The 21st Bad Etiquette Classic

September 2014

Global recognition of the Bad Etiquette Classic brand continues to grow at an astonishing pace. In its 21st year and 15 years after its first sortie to the Emerald Isle, the Bad Etiquette Classic returned to Ireland, this time to Dublin, where we found the city jam packed in readiness for the big event. Every hotel room and parking space taken, every bar over-flowing, every restaurant table reserved and every public TV the focus of excited fans, The Bad Etiquette Classic was in town and ... well ... the whole of Dublin was watching the All Ireland Senior Hurling Championship Final between Kilkenny and Tipperary. Let's not be too down about that. It was described later as the greatest hurling match in history, ending in a draw with the incomprehensible score line of Kilkenny 3-22, Tipperary 1-28. That's a draw? Sure to be sure, as night follows day, had it not been such an exciting game all 2 million viewers would have switched over to watch David shoot 99 around Royal Dublin.

At this juncture it should be mentioned that Ireland only narrowly won the right to host the 21st Bad Etiquette Classic, receiving 2 votes from the Founder Members to Portugal's one (with one abstention). Allegations that Portugal was paid $10m and awarded rights to the 2015 BEC as part of a hushed-up settlement agreement are currently under investigation by US and Swiss authorities.

Our itinerary this year would take in the magnificent and historical links of Portmarnock, Royal Dublin and The Island. Not a parkland course in sight. After 3 consecutive years of wet weather and waterproofs, our perseverance was about to be rewarded with four days of sunshine and sun-cream. And joining the Tour for the first time this year was property tycoon and elite road cycling champion Rob Gussinklo looking to become the fourth rookie to win the BEC at the first attempt.

But that wouldn't happen because what did happen some thought would never happen. Others didn't think it would happen in their life time. (*Can we just get on with this?*). But it happened at the 21st Bad Etiquette Classic. *What? Don't tell me. Someone strung together 3 decent shots? You got from A to B without the need for a U-turn? Pete missed an 8 inch putt and thought nothing of it? Julian, went 4 days without ordering two bottles of Chateauneuf-du-Pape? Spectators had to be turned away as the vast galleries were spilling onto the fairways and causing a hazard? No? What then?* Well, following his victory at the 20th BEC, Mark overcame all the odds, a lack of talent and a lifetime of under-achievement to win again at the 21st Bad Etiquette Classic .... and in so doing became the first player in the history of the event to retain the Tea Pot and Pink Jacket. *That's it? Tea pot retention? Congratulations.*

And that wasn't the only milestone of this year's event. David & Richard each played their 100th round, Julian & Pete their 10,000th shot and collectively we surpassed five million yards (shortly after getting the event under way at Portmarnock). And let's not forget Bill our friendly Irish taxi driver who went the extra mile every day for 4 days and, lived up to his name by clocking up a very large one, propelling him straight to third place in the all time Order of Merit with earnings of €524 (£379).

Welcome to the 21st Bad Etiquette Classic!

Saturday - Portmarnock

Once checked into the White Sands Hotel, we took the opportunity to enjoy the Portmarnock Beach vista (and save taxi costs) by walking the half mile to The Links. There, amongst more wedding guests than golfers, we enjoyed a beer & sandwich in brilliant sunshine on the terrace and wondered whether we might just be on for the best BEC weather since Ayrshire, 2006.

- The first BEC round to be accompanied by pumping dance music and a persistent car-alarm
- Martin chips in for birdie at the 3rd and hits an unreasonably long drive (ULD) of 330 yards at the 13th confirming what we'd all feared … that he can play great golf when he's not wearing waterproofs
- Rob makes sandy par, net birdie and £6 at the 5th for his first taste of the lavish rewards available on Tour
- Richard pitches to 12 inches for a tap-in net eagle at the 12th
- Mark & Martin win 3&1 against Richard & Rob, but Rob ('I don't like to peak prematurely') holes from 6 feet at the last to steal the back 9 and finish his first BEC round with a very satisfactory £0
- In the second match, Dave G and Julian declare new sets of irons, and Julian confesses to having taken ~~drugs~~ lessons. David confirms that he's invested nothing in his game for 30 years
- Julian also sports the new Garmin Shank S3 GPS golf watch providing exact distance to the pin; Pete's very impressed and looks forward to next year's launch of the Garmin Ultra Deep Foliage UDF4 model that he's told will better suit his game
- Julian & David win 5&3 and David's 3 net birdies, net eagle and spattering of positive extras put him in the Yellow Cashmere

