

OPEN UP, OR SIT BACK AND WATCH A SLOW DEATH



The question is simple. Is golf dying as a sport in Singapore?

The spark for the question is mainly from recent events which have seen two courses told to give way to the new High Speed Rail network connecting Singapore to Kuala Lumpur.

Jurong Country Club stopped its golf operations at the end of last year and Raffles Country Club was recently told it will go the same way next July.

Other clubs have been put on notice too, with Keppel Club not having its lease renewed after 2021 and clubs like Singapore Island Country Club and Tanah Merah Country Club being told to give up large parts of their land for other uses.

So the signal seems to be, golf land is up for grabs.

ST file photo

This has put the 60,000 golfers or so in Singapore in a quandary.

Should the 30,000 plus who forked out money to become members of golf clubs sell their memberships before they are taken away?

Should the rest, who currently play either in Malaysia, Batam or Bintan, or are registered with affiliate golf clubs (non-land owning) take the plunge to buy a club membership?

What direction are golf club prices headed? Up because there will be fewer of them? Or down because there is so much uncertainty in the market?

My own take is that the sport needs to help itself, if it is to survive the current atmosphere of gloom.

It needs to build a case for its own survival.

One big factor in golf's

favour is new Singapore Golf Association president Ross Tan, who got elected last year on the promise of revitalising the sport.

Tan and junior development head Lyn Sen need to get golf back into more schools in Singapore, and encourage greater participation in the sport.

And the 12 clubs in Singapore should also see this

as a big wake-up call. For too long, their fairways have been under-utilised, especially on weekdays.

They need to open their arms to more public players, as long as they are properly handicapped and follow the rules of the club.

If existing members complain, ask them what they would prefer: To let their courses be better used or to

lose them altogether?

Show the authorities and the naysayers that this is a sport worth preserving, and shatter the perception that it is meant for the privileged few.

Allow more people to access and enjoy the wonders of this amazing game.

Or sit back, do nothing, and watch it endure a slow death.

Golf is a search for perfection, for balance. It's about meditation and concentration. You have to use hand, and brain.

— CELINE DION

SWING TEAM

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Patrick Daniel

EDITOR

S. Murali

muralis@sph.com.sg

CREATIVE EDITOR

Jacqueline Wu

wuyej@sph.com.sg

SUB-EDITORS

Ida Karsia

Joanne Low

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Godfrey Robert

Spencer Robinson

Tan Ju Kuang

Ven Sreenivasan

Rohit Brijnath

Rahul Pathak

Clive Agran

Benny Teo

MARKETING AND PARTNERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Timothy Lim Business Director

9623 0118, limsht@sph.com.sg

Vivien Cham Deputy Business Director

9746 0379, champs@sph.com.sg

Daphne Tay Deputy Business Director

9620 1418, taykhd@sph.com.sg

Tan Ann Nee Acct Manager

9455 7786, antan@sph.com.sg

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