



BY  
GODFREY ROBERT

# SGA CAN CELEBRATE HEROICS OF 2017

ASSOCIATION HOPES TO KEEP MOMENTUM GOING DURING EVENTFUL NEW YEAR

An eventful year marked  
by the historic South-east  
Asian Games team gold  
medal brings

added joy and cheer to the Singapore Golf Association (SGA) during the current festive season which leads to the close of tasty 2017.

Much has been said of the euphoria that emanated from the sensational gold medal showing in Kuala Lumpur after 28 years. But every time you look back on the year, the heroics of the fabulous foursome of Gregory Foo, Marc Ong, Joshua Shou and Joshua Ho come into focus. Ditto the good showings at the Putra Cup (runners-up) and Nomura Cup (joint-11th).

With that dizzying high – flashback to how Ong sank the crucial birdie putt in the play-off against regional kingpins Thailand – the golf markers will be moved up a few notches and the SGA realises that it has to be all hands on the pump as it looks ahead to a new year filled with a chock-er block of big events.

And the tournaments come fast and furious during a period when the golfing landscape is about to see many changes.

The loss of Raffles Country Club in mid-year, coming almost 18 months after Jurong Country Club had closed,

means that another tournament host and training venue is being wiped off the radar.

And if that is already a blow, a bigger hit awaits the SGA as two of its gold-medal winning team members, Ong and Shou are turning professional next month while a third member, Ho, will be missed from next month to end-March because of his study stint in the United States.

Flagbearer Foo, the ace in the pack, will welcome a card shuffle, so in players such as Abdul Hadi, James Leow, Wong Qi Wen and Nicholas Chiam, he would seek a partnership that can still strike, especially with golf being a sport in the Asian Games in Indonesia from Aug 18 to Sept 2.

The Asian Games aside, the national team can look forward to the Putra Cup in Myanmar in August/September, the Eisenhower Trophy in Dublin from Sept 5 to 8 and the Asian Amateur Championships at Sentosa's Tanjong course in October.



From left: The fearsome foursome of Joshua Shou, Joshua Ho, Marc Ong and Gregory Foo.

And if they are events that should ensure that the players leave their clubs in their respective bags, the Singapore Amateur Open from July 16 to 20 at the Singapore Island Country Club's Bukit course and the National Open at Laguna National from Aug 14 to 17, would confirm that they cannot look forward to a break.

Foo, 24, could skip the Eisenhower Trophy though as he is keen on playing in the Japan Qualifying School in September with an eye to turn

pro himself by the year's end.

That transition is inevitable, as has been the likes of former Putra Cup champions Quincy Quek and Choo Tze Huang. And where the current SGA committee will score is in its plan to implement a Rookie Pro programme to ensure a continuity and better link with the Singapore Professional Golfers' Association (SPGA).

As SGA acting general manager Jerome Ng, a former national amateur who is now a member with the SPGA, says:

"We want to help the rookie pros in their game. They will access to our sports science programmes and can continue to train with our Elite squad so that the facilities will be available to them too. And they can learn from our panel of coaches which we will be setting up. Amateurs or pros, we want to make sure that the game of golf grows."

In fact, the grand idea is to look ahead to the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris where the professionals are allowed to participate.

## SHANNON AND INEZ ENJOY HEALTHY RIVALRY



The deadly duo of Shannon Tan (above, left) and Inez Ng.

Glory Barnabas versus Eng Chiew Guay, Seb Coe against Steve Ovett, Manny Pacquiao taking on Floyd Mayweather, and Dustin Johnson pitted against Jordan Spieth.

Singapore's teenage girl golfers Shannon Tan and Inez Ng have something in common with all of the four challenges from athletics and boxing to golf.

And two words sum up their showdown: healthy rivalry.

This friendly contests do one thing: it brings out the best in all the athletes.

It has been especially so for Shannon and Inez, two very good friends who picked up golf at the age of six and have been playing together for the last seven years or so.

They also have other things in common,

namely both are studying at Methodist Girls' School and the duo were introduced to the game by their respective parents.

A slice of this healthy rivalry was seen in two recent tournaments, where they made indelible marks that signal where their golf careers could end up.

At the Warren Open last month, Shannon, 13, bounced back from a four-shot deficit to win the age-group event in a play-off after Inez had tripled-bogeyed the second-last hole and bogeyed the last hole in regulation play.

But at the HSBC Youth leg at the same venue at Choa Chu Kang, Inez sought redemption and succeeded as she bounced back from a four-shot deficit in the first

round to eventually beat Shannon by one shot.

This friendly competition as spurred the two girls to impressive heights and while they continue their challenge, Singapore Golf Association officials are happy to note that their games have improved tremendously.

The duo also see to a good future in golf with Shannon have dreams of turning professional one day while Inez is fixed on playing well with an eye kept on her academic grades.

And they have pledged to work hard with their respective coaches, Shamsuri Sidek with Shannon at Warren and Greg Anketell with Inez at Keppel Club.