Sunday - Royal Dublin

Want to know a thing or two about Royal Dublin? Founded in 1885, the club moved to its current location on Bull Island in 1889 (*with the principal purpose of confusing visitors who assume Royal Dublin GC is The Island GC as its on an island when, in fact, The Island isn't located on an island*). Moving on ... Christy O'Connor Senior became the club pro in 1959 and is affectionately known by the members as 'Himself'. (*Eh? That must have lead to some misunderstandings. 'Old Tom's playing with Himself this morning'; Old Bill's in the bar talking to Himself'; 'Glad to see Old Ted's feeling Himself again' etc.*). Anyway ... Christy's eagle, birdie, eagle finish to win the Carroll's International in 1966 apparently ranks as the finest finish to any Irish golf tournament. (*Well, everyone to their own opinion, but I'd say David Law's par, double-bogie, bogie finish at Bally Castle to win the BEC in 2005 has the edge*).

The club's website is bang up to date though, stating 'Legends have played here' (*recognition at last*).

- Mark & Pete take the front 9 and are 3up after 11, but Martin & Dave G storm back winning the next 6 holes, with a one over par better-ball, to win the match 3&2
- Thanks to some lackluster play by the opposition, David & Rob find themselves 5 up after only 7 holes, but Julian & Richard find some form and claw their way back to all square at the 14th where David & Rob are disqualified for playing with each others' balls
- Julian thinks he has the match won at the 18th but Rob finds his ball behind the green and halves the hole and match

Monday - The Island

Next up, The Island GC, 'A Classic Links encounter.' 'Established in 1890 the club is surrounded by the sea on three sides.' (*In my book that doesn't make it an island*). In September 1887 four men rowed across the channel separating Malahide from the spur of land known locally (*by complete eejits*) as The Island and assessed it as suitable for a golf links. And the rest, as they say, is history. The club was founded by John Redmond Blood together with Francis Moore Blood, William Coverdin Blood, James Rippingham Fromthety, Robert Quietplis Onthety and James J. Law (*no relation*).

Then there's a strange story about the 1922 British Prime Minister, Andrew Bonar Law (*also no relation*) who played secretly at The Island in 1913 on the very same day that the Very Reverend (*but clearly not Very Able*) Reginald Godfrey Webster, Dean of Malahide, found himself (*with a small 'h' that is*) 7 down after 7 against the Secretary (*W.C. Blood no less*), became ill and died on the 8th tee. (*Well there you go).* Such a story on the BEC Tour might make no. 4 on the all time Top 20 Moments list but it certainly wouldn't trump Julian & Angie's duets or the Great Channel Tunnel debacle.

Post Golf Craic

Saturday - we take 2 of Bill's taxis into central Dublin only to find it very difficult to find a table for 8 as the whole of Dublin is out 'washing the banjo' ahead of tomorrow's All Ireland hurling final and Half Ireland, Half Georgia Euro-qualifier. Mark is propositioned by a girl in red who's banjo is clearly saturated. We end up eating in the basement of a French restaurant.

Sunday - Siam is the choice for dinner (a hell of a drive for Bill, particularly the section over the Himalayas). Rob heads off early to meet a friend in town who is apparently very disappointed not to meet us all. Having met us all yesterday himself, Rob suggests to her that she may be over-estimating the pleasure involved.

