



GB NEWS

Issue No.3

George Best
FOUNDATION™

The Official Newsletter of the George Best Foundation

It's that time of the month again. The weeks just seem to be flying by. If you remember from last month, the Newsletter was dedicated to the weekend surrounding 22nd May, the date on which George should have celebrated his 60th birthday. There were other events before that but I was unable to write about them due to all of the May events, so I will now bring you up to date on those.

BEST-11.COM

On behalf of the **GEORGE BEST FOUNDATION**, I have great pleasure to announce the launch of the "BEST" fantasy football league ever.

We all know football was George's first love and it is fitting that this game has been developed as an on-line living legacy to George Best.



The game will support the **GEORGE BEST FOUNDATION** promoting its aims and objectives with proceeds from sponsorship, advertising revenue along with the pay to play model helping to raise funds for liver disease and promoting a healthy lifestyle among young people through sport – especially soccer.

I would encourage all football fans to play this interactive game. There are a number of ways to play the game. You can join the main league and take on the world, create a mini league and play with your friends or get invited into other mini leagues.

I would encourage the football supporters' clubs from all over the world to join up and play the game and let's see who will be the "BEST" football Managers!

Also, there are the corporate leagues where companies can create their own leagues and encourage team spirit within the working environment.

Last, but not least, the invitation goes out to all professional footballers to put your management

MEMORIAL SERVICE MANCHESTER

On the 15th March, the family together with members of the **GEORGE BEST FOUNDATION** Committee had the pleasure of flying on the inaugural flight of "The George Best", a plane named in his honour by FLYBE. The main route for the plane, fittingly, is to be from Belfast to Manchester. So now it is possible to fly on "The George



Best" into "The George Best" How unique is that and I bet there are few people in the world, if any, who can claim that. FLYBE worked very hard to ensure that the requested date for the family to launch the plane on the 15th March happened. This meant so much to us as we really wanted to arrive in Manchester on the plane as this was the day before George's memorial service in Manchester Cathedral which was scheduled for the 16th March. Thanks to Andrea Hayes and all the staff at FLYBE for all their hard work.

The morning of the 16th March brought one of the coldest days which I can remember during last winter. The day of George's funeral on 3rd December was bad enough, but I couldn't believe that it actually started to snow in Manchester. George certainly never makes life easy!!!

Manchester Cathedral was full to capacity with many people also outside to lend their support and pay tribute. The service was conducted by the Sub Dean, Canon Paul Denby, and was yet another wonderful tribute to George. Our very own James Nesbitt, who comes from Coleraine in Northern Ireland, acted as host. He is a life long Man United and Bestie fan. He conducted a short interview with Sir Alex Ferguson who spoke warmly of George and of his natural talent. Jane Busby, a grand



skills to the test. Wouldn't it be fantastic to see Ryan Giggs in a league playing against Steven Gerrard, Frank Lampard and Thierry Henry?

Pay to play this exciting game and be in with the chance to win this 12" replica of the 1968 European Cup. kindly donated by the **GEORGE BEST FOUNDATION**.



It's never too late to join the league. Along with the main league table we will have monthly leagues with the opportunity to win Manager of the Month.

The game has been designed to be easy to join and easy to play. In order to be a successful manager you require a degree of skill when selecting your team and when transferring players during the league.

So log onto www.best-11.com or visit www.georgebest.com and play the "BEST" Football Fantasy League. I wish you luck in playing the game and thank you in anticipation for your support.

Barbara McNarry

On behalf of the GEORGE BEST FOUNDATION

CLUB OF THE MONTH 'MUCKAMORE REDS'

The Muckamore Abbey Branch of Manchester United Supporters Club was founded in October 2003, we are known informally as 'Muckamore Reds'.



Our 100 plus members have an affiliation to the hospital which provides a specialist service for people with learning disabilities. We are a family orientated club and as well as individual members attending home games throughout the season, we also travel together to matches as a group, three times a year. We were delighted to

daughter of Sir Matt, read a passage from the Bible.

