



in association with Mantality

■ One of the toughest parts of a six-week post-op rehabilitation is the middle of your overall recovery period. It's when the least seems to be happening. Progress has been made but that starts to slow down and the incremental benefits lessen.

There's also the monotony. You're not part of the squad, turning up virtually alone every day to be put through the same mill and wondering when it will end.

Having reached that period with my knee this time, I've been fortunate with a Mantality trip to a different kind of retreat, a wellness centre, the Argentario Golf Resort and Spa in Maremma, Tuscany.

The beauty and luxury didn't detract from the hard work that began with a two-hour gym session each morning, but the real benefit came from the environment.

Not just the weather but the facilities provided by an advanced spa including a thalassotherapy semi-circular pool at knee level, allowing you to jog around in ice cold water interchanging with warm.

It's known as a Kneipp circuit, after Sebastian Kneipp's experiments, which found that alternating the temperature generated benefits for the circulation.

The water is also rich in minerals and water jets, at a pressure that helps the legs to oxygenate. This improves circulation and the blood supply to the organs, skin and central nervous system, stimulating and reinforcing the immune system.

These benefits extend to body and mind, resulting in total wellbeing. After it I did a yoga session on the deck with an incredible view and explored the region.

More than anything, mentally getting away from the routine had the greatest benefit and reaffirmed how even that can help massively with recovery, being able to completely submerge yourself in something so completely different.

The food too in that region is amazing and a slogan on the hotel's Dama Dama restaurant menu summed its philosophy up perfectly: "...the pursuit of wellness and respect for environment."

They also know the value of fresh ingredients and a healthy diet. I always forget how great a bearing food has on your experience when you travel. It was the same going to India.

Everything in the resort is sourced locally, with the olive oil coming from the golf course. I loved it, especially the wild boar ragout and pasta, so different from



Welcome break: Stevie recuperates in a wellness centre deep in central Italy

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The Apennine way

The Stevie Ward Column

MANTALITY
FOR THE MILLENNIAL MIND

STEVIE WARD has been re-engersised in southern Tuscany **UKRed**
SECURITY & FIRE SYSTEMS

what we get here – and as for the fresh fish and seafood ... second to none.

Naturally, I assumed that this superb complex and setting would be part of a chain, but it's a family-run business. It may be that we'll go and do Mantality retreats including yoga, fitness and mental health programmes – it's perfect for groups who want to better themselves in top facilities.

It has definitely hastened my return. The perfect bridge to the next phase, the trip worked really well psychologically.



■ Reaction to our Brian McDermott podcast – trailed in *Forty20* last month – has been massive, the most popular one yet and certainly the fastest downloaded.

You can tell the intrigue around the man by the social media posts – I reckon it even overshadowed the anticipation of *Game of Thrones*! Even I was surprised by how frank and honest he was and there's more to go at and touch upon. It was really enjoyable to do.

The next rugby one is Trent Merrin, which will also surprise. He talks about self-expression and being true to who you are, very different from a player, and his mental health in a career of ups and downs.

■ The change of coach at Leeds with the departure of David Furner was a shock, but the players just have to crack on.

When something like that happens, the onus is on us to improve and do all we can to be part of the new regime.

It's odd for me, having been used to one coach for most of my career. Now I've had three within less than a year.



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