Monday - first to Gibney's for a few scoops, then on to Kajjal's for a curry which is pricey as well as spicy thanks to it being the recommendation of one of Dave G's high net worth friends. Back to Gibney's for a couple of pints of the Black Stuff accompanied by the first live music on Tour since Julian entertained all-comers in the Knight's Cocktail Bar at the Scarisbrick in 2000.

AM

- Pete holes a putt from 20 yards off the green at the 2nd for birdie net eagle to set the tone for a front 9 in which Mark & David L quickly find themselves 2 down
- Mark holes an outrageous two-tier birdie putt at the 9th to halve the nine but at the 10th both Pete & Rob hole par putts from off the green to set a similar tone for the back 9 which sees Mark & David succumb 3&1
- With no disrespect to Dave G's much emulated putting stroke, when he too holes from off the green at the 10th, the greens-keeper is called to check that the hole isn't located at the bottom of an enormous hollow
- Julian hits his partner, Martin, with a wedge (shot) from 90 yards as he tends the flag in the normally safe centre of the green; despite this they reach 5 up at the turn and hold on to win 4&2 against Dave G & Richard

PM

- Mark & Julian dovetail well around the front 9 to lead 2 up against Martin & David L and Mark's 4-iron to 5ft for birdie at the 10th makes it 3 up
- But Martin & David fight back winning the 12th, 13th and 15th …. and then the 16th too when Mark hits Julian's bag when playing from an awkward lie
- Despite Julian's gross sandy forehead (the result of a sun cream / bunker-fest combo) the match reaches the 18th (421yds, par 4) all square. There, Mark plays the shot of his BEC career, holing a 9-iron up the hill from 120 yards for birdie CI, NE and the match
- Pete & Richard win 3&1 against Rob & Dave G in a match with only one recorded highlight: Richard's LD at the 15th when Pete's ball 30 yards ahead is found to be 2" off the fairway ... Pete's reaction wasn't captured, but I expect he was pretty relaxed about it

After a long day on The Island (*not*), there are some dramatic changes to the leader-board.

Player Profiles

Mark

For 3 rounds Mark bided his time in 5th and 6th place with one match win and a few positive extras limiting his financial losses to £11. But on Monday afternoon he found form at The Island with a birdie at the 10th and another at the 18th where he holed a 9-iron for the match. From there it just got better. Having scraped into the leading four-ball for the final round on just £2 and trailing the leader (Julian) by £18, Mark saved his best until last, carding 3 NP's, 3 NB's and back-to-back NE's at the 9th & 10th. A final round haul of £38 overcame Pete's Herculean efforts in the other four-ball and earned Mark his 5th Bad Etiquette Classic. Congratulations Mark!

Martin

A chip-in for birdie at the 3rd hole of this year's event and his ULD at the 13th served notice once again that Martin was a serious contender for the chinaware at the 21st Bad Etiquette Classic. In 2nd place over the weekend, briefly in the joint lead but then tucking back in behind the leader (Julian) ahead of the final round, Martin looked perfectly poised to take the Tea Pot for a second time. All he needed to do was emerge from Julian's not insubstantial slipstream, win the match and make a few extras. But as we learned in 2013, 'It's not that simple'. Had he looked over his shoulder, he would have seen Mark & Pete both approaching at break-neck speed for the sprint finish. Martin's match win and 2 NB's were not enough and he crossed the line on £21 in third place.

Rob

After 3 rounds of this year's event, rookie on the Tour, Rob, could have been forgiven for thinking that 'this BEC malarkey' was a bit of harmless fun. But after 5 rounds he'd learned the hard way that it was neither. Two defeats, no net birdies, 5 FP's and losses of £53 in the closing rounds sent him tumbling to 8th place and in need of an MLI bailout from the Allied Irish Bank. Once the mental scars have healed we look forward to welcoming Rob back to the Tour.

