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BEACON OF HOPE

• ED HODGE

While the feats of golfers on the course occupy our news feeds, it's impossible to avoid the work of one man off it. His regular social media posts, typically highlighting his epic marathon golf walks and visits to all corners of the globe, always command one to sit up and take notice. If there is a tendency for hyperbole in sport, it is no exaggeration to say that Nick Edmund is one of the most remarkable individuals spanning the global golf industry.

Edmund's background is impressive. The affable 58-year-old Englishman is a qualified barrister, golf writer and, from 1997 until late 2012, was the managing director of six-time major champion Nick Faldo's course-design company. Remarkably, it's in the last three years that his name has become even more prominent in golf.

On three occasions now he has survived cancer. The scars on his neck, scalp and forehead bear witness to the surgery that have followed each diagnosis. It's an illness that can sap the energy of so many but Edmund's fighting spirit has instead fuelled

Despite ongoing treatment and multiple surgeries, Nick Edmund has walked the length and breadth of Scotland and Ireland, with his clubs, to raise awareness of his global cancer charity

a blossoming cancer awareness campaign that deserves every respect.

"If I didn't have goals, I'm absolutely sure I would be thinking 'when is the next cancer; is it going to happen again?' he admits, candidly. "So, this enables me to push it to the back of my mind and focus on all the positives associated with growing a global cancer-fighting campaign."

He has most certainly spread the word, his endeavours now spanning all six continents of the world. 'Global Golf4 Cancer (GG4C)' could not be a more fitting title for his work. Founded by Edmund and launched in 2017, GG4C is a globally active not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to inspire the golfing community to fly the flag and support cancer fighters worldwide.

Through utilising their distinctive '4-Flag', and by encouraging clubs and event

organisers to fly this flag on the 4th hole on special occasions, Edmund has been creating a powerful awareness platform, while at the same time serving as a catalyst for fundraising opportunities.

It was on 4 March 2017 when he began a walk of almost 2,000km (1,200 miles) along the Wild Atlantic Way in Ireland carrying a set of golf clubs. The purpose was to visit 40 golf clubs and deliver a GG4C 4-Flag to each club after playing



Right: Well-wishers show their support at Royal Dornoch (Photo by David Cannon/Getty Images)

Below: Walking, as ever, with his clubs, Nick leaves Turnberry to head off on his 250-mile trek (Photo by David Cannon/Getty Images)



their 4th hole to raise awareness. Images of him striding along roads come rain or shine, clubs strapped to his back, walking sticks in hand, have become iconic. David Cannon, golf's most notable photographer, has become a supporter and prolific snapper of his wanderings. Despite his challenges and often ongoing treatment, there is no negativity and self-pity. He simply pounds the pavements to achieve his goals. It's an inspiration to anyone.

Following a successful launch in Ireland stopping off at 40 golf courses en route, there was the completion of a 'Turnberry to Dornoch' golf-walk in Scotland in 2018, 250 miles from the far south-west to the Highlands. On the famous links of Royal Dornoch he raised the iconic 4-Flag and almost 60 supporters, including some club juniors, helped create a giant four sign in celebration. The end of his Scottish walk came three days before Christmas.

Incredibly, Edmund had had to take a four-week break for operations on a tumour on his forehead and radiotherapy. Yet he

resumed his trek from Edinburgh's Leith Links only three days later. The walk saw Nick visit 25 golf clubs over five weeks including Gullane, Muirfield and North Berwick in the east. He crossed the Firth of Forth in a two-man boat with his clubs in tow: "It wasn't very advisable in late November and one of the most frightening 50 minutes of my life."

He continued through Fife and onto Angus and Aberdeenshire, playing Crail, Carnoustie, Montrose, Royal Aberdeen and Cruden Bay. Avoiding heavy snow in the Scottish Highlands, he then made his way to Inverness via Moray, Nairn and Castle Stuart, before reaching the finishing post at Dornoch, toasting the achievement with a wee dram. "My hands were cold and my feet were sore, but my spirits were high."

