

More madness in Marrakech.....diary of the newbie

Following on from the successful trip to Marrakech in 2012, the decision was made to go back!! But this time, the number of tourists increased from 6 to 8, with Gary rejoining the group and Patrick being the newbie....Again, the tour would be for 5 days, with a return to the Al Maaden course and then rounds at The Royal Marrakech and Amelkis courses.

Unlike the previous year, the flight out to Marrakech was much more sensible, so we didn't arrive at the hotel (same one as the year before) until early evening, so there was just time to get food, have a few beers and get a relatively early night ahead of the next 5 days of golf, as it would be split into the PGA Team Cup (3 rounds) and the PGA Trophy (2 rounds).

The teams were:

Blue: Chris, Gary, Patrick, Simon

Red: Iain, Matt, Oliver, Andrew

Day 1 PGA Team Cup 2013 - Amelkis Golf Club: Blue & Red Course

Now, one thing frequently heard before the trip was just how hot it was in Marrakech when the guys were there in 2012, so you can imagine it came as quite a shock to everyone when we woke up to rain and cold temperatures! However, like the true golfing die-hards that we are, we weren't going to be put off by the weather conditions.

The format was Fourball Better Ball, and it was Oliver/Andrew vs Gary/Simon, and Iain/Matt vs Chris/Patrick. Not a good start for the Blue Team, as they lost both games, but more importantly there were forfeits for a number of players.....these were for the last person who was: in the sand; in the water; to putt on the 18th; in the rough; to score a birdie and to swear (you can probably guess who won that one each day?)

Once back in the hotel, a few hours of lounging by the pool / playing volleyball in the pool were followed by beers, food and carrying out forfeits. Forfeits for the first 3 days usually involved someone being the "drinks bitch" pre dinner, "drinks bitch" post dinner, dinner waiter to the rest of the group, and cleaning of golf clubs or shoes etc. However, one of the forfeits was to decide the forfeits for the next day.....this will take centre stage on the evening of Day 4

Day 2 PGA Team Cup 2013 - Royal Marrakech Golf Club

There aren't too many golf courses around Marrakech, so surely we would get to the golf course on time each day? Sadly not, as Day 2 got off to an interesting start with us being driven to a completely different course, and it was only when Iain realised that we were near to one of the golf courses that was played in 2012, that we were able to get the driver to stop and drive us to the correct course! But that was not the only surprise of the morning, as when we got there, we were told that we had to have caddies with us on the course, which were not included in the price! We had already paid to have buggies, so we were not expecting to pay any more. And this course was not exactly the cheapest, as Matt found out when he had to go and buy a pair of socks, which cost him about £15.

Anyway, play eventually got under way, and was again Fourball Betterball, with Oliver/Matt vs Gary/Patrick and Iain/Andrew vs Simon/Chris. Having had a shocker the day before, the Blue Team fought back, winning both games. After the post mortem in the club house bar, it was back to the hotel (where on the way back we witnessed a bloke hanging on to the back of a pick up truck as it weaved its way through the Marrakech traffic) where the routine was the same as the day before – plenty of beer, causing mayhem in the pool, and making sure all forfeits were carried out!

Day 3 PGA Team Cup 2013 - Al Maaden Golf Club

In true Ryder Cup style, Day 3 was all about the singles, as we finished off the PGA Team Cup, and the pairings were decided over plenty of beers the previous evening. They were Andrew v Patrick, Matt v Simon, Iain v Gary and Oliver v Chris. Details are a little hazy, but it ended up with the Red team taking the bragging rights and winning the PGA Team Cup. Once again, it was back to the hotel for another afternoon by the pool, and a new game in the pool was beginning to take shape, as when we all went in the pool with the mini rugby ball, it emptied. This meant that the throwing of the ball got more and more “silly”, as we tried to cause as much inconvenience as possible for whoever was trying to catch it! This gave somebody an idea for a forfeit.....

That evening we decided it would be good to head into the centre of Marrakech to visit the Souks and soak up some of the local culture. Simple enough to organise, the hotel ordered 2 taxis for us, and off we headed, not really knowing what to expect. The first few minutes set the tone for the evening, when Iain walked by one of the locals who was holding a snake and they tried to get him to have a photo taken with it. Even though Iain said no, and tried to walk away, the guy managed to force the snake around his neck, and then tried to charge him £20 to have a photo taken with it! Once we had stopped a riot kicking off, we headed into the Souks to have a look around, and so Oliver could buy a handbag for Freya. Now, to say that Oliver was up for the challenge of haggling with the locals would be an understatement, and after much negotiation, and what felt like several hours, he managed to beat them down to a good price – we knew he had, as the Shop Owner was not smiling and couldn't get him out of the shop quick enough. But never mind, Oliver had TWO handbags for Freya to use. So we headed back up to the main square, where Iain, Gary, Chris and Oliver decided to stay a bit longer, but for the rest of us, we'd had enough! So we went back out to the taxi rank and that is where a straight forward cab ride back to the hotel turned into anything but that!