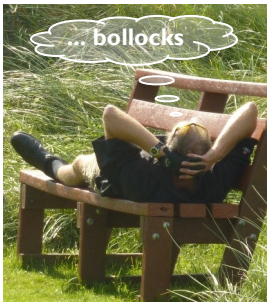
Julian

Hitting the front of the field AM and consolidating his first place position PM at The Island on Monday, Julian might justifiably have thought that he'd timed his move to perfection. Leading on £20 with just (*just?*) Martin at his heels, Julian might have considered that a match win with a healthy selection of positive extras might earn him his 5th BEC title. But it wasn't to be. The desired match win transpired to be a crushing 6&4 defeat and one net birdie didn't constitute the healthy selection of positive extras required. And as it turned out, it wasn't Martin that mounted the challenge but Mark & Pete, Thus with final round losses of £22 Julian limped home in a disappointing 5th place.

David L

Following his losses in each of the previous 5 years and having witnessed the BEC drive him close to the edge in 2013, fans & participants alike were delighted to see David take an early lead at this year's event. Sunday evening he was unbeaten and sitting pretty on £27. But around The Island it went horribly wrong; two match losses and just three net birdies saw him hemorrhage £37 and plummet to 7th place. Thanks to the able support of a resurgent Pete during the final round, David recovered some of his Monday losses to finish in 4th place, but the BEC's Wellbeing Sub-committee remains concerned that lifetime losses of £105 and 10th place in the all time Order of Merit may not provide the foundation David requires to ensure unbridled enjoyment on Tour for the next 20 years.

Pete



Had it not been for Mark's exceptional final round, Pete might have recorded a most remarkable BEC victory. Lying 7th, then 8th, then 6th after the first four rounds there was really nothing to suggest that Pete was a contender for the Tea Pot. But Pete delivered another of his trademark final rounds doing most of the damage in the 3&2 win over Dave G & Rob and carding 4 NB's, 2 NE's and an NP. Earnings of £31 propelled him up to 2nd place … his sixth career runner-up finish. What's more, he leads the Tour for most net eagles (41) and longest drives (74).

Richard

The 2011 runner-up may have wondered once again whether 2014 would be his year. Would it? In short, 'No', Less succinctly 'Nope'. With just one match win, 9 NB's and a solitary bogie in 14 attempts at the par 5's Richard's campaign for a first Tour victory didn't take off … in fact, it didn't push away from the stand and taxi out to the runway. But it wasn't all bad; 5 longest drives (first equal with Martin) and a tap-in net eagle bear testimony to that. None-the-less, Richard's fans expect a fully fuelled take-off in 2015.

Dave G

Losing £16 on day one wasn't the start David was looking for nor emphatic confirmation of the earnings growth he'd forecast in the business case for his new irons. But to his credit David kept the net birdies flowing and controlled his negative extra addiction so that by Tuesday he was in 5th place with hard-fought earnings of £0. But back at Portmarnock where his woes had begun, there was to be no fairytale ending; a 5th Scarisbrick title, yes (for a final round net 68), but further losses of £10 bringing him home in 7th place.

Tuesday - Portmarnnock

Was every course in Dublin discovered by odd blokes in rowing boats or do all these courses just share the same web designer and don't bother to QA their own drivel? Portmarnock's website says that on Christmas Eve 1893 W.C. Pickeman and his friend George Ross rowed over from Sutton to the peninsula of Portmarnock to explore the possibility of creating a golf links; an uncannily similar history to The Island. And why do you need a bloody rowing boat anyway to explore a peninsula?

Anyway, an absolutely stunning day for our second lap of Portmarnock and the final round of the 21st Bad Etiquette Classic.

- The leading 4-ball lets through a loan golfer at the 4th and regret it; he walks slowly, is an expert in deep visualisation techniques, takes 6 practice swings before & after each shot and rakes slowly too
- For Julian & Richard versus Mark & Martin the front 9 is 'tighter than ...' and all square after eight, but Mark's back-to-back birdies at the 9th & 10th visibly dent the opposition's resolve and they fade to a 6&4 loss
- Out behind, Pete is hitting and calling the shots with 3 NB's on the outward 9 followed by a quick call to the club secretary to complain about the slow 4-ball ahead
- Pete's birdies at 11 and 16 finish the job, winning the match 3&2 for himself (*with a small 'h'*) & David against Dave G & Rob