Many footballers both past and present attended... They included Pat Jennings, who used to share a room with George and has remained a very true and loyal lifelong friend. Very personal, moving and funny tributes were made by former team-mates and friends. These included Eddie Gray and Dave Sadler who shared digs with George in Manchester at Mrs. Fullaway's and Wilf McGuinness, former manager at United. It was lovely to have the entire Manchester United current team there as well, and so moving to have two of the younger players lay a Northern Ireland and a Manchester United shirt on the altar.

Of course the most moving part of the service for me was definitely the music. Salford's own Russell Watson was accompanied by The Chamber Choir from Chetham's School of Music. Dubbed the "People's Tenor" the lifelong Manchester United fan sang wonderful renditions of "You Are So Beautiful" and "You Raise Me Up". This obviously brought back memories of that so very sad day in Belfast when we had to bid George a final farewell and a few tears were shed. To all those people of Manchester and beyond who turned up that day to pay tribute to our George....Thank you all so very much.

In the afternoon, Paddy Crerand arranged for family and friends to have a tour of Old Trafford. It was quite nostalgic for me as during my teenage years I was invited by George to fly to Manchester to watch him play. It seems like only



yesterday and standing in the tunnel brought rushing back all the feelings I used to get when he ran out from the tunnel onto the pitch all those years ago. It was indescribable. The noise was deafening, but he took it so much in his stride. I remember that he used to say that because of the slope in the tunnel it wasn't possible to see the crowd until he exited. However he described that as he ran down the tunnel the noise built up to a crescendo and gave him such a buzz... That must have been spine tingling.

The day was rounded off with a very successful dinner and auction at Old Trafford, Over 600 attended, including Sir Alex Ferguson, Sir Bobby Charlton, and Denis Law. Gordon Taylor from the PFA paid a wonderful tribute to George. Cracked Flag, performed the song which they wrote for George, "Goodbye to the Belfast Boy" and will be donating part of their profits to the **GEORGE BEST FOUNDATION**. All in all it was a great evening, and I believe that approximately £45,000 was raised. This will go towards the opening of the dedicated laboratory which will be named after George at UCL Dept. of Hepatology.

Although having to go to Manchester was a sad occasion, it reminded me of just how highly thought of George was and indeed still is, and I would just like to take this opportunity to

be invited to the Gala dinner for the launch of the **GEORGE BEST FOUNDATION**, with eight of our members privileged to attend.

It was a wonderful evening to mark what would have been George's 60th birthday and an honour for us to share in the celebrations. Earlier this year the branch commissioned a flag as our own tribute to George, in recognition of his outstanding talent and the tremendous impact that he made on football at home and abroad, as well as with Manchester United. George will always be remembered for the genius of his football.

Website - www.muckamoreds.co.uk
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LETTER FROM AMERICA

I grew up in Texas totally ignorant about George's kind of football. In the mid-sixties as a very young teen I saw a photo of a young Irishman called George Best in a magazine, thought he was the cutest human being I had ever laid eyes on, put his photo up on my wall, and said good morning and good night to him for a long time. How many thousands of little girls must have done the same thing, but I expect I was the only one in Austin, Texas in 1966 - ha!

Maybe 10-15 years later I saw an article about him playing in the USA. It was then that I began following soccer news and now I count myself a huge football fan. I'm a Manchester United and Northern Ireland fan, thanks to You-Know-Who. And I'm watching my first World Cup this year!

I was surprised to be so strongly affected by George's death, and since have come to realize how much he represented my youth and innocence. When he died I not only grieved for George, but for my childhood and teen years during the 1960's. I expect many, many others had the same reaction.

George exhibited equal parts strength and vulnerability which somehow resonated at a very deep level with people. I think maybe one reason he existed was to teach the rest of us about the power of unconditional love. Because no matter what some judgmental types may say about him, George was adored by those of us who appreciated his unique personality despite his faults, and because of them, too. He was a very human man with inhuman skill at football. His life spoke to the hearts of countless men and women who never knew him but loved him as if we did.

