

BY GODFREY ROBERT

# SENTOSA'S AWARD-WINNING SERAPONG COURSE HAS A FRESH LOOK

It is ironic that a golf course that has won worldwide acclaim only recently should undergo an upgrade through extensive renovation.

Voted 'Singapore's Best Golf Course' for the second year in a row at the World Golf Awards back in October and finding itself regularly listed as one of the world's greatest golf courses, Sentosa Golf Club's The Serapong has a new look.

Andrew Johnston, the club's General Manager, Director of Agronomy and resident Golf Course Designer, has the best answer for the upgrading of a course that has become "the home" for the Singapore Open and has staged many other major events.

Said Johnston: "Being located in a sub-tropical climate means the golf course ages faster than an ordinary one, and these renovations are crucial to maintaining the quality of the playing surfaces, as well as the conditions and high standards that we pride ourselves on here at Sentosa, 365 days of the year".

The club today (Dec 19) officially reopened its world-class state-of-the-art championship course, headlined by a new bunkering style with creative, artistic serrated edges to enhance its character and overall strategy, whilst elevating the course to a new level on the world stage.

The club used 6,000 tonnes of new sand during the renovations to reinstate consistency, texture and tournament ready compaction for improved playability.

Modifications have also

THE HIGHLY-CHALLENGING LAYOUT HAS NEW BUNKERING STYLE, REFRESHED FAIRWAYS AND UPGRADED GREENS



(Above) The 14th hole on The Serapong.

(Left) The Serapong's iconic 5th hole has seen extensive renovations to its bunkers.

helped to enhance and preserve the personality of many of The Serapong's iconic holes, including the signature fifth hole, which overlooks metropolitan Singapore and its bustling port.

Masterminded by Johnston, The Serapong has been closed since March and,

alongside the new bunkering, a number of other key course upgrades were implemented during that time.

These included the re-grassing of fairways, rejuvenating them with minor grading adjustments and improved drainage strategies, as well as modifying the greens

soil profile by introducing new carbon technology to boost soil chemistry and profile structure.

Enhancements to the greens are set to make The Serapong's putting surfaces even better, which is hard to believe given the wide acclaim they already receive from its members, guests and visiting Tour Professionals.

The renovations also paid close attention to the re-leveling of all tee boxes, reinstating them with the historic tabletop flat finish The Serapong is renowned for. It

will enable the club to continue to maintain the tees at a super low mowing height of three millimetres, improving the quality of the playing experience for members and guests.

Speaking ahead of The Serapong's reopening, which is a soft launch ahead of a grand reopening in March, Johnston said: "The last time The Serapong was renovated was nearly 14 years ago and since then the course has grown to become one of the world's best, picking up multiple accolades in the process.

"Despite the challenges presented by the worldwide pandemic, we have found a way to pull the Sentosa family together within the safe working restrictions to complete the works.

"This has been a very exciting project that was well overdue, and we are confident the changes implemented will only enhance the golfing experience for our members and guests."

Dominic Wall, director, Asia-Pacific at The R&A, said: "The newly-renovated The Serapong looks great. It is fantastic to see that, throughout the entire process of the renovations, the project continued to align with the club's ground-breaking sustainability agenda."

The Serapong was originally designed by the world-famous golf course design firm Golf Plan and Ronald Fream, opening in 1982. The course was further renovated in 2006 by the Bates Golf Design Group, who were led at the time by their VP of Design and Construction, Andrew Johnston, and whose designs have seen the course's trademark contours, extended stone-lined lakes and breathtaking Singapore harbour backdrop become renowned across the world.

The Serapong has played host to the Singapore Open since 2005 (initially Barclays Singapore Open, then SMBC Singapore Open from 2015).

Singapore two leading professionals Koh Sock Hwee and Amanda Tan were elated to hear the news that the HSBC Women's World Championship looks set to return next year.

The marquee event was cancelled this year because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the title sponsor stated in an announcement last Monday that it has renewed its commitment to the tourna-

## KOH AND TAN LOOK AHEAD TO HSBC EVENT

ment on a multi-year deal.

The US\$1.5 million (S\$2 million) was originally scheduled for Feb 27 to March 1 this year at the Sentosa Golf Club but was called off two weeks before its planned start.

With next year's edition slated to be held in the February-March slot, Koh said:

"It's great news. Sure I would love to play, if the usual qualifying tournament is held.

"There were some changes to the qualifying process, but given a chance to compete I will certainly be there."

Koh, who has competed three times, the first time in 2016 after she just turned pro, is the best local finisher

in the series, finishing 59th out of 63 players that year. She finished ahead of former world No. 1 Yani Tseng and was only one shot adrift of hotshot Michelle Wie, with scores of 76-73-74-75.

Amanda, who played in last year's edition, is hungry for a big event as she has been forced to sit out events since

her last tournament in Taiwan in January.

HSBC announced the renewal of three key pillars of its global golf brand partnership portfolio also with World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions in Shanghai and the CGA-HSBC China Junior Golf Programme.

— GODFREY ROBERT