



BY
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TEAMWORK THE KEY IN SGA'S PUSH FOR EXCELLENCE

A MEMORABLE YEAR FOR GOLF, BUT THINGS COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER

eating Malaysia 16-8 in the recent Singapore Golf Association-Malaysian Golf Association series at Keppel Club can be viewed as the icing on the cake on a memorable year for golf in Singapore. But the SGA's acting general manager, Jerome Ng, is happy but not overly excited over the result, considering that there were areas where Singapore could have done better.



The winning men's golf contingent with team manager Jerome Ng at the biennial South-east Asian Games in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Take the recent junior event in Thailand where Singapore managed just a Team 2nd runners-up and Inez Ng finished 3rd runner-up from a team of 19 at the Singha World Junior Championships at Hua Hin.

Or the Nomura Cup in Kuala Lumpur recently where Singapore finished 11th out of 24 countries, but were way below the champions Thailand (40 shots behind) and with even Indonesia, among the South-east Asian nations, claiming a spot better than our boys.

No doubt, Singapore grabbed gold at the South-east Asian Games team event in Kuala Lumpur – a feat achieved after a long 28 years. But it is for that very

reason that expectations for the Nomura Cup, coming two months later with the same quartet of Gregory Foo, Marc Ong, Joshua Shou and Joshua Ho, were higher than how Singapore eventually finished.

For the Putra Cup too, Singapore finished behind pace-setters Thailand again (by nine shots), underlining a status symbol exemplifying that our team were better than all South-east Asian nations sans Thailand.

In this respect, where Ng expected more was in our players contributing more and being a shade better in consistency, with only our No. 1 Foo standing out in the best of three scores to count in each of the four rounds.

While Ng was analysing the performances with a sharp mind, he was pleased to note that in the past year, the new SGA committee, headed by Ross Tan and propped up by Lyn Sen, is moving in the right direction with their plans and policies.

There is more than a modicum of "oomph" in the SGA's approach to plans and events and the response from players, both seniors and juniors, has been very right although sometimes, the results have not been satisfactory.

No doubt, the SGA's emphasis on juniors is the best move if golf is to receive better recognition from the sports powers in a climate where many sports are vying for the nod in competing in

bigger sports events, such as the Asian Games.

Currently one team is in Sarawak for a competition, and from January onwards the squad of 48 will be trimmed by about 40 per cent to enjoy focused training under coaches on a regular basis.

Some will also spend short stints in Australia, with former national coach Andrew Welsford, where the SGA and the involved parents will share the expenses to ensure family ownership.

So teamwork and club co-operation (especially Warren) have been the SGA's emphasis in its push for golf excellence through well-construed plans and selective competitions.

NATIONAL SQUAD IN NEED OF FRESH INFUSION



(Top) Abdul Hadi and (above) Jesse Yap.

With Marc Ong and Joshua Shou turning professional after January's SMBC Singapore Open at Sentosa's Serapong course and Joshua Ho leaving for a three-month study attachment to the United States the same month, the national amateur team will be in need of an injection of new players.

Singapore's No. 1 Gregory Foo will carry the flag again – at least for another year – but he will have to part with the three players (although Ho could return) for national assignments in a calendar littered with major events.

For the new year, there are three main events, notably the Asian Games in Indonesia in August, the Eisenhower Trophy in Dublin in September and the Asian Amateur Championship at Sentosa Golf Club in October.

And having won this year's South-east Asian (SEA) Games gold medal after a break of 28 years, expectations are reasonably high for the team, justifiably being the second-best nation after Thailand in the region.

But Foo, 24, who played key roles in this year's SEA Games, Putra Cup and Nomura Cup, cannot carry the nation alone in team events where normally three of the four best scores count.

While it is a dilemma, Singapore Golf Association's acting general manager Jerome Ng prefers to look at it from another angle: the need for promoting the reserves, namely promising golfers such as Abdul Hadi and Jesse Yap.

Ng said: "There needs to be progression and continuity, and that can only come if we have move up some of our younger talent. And that talent can come only if you have well-constructed age-group and junior programmes.

"The SGA is aware of this, and is working hard in this area. Yes, results won't come overnight, but with good programmes and correct attitude of younger golfers we can and should be on the road for some positive change."