I am ever grateful to George's family for allowing those of us on the other side of the world to

say "Thank you Manchester" for adopting him as one of your own.

FROM MANCHESTER TO LONDON

On 21st March Norman and I had the honour of being invited to London to dine at the Palace of Westminster. I was really apprehensive about it all, but we had the most wonderful relaxed evening with one of the best meals which I have tasted for a very long time. The evening was made special because of the company. Two of our local Members of Parliament, Peter and Iris Robinson were our hosts and what great hosts they were. The reason we were there was to give Norman and I a chance not only to meet, but to offer our heartfelt thanks, to the two business men who so kindly and generously arranged to have George's body flown home by private jet to RAF Aldergrove. We will obviously honour their request for anonymity, but we will be forever grateful to them for such a gesture.

The 24th April saw us yet again back in London with my Dad and other family members to attend the star studded PFA awards dinner at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London. It was particularly poignant for us to be able to spend some time in the hotel as this was the place that George had hoped to have his 60th birthday celebration. Before going into hospital he rang and was so looking forward to the event as well as a dinner in his home town of Belfast. Gordon Taylor made a wonderful and moving speech about George before presenting my Dad with the Merit Award in memory of George. His name is now included in the Roll of Honour with other greats of the beautiful game such as Sir Bobby Charlton, Denis Law, Pele and Sir Matt Busby to name but a few.

FROM LONDON TO DUBLIN

On 14th May my Dad, Norman and I were invited together with other family members to "The Best Of Irish" ceremony hosted by the **IRISH DAILY STAR** and **TV3** at the **FOUR SEASONS HOTEL** in Dublin.



The Best of Irish Awards are monthly awards, now in its fourth year, which recognises the achievements of the broadest spectrum of people who have had their stories covered by The Star and TV3 News. The Star/TV3 News in association with Waterford Crystal "**Best of Irish Awards**" have been presented to people who have made special contributions to Irish society and have had their stories told through the pages of The Star Newspaper and on TV3 News. Each month readers of The Star and TV3 News viewers nominate people who best sum up "Best of Irish".

This involved people who stood out for their contributions throughout the broad spectrum of Irish life – Sport, Politics,

have "attended" the beautiful funeral. I watched it on the BBC website and hope it does not make me sound too silly but I cried like a baby throughout the entire service. Barbara's eulogy was so very well-written and presented; I will never forget it. She has been such an articulate ambassador - the Best charm did not die with George! And I am very proud of all of you for the work you are doing in his name. After having seen what his remarkable family is capable of, it is no wonder that George achieved such greatness at such an early age and remained a cultural icon throughout his entire life.

With all my best wishes
Carole

THE DAY I MET GEORGE

1999

It was 29th May, location Quality Hotel Carrickfergus, An Evening with the Legends. The event was held by the local Manchester United Supporters Club. I was invited along with others from the Whitehaven Respite Unit. The local supporters club had very kindly raised funds earlier in the year to enable the group to travel to Old Trafford to watch United v Everton. The game was thoroughly enjoyed by all. United won 3-1 and the group got to meet younger legends like Peter Schmeichel, David Beckham, Ole Gunnar Solksjaer, Jaap Stam to name a few.

Back to the night in question, the Legends attending the event were Paddy Crerrand, Denis Law and George Best. I was so excited that George was there, an ex United and Northern Ireland



Legend. Shortly after the meal George came across to our table. He took time to speak to us all individually and as a group. He made us feel at ease and in no time he had us in kinks of laughter. You know that was one of things that struck me about him was his sense of humour. We chatted about the United players of that time, the Treble they won just days before and a little about his playing years at United. He took the time to sign the nights programme and pose for photographs. A lot of people say that George was a gifted footballer. In my opinion he was so much more than that - he was a gentle, friendly, genuine and loving man. The group photo that was taken that night still hangs in my bedroom 7 years on and will do until the day I go to my grave.

When I heard late last year that George was seriously ill in hospital I was upset, but I did think that he would pull through like he had done before. As the weeks went on I think I did realise that the end was near. When he did pass away I was devastated. The memories of that night I will keep for the rest of my life and in years to come I will tell my children and grandchildren of the night I met George Best.

