



BY
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2019 IS A LOCAL GOLFING YEAR TO REMEMBER

NEW HIGH PERFORMANCE CENTRE, VICTORIES AT REGIONAL EVENTS AND PUSHING GOLF TO THE MASSES ARE SIGNS THAT THE GAME IS BUZZING HERE

With club closures in recent years and land leases soon to run out for some clubs hindering the growth of golf in Singapore, the national associations are forced to think up new ideas to find their way out of “hazards”.

Raffles Country Club and Jurong Country Club are no more. Marina Bay Golf and Country Club and Keppel Golf Club are soon to be phased out.

These developments have thrown a spanner in the works of the Singapore Professional Golfers Association who now take their tournaments mainly to Batam, which can be a tedious exercise.

The Singapore Golf Association (SGA) has also been hit for these clubs have been very supportive of their events.

So while the professional game in Singapore has suffered significantly, the amateur scene has been holding up, if not moving several notches higher.

That is purely because the dynamic SGA has taken the bull by its horns and has been tackling the problem with an open mind and new initiatives that have seen the amateur game rejuvenated and exuding vibrancy.

The SGA makes do with whatever clubs and resources are available and the existing clubs have thrown their weight behind the amateur programmes in fresh tie-ups with the national association.

Also the SGA has set up its own High Performance Centre (home training base) early this year at Laguna National Golf and Country Club’s world-class practice facilities.

Managed by national coach, Australian Matthew Ballard, with the goal of pursuing excellence in national and junior golf, the nation’s best amateur golfers are well-positioned towards greater skill education and preparation to achieve personal excellence both on and off the course.

Adding to the strategic tunnel vision, the SGA appointed



From top (clockwise): The victorious Putra Cup team, Sea Games champion James Leow, Low Wee Jin and Donovan Lee.

former national golfer and 2017 South-east Asian Games team gold-medallist Joshua Ho as High Performance Manager to assist in enhancing the High-Performance Programme. The programme has since blossomed into creating a holistic structure and pathway for the local aspiring golfers.

The positive results were forthcoming as our golfers con-

tended and triumphed in many regional and international tournaments.

More importantly, the SGA has stretched the depth of talent by laying out competitive platforms for young talent to perform and opportunities to be scouted into the national squads.

With the financial support from the monies raised through SGA-staged events, many young

talent have been given the opportunities to enhance their own games and gain exposure from many international tournaments.

Better still, these schemes have produced successes in 2019 for Singapore at the Putra Cup (Nicklaus Chiam’s individual golf and the team gold from Chiam, Low Wee Jin, Donovan Lee and Justin Kuk) and the Lion City



SGA takes the game to the community.

Cup individual silver from Hiroshi Tai and team silver from Hiroshi, Brandon Han and Brayden Lee at the South-east Asian Amateur Golf Team Championship.

Then James Leow narrowly missed out playing in the playoff in the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship and a chance to be the first Singaporean to play in the US Masters as he finished tied-fifth.

Donovan Lee won both the

GAC Honda China Amateur Golf Open and the Johor Amateur Open, and Low Wee Jin clinched the Selangor Amateur Open.

To underline the progress of juniors, Shayne Lim swept the 19th Zhang Liang Wei Cup, Brayden Lee claimed the Pondok Indah International Junior Championship and Justin Kuk won the A Division title at the same event.

Of course, to cap a fabulous year, James Leow snatched the SEA Games individual gold medal to snap a 30-year drought for Singapore since Samson Gimson’s 1989 triumph and Leow partnered Nicklaus Chiam, Hiroshi Tai and Low Wee Jin to win the team silver, behind a formidable Thai quartet.

It was also local tournaments galore for all amateurs and juniors as the SGA organised 12 competitions, from the Junior Golf Challenges to the popular Singapore National Amateur Championships for the year.

The seniors were also not left out with the staging of the Singapore Open Senior Amateur Championships under various age categories.

The SGA also worked on engagement activities with new initiatives to spark interest in the sport and also built on community golf to reach out to the masses, even non-golfers.