"Each golf walk is not an end in itself," he explains. "Their main purpose is to draw attention to the overall Global Golf4 Cancer campaign, to encourage and inspire the golf community to 'fly the flag' and support various cancer-fighting initiatives around

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the world. I will never forget the immense kindness I received at every stop between Turnberry and Dornoch.”

There were particular highlights, none more so than playing the first four holes of the Old Course at St Andrews on 30 November – fittingly St Andrews Day. He did so in the company of the two surgeons who had operated on his cancer three times during the summer and who had flown up from London with his family. It was featured in a video by Golf World.

He recalls: “Stepping onto the Swilcan Bridge with the two surgeons who effectively saved my life was a very emotional moment. To fly the flag on the 4th green at St Andrews, the Home of Golf, was very special.”

Edmund has barely blinked. His Global Golf4 Cancer has now been establishing a series of regional flag-flying campaigns, as well as a selection of special GG4C events throughout the golfing world.

Last year, his campaign in Northern Ireland commenced in spring – prior to the country hosting its first Open since 1951 at Royal Portrush. The ‘Lough Erne to County Down’ campaign highlighted 20 of the country’s finest golfing venues: from the dramatically situated Faldo Course at Lough Erne Resort to world famous Royal County Down at Newcastle, and the likes of Castlerock, Portstewart, Malone, Royal Belfast and Ardglass.

By the end of 2019, the Global Golf4 Cancer flag had flown on every continent and at such famous venues as St Andrews, Pebble Beach, Royal Liverpool, Ballyunion, The Olympic Course in Rio, Durban Country Club, Royal Montreal, The Jockey Club in Buenos Aires and Royal Portrush. By 2021, it is intended that 400 of the world’s finest golf clubs will be raising the flag on important dates and events.

“Our flag had flown in every continent with the exception of Oceania,” he said. “So, it was great to visit Cape Wickham Links in Tasmania, just prior to attending the Presidents Cup at Royal Melbourne at the end of last year. It was a proud and significant moment for our campaign. The Cape Wickham Lighthouse is the tallest in the southern hemisphere and it seemed the perfect place to raise our flag. These beacons of hope have so often been present to seemingly ‘watch over’ landmark moments in the campaign’s development: Old Head in Ireland, Turnberry in Scotland and Harbour Town in South Carolina immediately spring to mind. Special places indeed.”



Above: During the final day of his walk from Lough Erne to Royal County Down Golf Club on March 30, 2019 in Newcastle, Northern Ireland. (Photo by David Cannon/Getty Images)

Left: Nick Edmund (L) poses for a photograph with Leanne Rice the Head of Golf Marketing for Tourism Northern Ireland on the par 5, fourth hole with the special GlobalGolf4Cancer pin flag at the start of his GlobalGolf4Cancer Northern Ireland Golf-Walk at the Lough Erne Resort on March 02, 2019 in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland. (Photo by David Cannon/Getty Images)

Edmund’s focus remains on growing the campaign and turning it into a genuinely global one – the path to achieving this being the organisation of themed regional flag-flying campaigns and various flag-flying-fundraising events.

“We are of course happy for participating clubs to fly the flag whenever they wish, but are especially keen that they consider doing so four times a year on the four special ‘Global Golf4 Cancer Awareness Days’ [4 April, 4 July, 4 October and 4 February – World Cancer Day],” he adds.

The ‘Australia and New Zealand 4-Flag Campaign’ was launched in December 2019 at Royal Melbourne, where Edmund met with a selection of prestigious clubs in Victoria and Tasmania.

“In achieving our goal of raising the Global Golf4 Cancer 4-Flag in every continent, our inaugural campaign in

Australia and Oceania – due to commence on 4 April 2020 – will feature a selection of the finest golf clubs and golf resorts in both Australia and New Zealand. Each of the participating venues is being invited to support the campaign by raising a Global Golf4 Cancer awareness flag on their 4th hole.”

The plans keep coming. By the end of this year, Edmund hopes to have completed another walk in Spain with his friends from the Seve Foundation. Seve Ballesteros, of course, lost his fight to a brain tumour. Edmund will continue to keep Seve’s memory burning bright and raise awareness for others in his own determined, unassuming way.

For more details about the Global Golf4 Cancer 4-Flag Campaign, please visit www.globalgolf4cancer.org