



BY
GODFREY ROBERT

NEW BLOOD, FRESH FACES IN SGA NATIONAL SQUADS

AUSSIE COACH
BALLARD AND SERVICE
PROVIDERS WILL FORM
MAIN SUPPORT FOR
HIGH PERFORMANCE
PROGRAMME

When there is competition, there is motivation to raise one's individual performance so that one can stand up to the challenge. In the process, if there is complacency, it will be shed and if one suffers defeat, there is the urge to come back fighting. These traits were seen in the junior golf scene recently in Singapore following the extra drive and push by the forward-looking and dynamic Singapore Golf Association to create a buzz among the youngsters.



Andre Chong (right) hit a 324.3-metre drive at the SGA Long Drive Challenge at Sentosa last month.

And when the SGA announced its national squads for the various categories, it came as no surprise that among the 51-golfers named the majority was from the younger set.

They were the cream of a group who gave of their best in several junior competitions and are ready to take on the bigger challenges offered in the region.

And the means to that end was achieved through a combination of hard work, perseverance, learning and development.

The SGA recognised the importance of setting up the pathway of golf development in Singapore.

From the formation of the Junior Squad to Rookie Profession-

al Programme, the SGA continued its quest in creating national heroes and developing the game of golf.

The 2019 squads consist of new blood and fresh faces who have shone in the extensive local tournaments in Singapore.

And it is encouraging to see many younger golfers aspiring to work hard towards country representation and personal excellence through sport.

The pathway has been clearly defined from the Junior, Development, National squads, to the Rookie Professional Programme.

The newly hired full-time national coach Matt Ballard, a renowned Australian golf master from Queensland, and the service providers will form the main support team behind SGA's High-Performance Programme.

Said Ballard: "The SGA High Performance programme will compose of continuous athlete testing, mental and courage management skills, enhanced skills and conditioning systems. There will also be plans for local and overseas training camps with a larger emphasis on preparation for events."

The Rookie Professional programme is beginning to reap rewards as the five youngsters – Marc Ong, Jesse Yap, Joshua Shou, Abdul Hadi and Gregory Foo are making some impact on the regional scene.

In the current Qualifying School of the PGA Tour China Series, Hadi did

well to take the first-round lead with a five-under 65 in Guangzhou.

After two days he remained at the perch, sharing top spot with Japan's Otawa Keisuke.

It was also encouraging to see Andre Chong hit a 324.3-metre drive at the SGA Long Drive Challenge at Sentosa last month.

The 2019 squads are:

Men's National: Lucius Toh, Low Wee Jin, Donovan Lee, Brandon Han, Justin Kuk, Andre Chong, Sean Lee, James Leow (overseas), Nicklaus Chiam (overseas), Wong Qi Wen (overseas).

Women's National: Goh Jen, Shannon Tan (overseas), Hailey Loh, Anne Fernandez (overseas).

Development: Boys: Fabian Fernandez, Jeryl Tan, Austin Tan, Daryl Low, John Ho, Nathen Tan, Aidil Amani Norazman, Ryan Wong, Tommy Tan, Charles Alliston (overseas), Hiroshi Tai (overseas).

Development Girls: Nicole Mok, Angel Lim, Callista Chen, Shang Yu, Jillian Kuk, Shayne Lim, Inez Ng, Linah Loh (overseas), Linette Chua (overseas), Yoko Tai (overseas).

Junior Boys: Irvyn Tan, Jayden Loh, Shmuwel Soh, Ng Wei Jun, Brayden Lee, Trevor Ng, Yap Zhe Rong, Ethan Lim, Giovanni Goh, Ryan Ng.

Junior Girls: Rachel Sim, Sarah Lim, Gwen Tan, Jaymie Ng, Guo Jun Xi, Tatiana Ang.

GOLF CLUBS CHIP IN TO SUPPORT SGA PROGRAMMES

With fewer golf clubs in Singapore following the loss of Jurong Country Club and Raffles Country Club because of land acquisition, the challenge facing the Singapore Golf Association for its programmes gets bigger.

Jurong CC and Raffles CC had always been supportive of the SGA programmes and have hosted their events previously. In recent times, three clubs have been providing yeoman service to the SGA with their opening up of their facilities to engage the SGA programmes.

Sentosa Golf Club, Warren Golf and Country Club and the Laguna National Golf and Country Club are combining efforts to make a difference to the game in the light of land scarcity and an ageing population.

Sentosa GC recently staged the Discover Golf Carnival and Long Drive

Challenge, just days before the SMBC Singapore Open. On the SGA initiatives, Sentosa GC GM and Director of Agronomy Andy Johnston, said: "It is imperative for the growth of the game that golf clubs and organisations work together to promote junior golf and support the sport."

"We have been committed to utilising our hosting of world-class events to afford opportunities to the next generation of Singaporean golfers through several initiatives, and will continue to support the great work the SGA are doing in this area to help grow the game at junior level.

"They have a strong programme in place with some great junior events planned, that will only promote the game here. The more we can work together to foster the sport's development, the better it will become in the

long term."

Warren and Laguna are regular venues for the National Ranking Tournaments, National Opens and 9-Hole Junior Series. The tournaments include a six-month Inter-Club League and 3-Day and 4-Day Tournaments.

In fact, all the remaining Singapore clubs also chip in to help the SGA whenever possible.

Warren GM Jinder Aujla said: "At Warren we have an extensive junior programme. Our goal has always been to grow the number of juniors in our programme, as they could also be the future members of the club."

"We not only look internally but also are always on the lookout, through our resident professionals, to see how we can encourage juniors who may not even be our members."

"That's the reason why we have al-

ways supported SGA's initiatives on junior programmes. Other than our own programmes we have hosted a number of SGA junior events and assisted in their programmes."

Laguna also helps the Rookie Professional Programme by allowing the golfers to practise at their facilities.

In all, the SGA runs close to 30 events a year. And the clubs also raise funds for charity through golf as a form of giving back to society.

An enthusiastic Ross Tan, the SGA president, said: "It is encouraging for golf in Singapore as all clubs are starting to work close together towards the common goal to grow the game. We are appreciative of the support from the clubs, enabling us to reach out to more golfers and increase the number of activities for the community."

— Godfrey Robert