They included the 1st SGA-SLGA Mixed Game, Discover Golf Carnival, SGA Long Drive Challenge and the Golf Clinic for Schools.

The SGA-Keppel Club 9-hole walkathon was a huge success and the monies raised went to Diabetes Singapore.

Consistent branding was yet another SGA focus with the use of creative and interactive social media platforms to connect with the golfers and community, showcasing work “live” on and behind the scenes.

SGA president Ross Tan summed up the year with some encouraging words, saying: “2019 was an eventful year with many surprise successes and performances and a plethora of tournaments here and abroad to keep the amateur golfers busy and engaged in a sport that Singapore can do well.

“The support of Sport Singapore and the various clubs has been overwhelming and we hope to build on all the initiatives that we have introduced.”

WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM IS ROLLING OUT NEXT MONTH

The World Handicap System (WHS) is ready to be launched next month and will provide golfers with a unified and more inclusive handicapping system for the first time.

Though many countries are planning to adopt the new system next month, the system will go live in other parts of the world throughout the year to accommodate different implementation plans and variations in the golfing calendar.

Developed by The R&A and USGA in close coordination with existing handicapping authorities, the WHS will provide all golfers with a consistent measure of playing ability, with handicaps calculated in the same way wherever they are in the world.

A key objective of the initiative was to develop a modern system, enabling as many golfers as possible to obtain and maintain a Handicap Index.

Golfers will be able to transport their Handicap Index globally and compete or play a casual round with players from other regions on a fair basis. It will also indicate the score a golfer is reasonably capable of achieving the next time he/she goes out to play.

The estimated implementation timeframe of the WHS for Singapore is from February to April.

The WHS has two main components – the Rules of Handicapping and the Course Rating System.

The Rules of Handicapping are encompassed within seven rules to inform administrators and golfers on how an official Handicap Index is calculated and administered, with some flexibility given to national associations based on how the sport is played and enjoyed in their region.

The Course Rating System, based on the USGA Course Rating System first adopted nearly 50 years ago and already adopted on nearly every continent, sets out a consistent method of determining a course’s difficulty.

Together, these components become the foundational elements in determining a golfer’s Handicap Index.

In preparation for the launch of the WHS, more than 3,000 golf courses have been rated for the first time and an extensive education programme has been delivered.

By the end of the year, more than 90 National Associations will have attended an educational seminar and a robust library of resources is hosted on WHS.com to support regional education.

Rules of Handicapping books are

being produced and will be translated and delivered through national associations.

In addition, the USGA and The R&A have developed a series of golfer-focused materials, including videos, infographics and posters, which can be used by national associations and shared with golf clubs for the benefit of golfers.

This includes a promotional video which features Annika Sorenstam, Gary Player and voices from recreational golfers from around the world to encourage as many golfers as possible to obtain and maintain a handicap.

The materials explain the system’s key features, include:

- Flexibility in formats of play, allowing both competitive and recreational rounds to count for handicap purposes and ensuring that a Handicap Index reflects demonstrated ability

- A minimal number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap; with the number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap being 54 holes from any combination of 18-hole and 9-hole rounds (with some discretion available for national or regional associations)

- An average-based calculation of a handicap, taken from the best eight out of the last 20 scores and factoring in memory of demonstrated ability for better responsiveness/control

- A calculation that considers the impact that abnormal course and weather conditions might have on a player’s performance each day

- Timely handicap revisions
- A limit of Net Double Bogey on the maximum hole score (for handicapping purposes only)

- A maximum handicap limit of 54.0, regardless of gender, to encourage more golfers to measure and track their performance to increase their enjoyment of the game.

The transition from the USGA Handicap System to the WHS is welcomed by the Singapore Golf Association (SGA).

The SGA kickstarted the transition a few days ago, and all technical and formula changes will be done at the backend of the Centralised Handicapping System (CHS) to ensure current users will enjoy a seamless transition.

In Singapore, the existing SGA CHS users need not download the New App as it will automatically update itself very soon.

Local golfers must be ready for the new Mobile interface and submit scores promptly after a round.