

SGA MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

BUT THERE ARE AREAS OF CONCERN DESERVING ATTENTION

If a sports association has to be judged solely on transparency, the Singapore Golf Association would score a triple A. For it has been so frank and open with its policies, plans and programmes to the point that it would be tough to pick holes.

And the good thing is that the SGA is willing to listen to contradictory views and change if change is necessary.

Since coming into office a year ago in dramatic fashion (there was a last-minute withdrawal by leading sports official Low Teo Ping in the contest for president), businessman Ross Tan and his association have been forthright with their ideas.

The dynamic team, with Lyn Sen, C.S Kong and Goh Kui Hwa playing crucial roles and all club captains lending yeomen support, stepped to the forefront during a period when a pall of gloom was setting on the sport in Singapore and in the region.

In Singapore a club was closed, another shutting shop next year and a couple of others whose fates are left in limbo. Also many clubs were asked to pay for lease extensions which resulted in members paying top-ups. And the most serious effect was a reduction in the playing population.

But Tan (who himself, as club captain, bore the agony of seeing his club, Jurong Country Club, disappear) faced the dire situation head-on and have been working extra hard to circumvent some of the problems.

The SGA's main focus has been the development of junior golf, and in this direction, the team got down to work



Promising golfers teeing off at the driving range at Sentosa Golf Club.

seriously on staging events for youngsters on a regular basis. And this has been very popular, judging by the turnouts at their events.

And where the SGA scored big is in roping in the parents who see merit in their attendances at the events where kids from as young as eight enjoy the outings.

For the older juniors, the recent Seletar Junior Open proved to be a super tournament and the club captain

Ismail Taha should be complimented for preparing a great course.

The SGA also made another breakthrough when it worked out a scheme with the Singapore Professional Golfers' Association (SPGA) where leading juniors will gain the opportunity to play with the professionals in local tournaments.

SPGA president M. Murugiah saw benefits in this inclusion because he believes that "this is a sure way for

our juniors to gain valuable experience and develop big-match temperament."

At this month's Totts Golf-SPGA tournament at the Sembawang Country Club, four juniors played and surprised everyone by making the cut.

Andre Chong was the best of the lot with a seventh spot while Sarah Tan (12th), Callista Chen (19th) and Ryan Ong (22nd) also performed creditably.

STAKEHOLDERS

The SGA also managed to rope in an array of stakeholders and are grateful to all the clubs, and sponsors such as TaylorMade, Callaway and Car Times for their invaluable support.

The national team have also been impressive at the Putra Cup, and leading player Gregory Foo and Joshua Shou made it 1-2 in the recent Vietnam Open. Foo is now competing in the British Amateur Open, after which he will play in the European Open.

But it has not been all rosy for the SGA as its revamped inter-club league came in for criticism.

Many golfers were unhappy that the league teams have been divided into two groups of six, leaving clubs to play just five preliminary games before the top teams qualify for next round.

SGA's rationale has been to cut the duration of the league to three months and use the saved time for other meaningful programmes.

Also unhappy was former national golfer Douglas Ooi who felt that the SGA has not still found the best formula for its events. He said "more can be done" and that there are areas in the senior league competition that need to be addressed.

The SGA will also have to do more to strengthen the women's team who could face a hiding at the South-east Asia Games in Kuala Lumpur in August.

The association would do well to heed such concerns in its annual review.

GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN

Girls, girls, girls. Booths, booths, booths. Prizes, prizes, prizes.

Put them all together and you get a potent mix of fun, giggles, glee and gratification.

The Sentosa Ladies Open at the premier club On June 6 was a fabulous event, themed black and white, that saw everyone dressed to the nines.

It was an evening of cool glamour that began with women attired in stylish and fashionable LeCoq Sportif golf gear colouring their nails, after earlier enjoying massages, manicures, beauty workshops and makeovers before taking to the well-manicured new Tanjong course.

A large field of 230 players turned up to play in the morning and afternoon sessions.

And they were spoilt by sponsors Le Coq Sportif's selections, Sulwhasoo (official beauty), Mouawad (official jeweller and notable sponsors Imdeen, FootJoy, Taylor-Made and Leica.

In addition Apexlynx were the main sponsors to an event that drew laughter and joy at a lavish dinner that spoilt them with delectable food, great company, entertaining games and an array of dances that almost brought the roof down at the beautifully-decorated ballroom decked in black and white décor.

MC Justin Mission added to the fun with his jokes, games and dances.

Meylinda Setyo of Sentosa Golf Club walked away with the title in a competitive event partnered by SPH magazine Golf Women.



The organising committee (from left) Jacqueline Chew, Katsuko Blalock, Lyn Sen, Caroline Ong, Stella Ooi and Kang Jae Yeon.