

## FEATURE II

Harry Lovero, Orchard Valley Golf Course



# DJ Gregory – Walk On

*One Saturday a couple of months ago on a cold wintery afternoon, I was flipping channels on the old tube and I came across a video report on ESPN about a young man by the name of DJ Gregory. After watching the report, I felt compelled to write this.*

DJ was born with cerebral palsy. Doctors told his parent that he would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life and that he would never walk. However, after much perseverance on the part of his parents, and five surgeries (by the time he was in first grade) and much physical therapy, DJ learned to walk. He is now thirty years old and walks with only a cane.

DJ loves the game of golf. He began playing at the age of nine and taught himself to play. He shoots between one hundred and one fifteen one handed while holding his cane in the other hand for balance. His father took him to his first tournament when he was twelve years old in 1990 to get autographs when he was spotted by Mr. Ken Venturi who got him to come up to the CBS broadcast booth where he became very good friends with Ken and Jim Nantz. For a while, DJ was a staple in the booth week after week, stopping by to speak with his friends on television.

DJ is a very bright and intelligent individual. He has a Masters degree in sports management, which he received from Springfield College in Massachusetts.

Now that brings us to 2008. DJ expressed a desire to walk every PGA 2008 tournament. Forty-five tournaments in all. Over 900 plus miles. Something that has never been done by someone with his desire or his physical challenges. There were many doubters but the PGA gave DJ his chance with the deal that he would have to interview one Tour Pro every day and blog it on-line. It was something that he was going to have to prepare himself for physically and mentally. With the support of his



*DJ Gregory is not slowed down at all.*

parents, friends and family, DJ embarked on his mission to walk forty-five PGA tournaments in the 2008 season. DJ walked and fell a "few times keeping track of every time he took a spill. Can you imagine walking every hole of 45 tournaments normally let alone having a disability such as his?

DJ accomplished his goal and made many, many friends along the way. From spectators wishing him "well to the PGA pros and their caddies "giving handshakes and hugs for his undying will and determination. Many noted that they were exhausted after walking eighteen holes and could not imagine what DJ was going through walking every hole of forty-five tournaments.

He became very close friends with Kenny Perry, who in the video told DJ, "I'm so proud of you I love you like a little brother." Moreover, that was on the final day of the final tournament of 2008, which was a very emotional day indeed

for everyone involved in "the walk of a lifetime."

If you ever get the chance to locate the video on "YouTube", please take the time to watch it. DJ is a very inspiring young man and he absolutely loves the game which we are all so dedicated to. I believe that you too, as I did, will find it difficult to keep your emotions intact while watching. **-OC**

Photo credit: Francisco Medina