First problem encountered is that they didn't want us to share one taxi, and so we spent 15 minutes arguing about that. Eventually one taxi driver agreed to take all 4 of us in one taxi, and we started the journey back to the hotel. Now, even though it was getting dark, we still knew the way back to the hotel, as we had driven the route several times going back and forwards to the golf courses, so got a little suspicious when the taxi driver took a different route, heading slowly down a narrow street with no street lights, and not an obvious route back to the hotel. Panic started to set in when the taxi driver slowed down to answer his mobile phone, and another bloke (also on a mobile

phone) stepped into the middle of the road. The taxi did go past this random bloke, but 200 yards later, the taxi stopped altogether, having broken down. So there we were, 4 European blokes, in the middle of a suburb of Marrakech that we didn't recognise, in a taxi that was broken down...to say that there were a few brown patches appearing on trousers would be an understatement. The taxi driver assured us that we weren't actually that far from the hotel, so having got out of the taxi (and actually paid the driver!), the 4 of us legged it in the direction we were told that the hotel was, and were never happier to see a familiar road and the hotel. We headed straight to the bar, and were joined by the rest of the guys, who even though they walked around Marrakech for another half hour, got back only a few mins after us!

Anyway, we all lived to play another round.....

Day 4 PGA Trophy 2013 - Amelkis Golf Club: Blue & Red Course

Having recovered from the ordeal of the trip into Marrakech, it was now time for the serious business of the PGA Trophy, and for that, it was back to the Amelkis Golf Club. The groups were made up of Iain, Chris, Oliver & Matt and Patrick, Gary, Simon & Andrew (check). As you can imagine, the tension was high as everyone wanted the coveted trophy, and for some it became too much to bear....on one particular hole, Simon missed a putt – no shame there, but not for Simon. At this point the peaceful setting of the golf course was shattered as Simon bellowed “F***** C*** that could be heard in neighbouring Algeria. Just in case we didn't realise he was a little annoyed, he decided to throw his putter towards the golf buggy, however, it didn't quite get that far, and wedged itself into the green. Once Simon had demonstrated his Alan Titchmarsh skills and repaired het huge hole that was now in the green, we headed off to the next tee, wondering what could do to snap Simon out of his bad mood – enter Gary!!

Gary sent his approach shot to the green slightly to the right – a polite way of saying it was into the rough / bushes, however, he did have a shot to the green, he just needed to avoid the big puddle of water on the green and the big tree just before it. So where did Gary end up? In the tree! And the best way to get out of the tree? To putt out, any by this point, Simon was in hysterics at Gary's misfortune, and the missed putt on the previous hole was long forgotten. And by the end of the round, Simon was in the lead!

Leaderboard at the end of the day:

- Simon
- Oliver
- Iain

This was also the last day for the forfeits, and the previous day, Oliver got the forfeit that was to decide on the next day's forfeits, and so he thought he would take them to another level. As well as keeping the obvious ones like the “drinks bitch”, “dinner waiter” and cleaning of golf clubs & shoes, he decided to add a couple more – standing in the middle of the pool whilst the rest of the group threw the mini rugby ball at you, having to dance on your own in the hotels nightclub, and attend one of the afternoon activities by the pool. Unfortunately for Oliver, he seemed to win quite a few forfeits that afternoon, and ended up having to complete the forfeits that he had arranged. Am not

sure which he enjoyed the most – having everybody sat around the pool wanting to throw the rugby ball at him, attending an afternoon session where he learnt all about tea, or dancing all on his own in the nightclub (we were the only people in there)! But in all fairness to him, they were all completed. And the evening was finished off with the story about the ‘Love Glove’, with Gary crying with laughter as Oliver explained what it was!

Day 5 PGA Trophy 2013 - Al Maaden Golf Club.

The last day of the tour, and quite a tight schedule, as we were going straight from the golf course to the airport. Iain had arranged it so that there was enough time to get changed, have some food, present the trophy and get to the airport in time for check in. So all we had to do was make sure that we were in the reception of the hotel for 8am.....which we were, however, the bus was not, and didn't actually turn up until after 9am so by the time we got to the golf course we had missed our tee off times. Which wouldn't have been too much of a problem, as the golf courses had been fairly quiet for most of the week, but not today! It was that busy that we had to start from the 10th, and the round was very slow, but we finally finished, and the 2013 winner was announced.

FINAL RESULTS

PGA Trophy

1st	Iain Parker
2nd	Simon Kennedy?
3rd	Chris Wilson?
4th	Oliver O'Mara?

In the Drink Trophy

Gary Grace

A fantastic 5 days of golf and plenty of laughs along the way. There was certainly more things that could have been written about, but in order to keep this from being the length of War and Peace, and to spare the identity of those who caused more mayhem (what goes on tour stays on tour!), they have been left out. But Marrakech was anything but dull!