Community, Charity selflessness and so on..."Best of Irish".

The picture above shows all the winners in 2005 & include Dennis Middleton who received the award in October for giving part of his liver to his son Steven, also in the picture. They were the first living parent & child from Ireland to undergo the life-saving double operation.

Also included is Kevin McBride, the Irish heavyweight boxer, who effectively put an end to Mike Tyson's boxing career and Callum's mate Fran Cosgrove who won the award in July. He was in the States so was represented by his parents, Dermot and Betty.

George was honoured yet again by receiving the award for November 2005, the month in which he sadly passed away. My Dad was presented with an amazing Waterford Crystal bowl which takes pride of place at his home in Belfast. As I have so often said, it is amazing to me that my big brother is still so highly regarded and, even in death, these wonderful tributes are still being heaped on him.

Following the awards ceremony we arranged to meet Father Aiden Troye, a Governor of the Holy Cross School in Belfast. Norman arranged to meet Father Troy upon our return to Belfast and we are delighted to say that we undertook a project in Belfast in July which proved to be very successful in promoting youth football as an alternative lifestyle. But there will be more of that in our next Newsletter!!

QUICK UPDATE

You will recall in the last Newsletter that I mentioned a couple of events which were due to happen.

The first one was an appearance on the very popular Ulster TV programme called "Gerry Meets", hosted by the delightful Gerry Kelly. Gerry has interviewed George several times in the past and on the 7th April my Dad and I



were guests for that show. I am delighted to say that the show was a resounding success, attracting more than a quarter of a million viewers. This left all other prime time programmes way behind attracting a whopping 35% audience share, surpassing popular soaps such as Eastenders. The show was mainly about how the family coped with the traumatic events of last Autumn and how we are coping now. Not an easy experience but we draw strength from sharing it with you all.

Mark Cragg

POEM OF THE MONTH

GEORGE BEST

I knew the dreaded day would come,
I overheard dad say to mum,
"I am going to decorate Gillians' room"
all day I walked around with gloom.

With sad and heavy heart that night,
I told Georgie of my plight,
"I will have to take you off my wall".

He looked sad too, as if to say
"I am sorry because I would like to stay"
And so I slowly took him down,
And tried my hardest not to frown.

At last each wall was stark and bare,
No trace of Georgie anywhere,
Forlorn and sad I crept to bed,
To try and dream of him instead

I looked around - a sorry sight,
No Georgie there to say goodnight,
I found I could not sleep at all,
Without Georgie upon my wall.

But now my room is done and I am glad,
No longer will I feel so sad,
Because now he is back upon my wall,
Dear Georgie Best of all.

Gillian Preston
Wales.

Gillian wrote this poem at the age of 15 nearly
40 years ago.



There was a second major event. This was a photographic exhibition entitled "The Belfast Boy" This was a collection of photographs of George from the age of fifteen up to his funeral. This was the idea of the **BELFAST TELEGRAPH** and is based in the **BELFAST CONVENTION & VISITOR CENTRE** which is in Donegall Place, Belfast (just a few hundred metres from our City Hall) The photographs are truly amazing and have attracted visitors from all over the world including such as South Africa, Australia and Canada. My Dad was the first one to sign the Visitors' Book and since then there have been many lovely tributes left. Many people have also left a donation to the **GEORGE BEST FOUNDATION**.

The exhibition will be open until September and we would strongly recommend it to you all. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time and trouble to view or visit .Our very special thanks go to Ed Curran, (Editor-in Chief), Martin Lindsay (Editor) and all their staff in the "Tele" and Mary-Jo McCanny of the Visitors Centre for all their help and support.

NEXT ISSUE

I am sure that you will all be wondering what is happening reference the football side of things. We have been involved in a number of youth projects that we will do a special feature on over the next month or two, when all of the summer tournaments will be completed. I will also keep you up to date on recent fundraising events.

Best Wishes to you all,
Barbara

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