

## **GolfRSA – CEO Annual Report 2020**

### **TOURNAMENT REPORT BACK**

The 2020 season began with great promise.

The GolfRSA National Squad celebrated its first success in the first week of January when Rory Nkosi enjoyed his maiden national victory in the Nomads SA U15 Challenge at Mbombela Golf Club.

Martin Vorster followed suit with his play-off triumph over Scottish National Squad member Olly Huggins in the African Amateur Stroke Play Championship title at Leopard Creek in February, and South Africa's No 1-ranked Casey Jarvis pushed the squad tally to three with his runaway nine-shot victory in the South African Stroke Play Championship at Randpark.

A week later Jarvis became only the seventh male golfer and SA No 1 Caitlyn Macnab the 12th female golfer to achieve the rare "calendar double" in the Aon SA Amateur Championships at Royal Johannesburg & Kensington's East Course.

The 2020 Aon SA Amateur Championships marked the first time in South African golfing history that the men's and women's championships were played simultaneously at the same venue. The ground-breaking project was very popular with the competitors and proved extremely successful from a sponsor and media perspective.

The men's Senior, Junior and Mid-Amateur, and the women's 2020 seasons were well underway across the country when the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a global pandemic on March 11th.

GolfRSA immediately consulted with the South African Golf Association, Womens Golf South Africa and the GolfRSA Board of Directors and decided to take a pro-active approach. Well before South Africa went into its hard lockdown on 27 March, GolfRSA had already cancelled all provincial and national events, including the Nomads SA Girls Rose Bowl Championship on the day it was due to tee off at Kloof Country Club.

The impact of the immediate economic standstill was massive and not a single industry in this country went untouched, least of all the golf industry, with all its moving parts.

## **PANDEMIC**

Golf came under the microscope from the moment GolfRSA and its partners (PGA of SA and Club Management Association of South Africa) consulted with government in terms of the first set of regulations to obtain and issue Essential Services permits to golf facilities to ensure golf course maintenance could continue until golf was reopened, and made the first announcement regarding this on 26 March.

The organisation had taken a pro-active step that set it apart from all other sporting codes and the country's media took notice.

The plight of the caddies and casual workers received a lot of attention in the press, as did the financial impact on golf clubs and facilities due to the loss of income from membership fees, green fees, conferences and functions, etc. But, very quickly, the focus shifted to GolfRSA and its partners' bid to safely reopen golf and, subsequently, the journey to reopening golf was very well covered in the media.

Being in the spotlight between April and July 2020 produced some very positive outcomes and improved brand awareness for GolfRSA, the South African Golf Association and Womens Golf South Africa.

When GolfRSA took a leading role in negotiating the reopening of golf with the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, well ahead of any other sporting codes, the progress was scrutinised not only by all its members and industry stakeholders, but also the press, other sporting codes and the public relations arm of the government.

Against all odds, GolfRSA delivered a positive outcome months ahead of the anticipated Level 1 re-opening and this alone earned the organisation immense respect.

A unilateral decision was taken at the end of March that all communications sent to the media and posted on the website and social media platforms had to be meaningful and we would only communicate when we had something pertinent to say. It was also unilaterally agreed that no staff member of GolfRSA was to engage in any manner with individuals on the official social media platforms – no matter how provoked we felt to respond – and that all interviews would be handled by myself, backed up by our media manager, Lali Stander.

The knock-on effect of the negotiations, the to-the-point communication strategy and the eventual outcome continues to positively impact on our relationships within the sporting community, the press and our many stakeholders.

In April and early May, GolfRSA took a beating on social media, but the media & communications team worked tirelessly to get all its stakeholders on their side.

As GolfRSA CEO, I did more than 50 television, radio, written media and podcast interviews between April and July, explaining and educating the public on the continued efforts of GolfRSA, together with its partners, to put golf's case forward.

Our viewpoint was to never downplay the critical impact the lockdown was having on the golf industry. We were truthful about job losses, courses on the verge of closing, etc. and we tried to deliver our news and updates in a calm, non-aggressive manner.

By being willing to address all questions during some tough interviews, we turned the media into allies.

During this period, more than 20 petitions to open golf popped up, but the communication team successfully negotiated telephonically with the individuals to take these pages down by explaining the bigger picture and the damage this could do to our ongoing negotiations.

GolfRSA was particularly attacked in social media, especially on its Facebook page, but we stayed the course and continued to post updates as matters progressed with government, but the positive articles, in which the press lauded GolfRSA for taking the lead for all sports in the negotiations with government, helped turn the tide.

Comprehensive protocols and risk mitigation strategies were drafted well in advance and rolled out to golfing facilities to be ready and prepared for the re-opening of golf. We purchased the HealthDocs App and hosted comprehensive training sessions in the use of the App. We topped up the GolfRSA Help Fund for the caddies and casual workers with raffles and auctions to continue to pay out vouchers.

The message was clear: GolfRSA is being pro-active – not reactive.

Golf made headlines week-on-week throughout May, June and July with the emphasis on the positive progress the sport was making. In many articles, golf was held up as an example of what other sporting codes should be doing.

