



BY  
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# GIVING YOUNGSTERS A HEAD START

SGA JUNIOR PROGRAMME TEACHES  
SELF-CONFIDENCE, MENTAL PREPARATION  
AND BUILDING RELEVANT SKILLS

The home of golf at St Andrews in Scotland beckons. That is the carrot tossed by the Singapore Golf Association (SGA) for a promising local junior golfer. And the player will come from the SGA Junior Squad, the first of which was formed recently after a series of nine-hole challenges and a two-day scouting camp.

(Above) Brayden Lee attended the first SGA-R&A Introductory Rules School R&A Level 1 course, which was run by the Society of Singapore Golfers.

Currently, 24 players (13 boys and 11 girls) have been selected to form the squad which will expand after the next two challenge events this month and in September.

The Junior squad will be a feeder group to the National Development Squad, a forerunner to the National Squad, which has seen its members competing in various tournaments regionally and internationally.

The whole idea is to give the younger players a chance to be mentored by the senior and former elite players as they work towards being good all-round players.

Lyn Sen, head of the SGA Junior Programme, said: "This scheme is also tailored towards allowing the players to

learn course management at a young age with on-course training sessions.

"The more promising youngsters will be sent to more overseas age-group tournaments to gain competition experience at a younger age."

## TERRITORIAL COACHES

The SGA recognises that it is a reality in Singapore where coaches can be territorial.

And it understands why this is so, underpinned by the fact some juniors have been with the coaches from a tender age.

So the SGA states that "no coaching per se will be enforced as the youngsters have their own coaches. Rest assured there will be on interference

with that."

However, all squad members have to sign an agreement, basically on discipline and commitment, which is non binding.

As Ms Sen says: "Parent and child must show commitment to SGA and be bound by a code of conduct."

In this respect, the SGA is happy that parental support to their junior programmes has been good. Their presence and interest shown at the junior camp is appreciated by the local governing body.

This push by the SGA to increase the playing population among the youngsters in the light of some adverse trends in world golf, namely course closures that have resulted in non-

club members to giving the sport, is in tandem with what is universally seen.

The US PGA Tour said last year that the percentage of millennials who play golf (28 per cent) mirrors that of the group's percentage of the total population although they play only about half as frequently as previous generations.

The LPGA's girls' golf programme introduced 62,000 youngsters to the game in 2016, a staggering increase from 4,500 just six years ago.

Golf aside, the SGA junior programme hopes to also teach the youngsters self-confidence, mental preparation and relevant social skills.

A wholesome education programme is what the SGA junior scheme is all about.

## GREG'S IN THE GROOVE FOR SEA GAMES

He is ready. He is focused. And the South-east Asia Games (SEA Games) gold medal is his target.

But Gregory Foo (right) always sheds the favourite's tag and believes that he is just one of the competitors.

And unlike Singapore's favourite sporting son, swimmer Joseph Schooling, who carries with him an aura of invincibility, Foo considers himself just another sportsman. That is understandable as, unlike Schooling's Olympic gold-medal fame, Foo hasn't done anything out of the ordinary.

But Foo will carry with him Singapore's main hopes to next month's Games in Kuala Lumpur for the elusive golf gold medal – it was 18 years ago that



the Republic won a golf gold through Samson Gimson, also at the Malaysian capital.

And he is buoyed by the fact that at the recent Singapore Open Amateur Championship he beat Malaysia top player Ervin Chang and Thailand's leading player Kosuke Hamamoto on his way to the title at the SICC New course.

## THREE-DAY TRAINING STINT

Just back from a three-day training stint at The Mines course in Kuala Lumpur – the SEA Games venue – Singapore Golf Association's high performance coach Jerome Ng said: "Greg and the team had a fruitful workout at the course."

"The sessions were about familiarity, tee shots, ball placings, greens read-

ing and course management. It is always good to get a feel of the venue."

Ng is not predicting anything for Foo, and all he would say is: "He is well prepared, especially after a series of tournaments, including the British and European Amateur Opens.

"He has two more tournaments, the National Ranking Game at Raffles Country Club and the Singapore National Amateur Championships at Kranji Sanctuary. With those he should be ready to take on the South-east Asian region's best".

The other members of the SEA Games team are Marc Ong, Joshua Shou and Joshua Ho (men) and Callista Chen, Jacqueline Young and Sarah Tan (women).