



From 9 to Scratch

"Since falling back in love with the game of golf 5 years ago and throwing in my 3 cards at my home club North Hants to get my handicap back, which at the time seemed way too high, coming from a handicap of 2 back in 2006/2007 to be given a handicap of 9 in 2011. I managed to get this down to 6 over the winter period but just found myself in a rut and couldn't get back what I had. We get older, body shape changes, long commutes into work etc.

I went to see Greg in 2012 when he was based at Pine Ridge and we set to work on building a stable swing, one that would see me have the ability to play golf into retirement age. I wanted a swing that wasn't manipulated, one that's not going to cause unnecessary injuries. Over the following year we set to work and the handicap fell to 4.6, so we were heading in the right direction.

At the start of the 2014 season, things got off to a rocky start, I blame it on the long cold wet winter days we have and its not always ideal to hit balls. However myself and Greg carried on working on our long term game plan and something just clicked in the May of 2014 when I shot my first competitive under par round in a very long time, we knew things were going in the right direction.

Life generally has a way of giving you a little and then taking some back, or in my case giving me a little and then me having to give something back. My brother was diagnosed with CKD (Chronic Kidney Disease) back on bonfire night in 2010. I'd always said he could have one of mine if I was a match. I was a perfect match so things looked good, but its never always as easy as you think, I'd have various other tests though 2013-2014 and was given the all clear to donate, an operation date of 23 June 2014 was set. Golf was not a priority during the next 12 weeks. I was advised not to even swing a club until I had healed internally. I managed to finish the season off with a handicap of 3.9 and my last event that year was June 14th. No more competitive golf was played that year, so it was a very short season Which in some ways was good as it gave me time to re-group and focus on my longer term goals along with my health. I had no idea how I'd come back in 2015 with 4 keyhole scars on my lower back and a 3-4 inch scare on my lower abdomen. Who knows how the surgery would have affected the way I swing a club.

I last wrote a short testimonial for Greg back in 2014 and my golf has certainly progressed since. During the 2015 season I could really see my game improving, I managed another two W's in 2015. The first of them being level par and the second another sub-par round. I also joined the mid-am circuit in 2015 and felt like I could compete in some of the events I was entering, but early on in the season I couldn't quite sustain the 36 hole concentration required, I manage to put in one low round and then blow up on the final 18. This had to be addressed! I didn't feel like it was a confidence issue, I knew I could do it, but old habits die hard I guess. Greg got me on trackman and we got the 3d system hooked up and we looked at ways to improve again, in both my swing and mentally.

I knew Greg had been working with Mark Bull for some time, and Greg suggested we start looking at some posture belt work round May 2015. I set to work straight away, headed off to the gym with belts in hand. I managed to put in two low 70 rounds in the Hankley mid-am that year and the work we had been putting in with the belt and spikey balls felt like it was coming together and I really felt like I had so much more space and time to hit the ball. My goal for 2015 was a 1 handicap, I finished the season on 2.1 after initially getting down to 1.5. However I won 2 events & the Order of merit at my home club. Things where still on the up.

I set myself 4 goals in 2016.

1. To win another competition.
2. To get to scratch
3. To play in the Gerald Micklem at Sunningdale Golf Club
4. To make Mid-Am the Tour Finals day (This is all points based and due to work commitments I am limited to about 8 events a year from a potential 25)

I knew I had to get to scratch before the August closing date for Sunningdale as this event usually ballots in the region of 0.2-0.3. I kept saying to myself just keep doing what you have been doing and let your swing dictate your score. Handicaps are just a number of how well your playing at that moment of time.

Another slow start to 2016, maybe this is something Greg & I need to look into for 2017, and I crept back to 2.7. I kept working on getting myself set in the right position and ensuring that I had none or very minimal lateral sway in my swing as this is something we've been working on very hard on over the last 2 years. It had to be eradicated to get rid of the errant shots.

I wasn't worried about the slow start as I knew it was only a matter of time before the old muscles loosened up and I'd start to get back into the swing of things again. I managed to finish 4th in my first Mid-Am event of 2016 and the handicap came straight back to 2 (2.3), the confidence built from there with another sub-par round at my home club to take the same Board comp I won in 2015. Handicap to 1.8. My first national event loomed in June, the Welsh Mid-Am!

I spoke with Greg a few weeks prior to this and we agreed that walking the course the day before and making notes was the best prep for this event. It wasn't possible to get a practice round leading up to the event as its just too far to travel and besides I am not a fan of playing a course the day before a competition, mainly because on the day the course is set up different, speed of greens, different pins, tee's pushed back etc. I got to the venue the afternoon prior to the event and settled in. I hit a few balls on the range and spend an hour on the short game area and then went and had a pint while I had a look at the course guide. The course was quiet by the time I'd finished so I set out on my rekkie.

The welsh is a 54 hole event over 2 days with a cut after the first 36. With scores of 72-74-66 to finish on a 4 under par total, got me 5th spot in my first national title. The last 3-4 years work was clearly starting to pay off and come together.

Scratch was lurking and I tried not to think about it as my next focus was The Logan Trophy (English Mid-Am). Another event I'd never played in before. This year it was held at Brokenhurst manor Golf club, a lovely course in the New Forest. Another rekki was required the weekend before and again I didn't take the clubs just took in the course and walked with the course guide. I was tied 3rd after the 1st day shooting a 69. Its top 45 and ties that go through to the final day, I managed to shoot 69/77/76 to finish tied 30th. Not the final 2 rounds I'd have liked, but these things happen and I was happy to make the cut in my first English event. We had a chuckle at the end of it as although I managed to get to 0.3 after my first round, scratch. I didn't actually play off it as went back .2 for the final 2 rounds.

I didn't have much time off after this and had a run of 3 36 hole events in a 10 day period. This along with a busy work schedule was a little too much, but I trusted my swing, ensured I was hydrated on the course and managed to get through the 3 events by only losing .1 on the handicap. A good schedule is something that needs to be looked going forward. The big question was will 0.6 get me into Sunningdale? It did and I got in as the 60th spot, with a maximum playing field of 60 players.

The focus was purely now on Sunningdale, I withdrew from an event the weekend before Sunningdale and focused on the fine tuning of my game. I looked at my weakness which was bunker play and spent a few hours a week in the practice bunker at North Hants and continued with the long game practice, posture belt, strength & flexibility work in the gym.

As Sunningdale GC is pretty local to me, and a practice round was included in the entry fee. I thought on this occasion I'd be mad not to make the most of it and had a good look round "Sunningdale New Course" about 10 days before the event. I also checked in with Greg a week before for a few hours and we looked at how I was swinging and made sure what I was working on was working and I was setting myself correctly. All was good on the morning of the event and I was stripping the ball on the range, high draw, low fade etc. I just felt good in general. I finished tied 3rd with a 142 total, 2 over par, goals 2, 3 & 4 achieved and what a place to do it, Sunningdale!

All the long wet, dark, cold days & nights spent scraping balls off a matt, hours in the gym working on posture belt routines along with strength and cardio fitness training and not to mention the hours over the years Greg & myself have put in at either Pine Ridge or Fox Hills on trackman and 3D, he must get frustrated at times as its generally the same issue we look at, You get out of life what you put in, and I am hoping that Greg has enjoyed our journey as much as I have.

I also have to thank my lovely wife Bops for putting up with the long hours I put in while working in London, arriving home late and then spending a few hours in the gym or on the range/course.

This is my story, all I can say is bring on tour finals day!!!

Greg what's the plan for 2017?"