



Proud Gloucestershire mum takes the trophy at Macmillan Charity Raceday

- Watched by nearly 27,000 people, amateur rider Belinda Keighley raced to victory on Buckle Street, trained by her husband, Martin, and raised more than £25,000 for the charity -

An amateur horse rider, Belinda Keighley closed a record-breaking charity raceday by taking first prize in the Best Western Hotels & Macmillan Ride of their Lives. She was one of 10 amateur riders who today went head-to-head on York Racecourse, in front of a crowd of nearly 27,000 people.

Together, the riders - including a care worker, a swimming teacher and a vet - have so far raised over £132,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support to help people affected by cancer. They began training, and fundraising, six months ago aiming at today's event. You can still add to this total by visiting their JustGiving pages.

The 42-year-old from Luckley in Gloucestershire was joined on the winner's podium by sons, Freddie, 9, and Harry, 6, after seeing off a strong finish from Jo Ford aboard Arabian Oasis, with long time leader, Tanawar, holding on to give third place to Catriona Moon.

She said: "This is a dream come true, it's absolutely amazing. That's probably me retired now, I think I'll stop at the top – I'll wait for my two boys to do it now.

"I've shed nearly three stone to ride today. I dedicate this race to my mum, Kathy, who we lost too young in 2010 after a brave 18-year battle with cancer and my dad John, who was the most amazing carer but sadly died three months later."

The raceday, which is the charity's single biggest fundraising event, raised a record sum of just over £500,000. All money raised for Macmillan will help the charity continue to provide emotional, financial, medical and practical support to people affected by cancer. Other local cancer and racing charities will also benefit.

Lynda Thomas, Chief Executive of Macmillan Cancer Support, said: "Thank you to everyone who has supported Macmillan Charity Raceday and made it such a record-breaking success. Macmillan Cancer Support relies on donations to fund our services, which are there to help people living with cancer, so we're very grateful."

Chief Executive and Clerk of the Course at York, William Derby said, "For Macmillan Charity Raceday to set a new record after 47 years and having now raised over £7,650,000 is a wonderful tribute to the support of so many individuals and organisations. Everyone associated with York Racecourse is so proud of the partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and the funds this day generates for helping people suffering from cancer. After a week in which we were voted as Best Racecourse in Britain to end it, blessed with glorious weather, top quality racing action and a wonderful atmosphere around the racecourse, as well as that record sum of over £500,000 makes for a memorable chapter in our 2017 season."

Andrew Denton, Director of Communications at the sponsors, Best Western Hotels & Resorts – Great Britain, said: “The riders have achieved something extraordinary and inspirational by taking part in the Ride of their Lives this year. We are humbled by their stories and their successes over the last six months and as race sponsors we are proud to help raise important funds for people whose lives have been affected by cancer.”

The raceday also featured seven professional races alongside charity lunches, auctions, raffles and collections all helping raise money for Macmillan and other charitable causes.

More than 150 Macmillan volunteers took part in Raceday, collecting donations and selling more than 19,000 raffle tickets to further boost the grand total. Just by attending, racegoers played their part as a contribution comes from each and every gate receipt.

Macmillan Charity Raceday is a fundraising collaboration between York Racecourse and Macmillan Cancer Support. Founded by the late Reg Griffin, the event has been held at York, annually since 1971, now raising more than £7.6 million in total for Macmillan and other charitable causes.

Macmillan Charity Raceday will return on Saturday 16 June 2018, so put the date in your diary.

For further information, please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

The full list of riders for *Ride of their Lives* race:

Annie Cooke, 44, vet, from Whenby, North Yorkshire
Brett Williams, 34, Racecourse PR and presenter, Redditch, Worcestershire
Alex Steedman, 45, Racing UK presenter, Bicester, Oxfordshire
John Neilson, 51, director of publishing company, Bishop Auckland, County Durham
Lizzie Richmond, 38, show producer, Harrogate, North Yorkshire
Catriona Moon, 34, international endurance rider, Terrington, North Yorkshire
Stella Riley, 41, owner of baby swimming business, Fangfoss, North Yorkshire
Jo Ford, 45, housewife, Bedale, North Yorkshire
Belinda Keighley, 42, trainer’s wife, Luckley, Gloucestershire
Kirsty Parker, 23, community care worker, Nawton, North Yorkshire

Two riders sadly withdrew through injury but still played their part in the fundraising:

Jeremy Corkell, 54, runs a boarding stable near Malton, North Yorkshire
Chris Ford, 55, hotel account manager, Preston, Lancs

About Macmillan Cancer Support

There are 2.5 million people living with cancer in the UK. One in two people are likely to get cancer in their lifetimes. Cancer can affect everything, including a person’s body, relationships and finances.

Macmillan Cancer Support provides practical, emotional and personal support to people affected by cancer every year. The charity is there to support people during treatment, help with work and money worries, and listen when people need to talk about their feelings.

Macmillan receives no government funding and relies on generous donations from the public. People up and down the country show their support for Macmillan – from hosting or attending a World's Biggest Coffee Morning to running a marathon or giving up alcohol – so the charity can help more and more people affected by cancer every year.

Life with cancer is still your life and Macmillan is there to help you live it.

About Best Western Great Britain:

Best Western GB represents the largest collection of independently owned and family run hotels in Great Britain, with over 250 properties across the country. From beach front properties and mountain views, to city escapes, rural retreats and both modern and listed buildings, each hotel is different. What brings them together is their commitment to the quality, value and standards of service that every guest receives.

Best Western GB is a retained-profit membership organisation that helps hotels maintain their independence. Committed to representing the views of its independently owned member hotels, Best Western GB tackles key industry issues on their behalf, including the effects of Government policies and legislation, industry changes and environmental impact on the heartbeat of the Great British hospitality industry.

For more details about Best Western GB visit www.bestwestern.co.uk