bacon roll waiting for them on arrival.

EAST TEAM – A big thanks to our Andy Davies from the magazine, he couldn't get into our car but came to the rescue of Team East as they lost a member with just days to go. Andy stepped off the sub's bench, picked up the BMW from Stoke and got up at 4am to pick up the others from Nuneaton in time to reach their first 18th hole at Beedles Lake GC near Leicester. Peter, Liam and Paul all from the BUGS golf society were the other occupants of the car and they were off to a great start as Jon from Beedles Lake was on hand at 6am, dishing out bacon rolls and hot drinks. The warm welcomes continued as East continued around Leicester eventually heading back to the Nuneaton area before taking in the Coventry clubs. They arrived at the forest in plenty of time to play The Arden, later on Andy took on the reverse journey, eventually arriving back in Stoke at around 11.30 pm, quite a day he had!

So at around 8.45 pm all teams were enjoying a beer and a recap of the days events outside the Zest Bar at The Forest of Arden. We'd all managed to complete the final hole in plenty of time, two teams even took on the Aylesford 18th as well. The main thing was that the collection buckets we all took around with us had all filled up nicely, many hundreds of club



TEE OFF - 5.45 AM WITH THE WELCOMING COMMITTEE AT WESTWOOD GC



SOUTH TEAM - Well earned break at Lickey Hills



EAST TEAM - 6am, ready to go at Beedles Lake



WEST TEAM - Collecting at Oxley Park



NORTH TEAM - The final putt at The Forest Of Arden

members and visitors were glad to donate. We thank them all and also to all of the golf clubs who kindly hosted us on the day, they are all listed here. Including the fabulous closing venue who couldn't do enough for us, we managed to play 81 closing holes in total during the day, mission accomplished.

N.B A public apology and thanks to the three clubs who had agreed to take

part and who we just ran out of time to get to during the day. Maxstoke Park, The Warwickshire and Wishaw GC's, we'll make doubly sure we get to you for Operation 18th – 2015. Plus thanks to Suzi from DMH for following us around all day, tracking our movements on social media and meeting up with us in the evening. Also to David Westwood for the logoed Srixon's that we all played with

during the day. Incidentally – We also ran a little comp for all of the teams, Chris (Midlands Golfer designer) devised a scorecard based on the first 18 holes for each team, the best two scores per hole counted and at the end it resulted in a comfortable win for Team South. The guys win a fourball at The Open Course at The Nottinghamshire G&CC.

"THANKS AGAIN TO THE FANTASTIC WELCOME AND SUPPORT OF ALL THE CLUBS BELOW"

NORTH

Westwood: 5.45 am
Leek
Greenway Hall
Wolstanton
Trentham Park
Trentham
Barlaston
Isaac Walton
Ingestre Park
The Manor
Uttoxeter
Whittington Heath
Druids Heath
Aston Wood
Little Aston

Sutton Coldfield
Boldmere
Walmley
Pye Hayes
Forest of Arden –
Aylesford & Arden
Course : 8.25pm

SOUTH

Gaudet Luce: 6 am
Ombersley
Cleobury Mortimer
Little Lakes
Wharton Park
Burlish Park
Kidderminster

Hagley
Halesowen
Bromsgrove
Lickey Hills
Kings Norton
Gay Hill
Shirley
Widney Manor
West Midlands
Stonebridge
Hatchford Brook
Forest Of Arden –
Aylesford & Arden
Course: 8.45pm

WEST

Lilleshall: 6 am
The Shropshire
Telford
Horsehay Village
Shifnal
Worfield
Patshull Park
Perton Park
South Staffordshire
Oxley Park
Penn
Great Barr
Calderfields
Walsall
Handsworth

Hilltop
Edgbaston
Moseley
Cocks Moors
Woods
Forest Of Arden –
Arden Course:
7.50 pm

EAST

Beedles Lake: 6 am
Rothley Park
Lingdale
Longcliffe
Forest Hill
Western Park

Kirby Muxloe
Glen Gorse
Kibworth
Cosby
Ullesthorpe
Nuneaton
Atherstone
Oakridge
Brandon Wood
Coventry
Windmill Village
Forest of Arden –
Arden Course:
8.10 pm