Final call. Mark receives the Tea Pot from rookie Rob in the departures lounge at Dublin Airport

Changes to the BEC handicap system

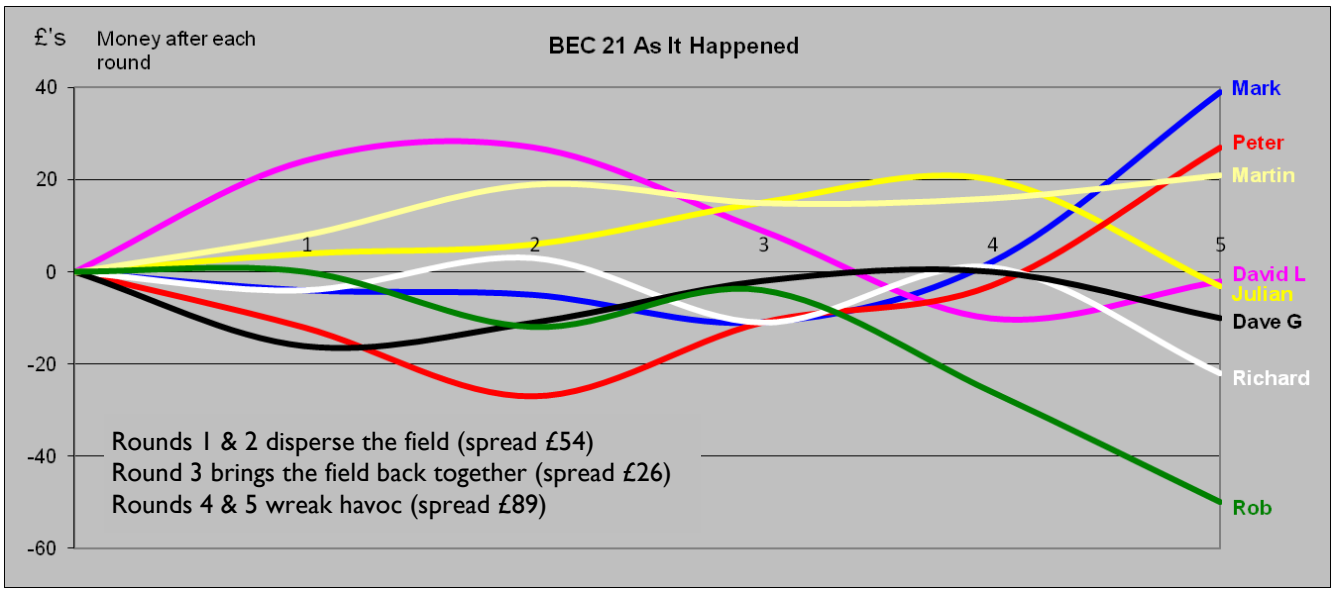
The first objective handicap system (with adjustments made after each round) was introduced at the 6th BEC in 1999 and was updated to its current form ahead of the 7th BEC. (… *oh, here we go, another bloody history lesson*). Having served us well for 15 years, the Founder Members have agreed some fine-tuning of the system to ensure no future reoccurrence of the distasteful Tea Pot retention scenes that took place at Dublin Airport upon conclusion of the 21st Bad Etiquette Classic. Therefore, with immediate effect, following the end of each year's event, the handicap of:

- The winner will be cut by 2.0
  (*but, but, but ....*)
- The runner-up will be cut by 1.0
  (*... you're acting the Maggot!*)
- Third place will be cut by 0.5
  (*... you'll be hearing from my lawyer)*

These cuts will be applied in addition to the existing system and will be applied prior to the following year.
(*... my arse they will*)

Did you know?

- Dublin Airport is located 5 miles north of Dublin city and was discovered by 2 men in a rowing boat who set-off to explore the possibility of creating an airport
- Kilkenny won the replay on 27th September 2-17 to 2-14



See you in Portugal for the 22nd Bad Etiquette Classic !