



singapore
scene

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NEW ROLE IN GLOBAL CHALLENGE

AMANDA SET TO TACKLE HSBC CHAMPIONS AS A PRO

he was a precocious golfing talent – at only nine, she could drive between 160m and 180m. She oozes confidence – just turned 18 last Saturday, she speaks with the poise and purpose of a mature adult.

She has strong backing from her family, and is among a few Singaporeans who can afford the luxury of time as the parents, both in family business, have the means to back her always.

Assimilate all these factors, and you might think that Amanda Tan, a product of the Singapore Ladies Golf Association, should be in no hurry to pursue her long-term dream of becoming a professional golfer.

But no, she turned pro last Friday, had a first practice three days later at Sentosa's New Tanjong course, and will be making her pro debut at the HSBC Champions from March 2 to 5.

"I must get out of my comfort zone, and be independent," said the ever-smiling Amanda, who has her head on her shoulders and a mind of her own.

No doubt, while thanking her uncle, Alan Tan, for introducing the game to her when she was only seven, and her parents Ricky and Mandy who took the baton from there and fully backed her in her challenging endeavour, Amanda has pursued many challenges on her own even as a young teen.

After primary school at Pei Hwa Presbyterian School, she enrolled at the Singapore Sports School solely in pursuit of her golfing dream.

And at 15, as a Secondary 3 student, the year (2014) she first qualified for the HSBC Champions at Serapong, she

pondered over her future when her game, ironically the same year, took a slight dip.

Then she did what few Singapore teenagers would do: in consultation with her parents, she pulled herself out of studies, and went on an 18-month full-time golf mission to Brisbane under Australian coach Ian Triggs.

The comforts of her West Coast home, the regular outings with her friends and classmates, and the occasional pampering of her family were all sacrificed in the name of golf: she stayed at familiar coach Sean Lynch's home, went for practices and games – sometimes alone – and in short, had to fend for herself in many areas.

"They were lonely times often, and there were occasions when I felt homesick," she said.

"But I realised that I had to go through these tough times, as many top golfers do, to achieve my targets."

In short, she was single-minded in her ambition and open to accepting good advice and sound counsel.

And while there, her perspective of her intense passion; she realised that the road to glory is littered with pain and potholes, but one must learn to experience and overcome them.

Currently, she is the talk of the town in golf as she prepares to take on the "Who's Who" of the women's game at

the premier HSBC event next week.

But last Tuesday, the bespectacled, down-to-earth, affable lass was pacing along the Sentosa Golf Club lobby area and corridor as a nobody, as no attention was paid to her and the few visitors around her did not know that she was a pro and a name among the 63 world-class golfers preparing to descend on Singapore.

But while she luxuriated in the anonymity with the thinking that pressure would not haunt her, Amanda knows that once the four-day competition tees off, there will be expectations and hopes from the Singapore fans.

BEST AMONG THE LOCALS

After all, she is the best among the locals, even though she won the National Qualifiers by a whisker, in a three-way play-off.

She also knows the terrain and landscape having been a previous qualifiers (2014).

Additionally, she is a Sentosa member and although the New Tanjong came about only two months ago, she is familiar with the course.

Said Amanda: "Now, as a pro, I know that I'll be playing for money. I have to really score and try and do better than the last time when I finished at the bottom."

"I know that there will be fans and

followers backing me, but a lot will depend on me. So I have to be focused, keep sight of my goals."

Amanda is also grateful that the Sentosa club has been very good to her, allowing her to use the range freely and play when she needs.

She is also thankful that sponsors Big Fish Golf and Titleist have given her equipment.

Triggs aside, Amanda complimented her coach Skye Neal for giving her sound advice not only on the many aspects of the game, but also in the mental and physical approaches.

The admirer of former world No. 1 Jordan Spieth for his game strategy, and one who idolises Lydia Ko and Ariya Jutanugarn, Amanda believes that she has a decent game.

"My drives are okay, hovering around the 240m mark, my bunker shots are good, but I have to improve my short game," she added.

Badminton and tennis with brother Byron and watching movies occupy her time outside golf.

But now that she is into full-time golf, even those hobbies take a backseat for the highly-motivated and steely personality whose life is about to make a dramatic change in a week's time.

The amateur is now a pro, and on her own as she prefers to be.

SPIRITS HIGH DESPITE THE RAIN

Heavy rain did not dampen the spirits of 81 golfing juniors who attended the Singapore Golf Association's (SGA) First Junior Golf Challenge at Raffles Country Club last Monday.

The juniors managed only three holes at the Lake Course, but as they rested at the clubhouse they were engaged in deep conversation and exchange of notes, all related to golf.

Daryl Low, 12, a Primary 6 pupil of Compassvale Primary School with a handicap index of 6.7, was among those engaged in small talk with his colleagues as his businessman dad, Hans, ensured

safety and security as a volunteer because of the huge turnout.

Orchid Country Club member Low said: "This series of camps by the new SGA committee is a great idea. Previously my son, being below 12 years, could only play in a few events like the monthly medals.

"Now there is a whole avenue open for him. He is now looking forward to playing in the second event on March 6."

SGA junior development committee chairman Lyn Sen said: "We were excited by the overwhelming response to the first event. It's a pity that it was rained out."



Singapore Golf Association's (SGA) First Junior Golf Challenge attracted 81 juniors at Raffles Country Club.

photo by The Straits Times