

FF BELIEVES THAT THE GAME OF GOLF HAS SO MANY VIRTUES

BOUSTEAD COMPANY CHAIRMAN IS A LIKEABLE, DOWN-TO-EARTH PERSONALITY WHO'S A FRIEND TO EVERYONE

He is a small man with a big heart. He is the chairman and group chief

executive officer of a company which offers even the cleaning lady a ready warm smile. And the silver-haired septuagenarian is known to have turned strangers into friends with an exuding charm that often breaks barriers.

Wong Fong Fui, popularly known as FF, is a down-to-earth, busy personality. Lofty may be his company position, but he has his feet firmly on the ground.

And most of his virtuous values can be felt when you run into him on a golf course, one of his popular venues where he mixes with many friends, both established ones and newly-found.

The boss of 190-year-old Boustead Singapore, an engineering services and geo-spatial technology group whose fortunes he revived after his taking over in 1996, is the reason why the company is an active player in the popular Business Times Corporate Golf League.

And the game which he took up some 25 years ago through the encouragement of a "good buddy", Thomas Lim, has taught him many good values.

He said: "Golf is one sport that brings together people in a relaxed setting. And as we get to know each other better, we also find that the game helps us de-stress from work as the focus shifts to simply hitting a small ball well and not bogged down with emails and whatsapps.

"The BT Golf League is a great platform that brings people of different backgrounds together. And golf is a sport that provides you leisure, a break from the normal routine. It may not seem like it but it gives you good exercise from the long walks around a natural landscape that is fresh and green.

Already a busy man with his travels, the golfing trips are somewhat different. "I truly enjoy the golf trips for while we try to play our best game, on many occasions we do not meet our targets. But there are days

when everything falls into place and you play a very decent game that you enjoy and talk about often during meals."

One such game was when Wong had to make an important trip to Bangkok to collect money from his Thai business partner. His Thai partner had arranged a golf game with him and two army generals on a very tough course.

Wong surprised everyone because, the-then-21-handicap index social golfer played his best game ever, even surprising himself. "Oh what a day it was. Everything I did was right, hitting over water, managing the hazards and sinking the putts. It was such a memorable game and I registered the best score."

He felt that the reason he rose to the occasion was his determination to show his Thai partner that he was not to be intimidated.

While not many people can talk about aces, Wong bagged a hole-in-one in the most unlikely circumstances. "It was in 2006, and I made a small donation to play in the same flight as ESM Goh Chok Tong. On a windy day at the old Tampines course hole No. 6, I hit a perfect four-wood and the ball rolled upwards and fell in. I suppose every dog has its day, even a lousy golfer like myself."

Wong's favourite player is Tiger Woods, a golfer he admires for his immaculate skills and course management. So it was not surprising that when asked who he would like to be in his dream flight, the name cropped up first.

But, his modesty showing again, Wong said: "I prefer not to be playing in his flight because of his aura and charisma, and I would be tensed and pressured. So I prefer walking behind



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— BOUSTEAD CHAIRMAN FF WONG (ABOVE)

a flight with him, Jordan Spieth, Brooks Koepka and Phil Mickelson, the three other players I admire most."

At Boustead, he is looked upon as the godfather of golf. Even on days that he cannot make it for the BT League, his name crops up because people miss him. As he says: "At Boustead, we take this event seriously because as we compete sportingly we also bond with each other, create friendships and relationships within and without, with all the participants."

Wong, who is married with three children is a chemical engineer who

started his own business in the oil and gas industry in 1970s.

The business was good but Wong retired as he became bored and started buying into ailing companies and fixing them. He is noted for having turned QAF and Boustead around with his sharp mind and tactical acumen.

Despite a back injury and his golf playing days getting fewer, Wong is never underestimated by his flight mates because he applies the same two qualities on the golf course and occasionally raises a big surprise.

And wins for himself bragging rights.

photos by Tharm Sook Wai, courtesy of Audi (below)



AUDI RS 5 SPECIFICATIONS & FEATURES

Model name: Audi RS 5 Coupe 2.9 TFSI quattro tiptronic
Engine: 2894cc, V6, TFSI
Power: 450hp
Torque: 600Nm
Top speed: 250km/h
0-100km/h: 3.9s
Consumption: 8.8L/100km

Price: \$379,080 inclusive of COE

Features:

- Design inspired by the Audi 90 quattro IMSA GTO
- 2.9 TFSI bi-turbo engine
- RS exhaust system
- quattro all-wheel drive with sport differential
- interior in fine Nappa leather with honeycomb pattern