In articles with the CEOs or Presidents of sports like tennis, gymnastics, swimming, rowing and fishing, these persons regularly referenced GolfRSA and the message was that golf was guiding the way or breaking ground for all non-contact sporting codes. The Daily Maverick columnist Craig Ray and Marizanne Kok from News24 even went so far to suggest that SASCOC would do well to bring Golf onto its Board of Directors to help them straighten their “sinking ship”.

The positive light in which golf was painted by the media and the communications team subsequently sharing the interviews, links and podcasts on social media had a positive effect on the GolfRSA followers on social media. By the middle of May, the overwhelming response was positive as the followers began anticipating the re-opening of golf.

The tone on the social media platforms turned positive in May and we began noticing that members of a multitude of golfing groups on Facebook also began berating the nay-sayers by posting the information that GolfRSA was sharing on its platforms. The tide definitely turned towards support for GolfRSA and its mission to re-open golf.

We created a four-person Communications team that included brilliant guidance from Wimpie du Plessis, supported by Sarah Braude and Eden Thompson. As a team we generated the elements of the Risk Mitigation Strategy and began posting these on social media and distributing them to the unions and press. The Unions across the country followed suit and the sense of anticipation increased.

Just before golf re-opened, we had a couple of scary moments where certain courses decided to break ranks. GolfRSA issued an official statement condemning this behaviour, and it was interesting to note that when the media got wind of this, they too condemned these courses with comments that maverick stunts like this could seriously jeopardise the re-opening of golf for the entire industry.

The announcement that golf was to re-open, issued on 12 June, elicited a cascade of congratulations across all social media platforms and once again, was widely covered by the national mainstream media and television channels, DSTV channels, as well as the regional and community media.

## POST RE-OPENING OF GOLF

GolfRSA made many friends during the period April to July across many forums, including the media industry, sports federations and the international press. For instance, we received nearly 20 requests from sport federations for assistance with their risk mitigation strategies.

It must be said that Lali Stander and Brendan Barratt played a very influential and positive role during this time. Their media contacts and network were a key factor in ensuring that GolfRSA was able to communicate and send out a positive message across all platforms. Lali did an excellent job of managing the various media requests and complexities and along with Brendan they spent countless hours on all forms of communication from GolfRSA, for which we are very grateful.

A multitude of federations consulted with Wimpie to refine their Risk Mitigation Policies and Protocols and with Lali on their communications strategies.

Perhaps most pertinent is the fact that our communication throughout the process of re-opening golf established GolfRSA as the official body for golf in South Africa. This continues to be underlined by the significant amount of email requests the staff still receives through our website and via our social media platforms with enquiries about other golf bodies, and it is further signified by the media enquiries our communication handles.

When golf tournaments were given the green light to restart, they were permitted only under the strictest risk mitigation protocols. As there was no cross-provincial travel allowed at the time, GolfRSA introduced the Race to 2021 Series, which allowed Unions to create and run their own Order of Merit, with the winners receiving a place in the 2021 SA Amateur Championship.

Performance-wise, the National Squad members picked up where they left off when tournament golf resumed in October, under the strictest risk mitigation protocols. Caitlyn Macnab won the



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Ekurhuleni Open, Kaylah Williams won the Ackerman Championship, Kaiyuree Moodley won the WP Women's Championship, Kiera Floyd won the Mpumalanga Women's Championship and Samantha Whateley shared the KZN Junior Girls Championship with Kim Turgut.

On the men's side, it was a clean sweep of victories for the National Squad players, beginning with Christiaan Maas in the GNGU Silver Salver. Samuel Simpson won the Eastern Province

Stroke Play, Yurav Premlall won the Harry Oppenheimer Trophy and the Central Gauteng Open and Jordan Duminy closed off the year with a win in the Bobby Locke Trophy.

Squad players also carried their fine form into developmental tour events, winning a total of seven professional events on the Big Easy IGT Tour and five on the Bushveld Tour.

The wins came from Casey Jarvis (3 IGT wins, 2 Bushveld Tour wins), Christiaan Maas (2 IGT wins, 2 Bushveld Tour wins) and Ryan van Velzen (1 IGT win, 1 Big Easy Tour win and 1 Bushveld Tour win).

## STAFF

During lockdown, all of the staff took a voluntary salary cut for six months. This gesture was appreciated and showed an understanding of the crisis that we found ourselves in.

Our plans to bring in Tshepo Nyambi on a contract to help with Tournaments and Transformation projects was temporarily stalled due to Covid-19 and the cancelling of tournaments and other activities.

Braxton Group has completed a Roles and Responsibilities analysis with the staff. We are now finalising performance agreements and KPIs with the staff and Braxton.

I would like to note that the staff have done excellent work, often under pressure and in unprecedented times. The planning,

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running of tournaments and events, and the logistics and compliance aspects of the Golf environment has been a huge challenge. I am proud and thankful to our staff for their dedication and efforts in successfully handling these difficult times.

## **OFFICES**

With most staff working from home, we moved our offices into the Sunshine Tour building and reduced our office space. This has resulted in a R20 000 a month saving.

## **HANDICAP AND COURSE RATING REVIEW**

### **World Handicap System**

South Africa implemented the World Handicap System (WHS) on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2020. The last few pieces of the puzzle included calculating a Low Handicap Index (HI) for every player on the system for Hard and Soft Cap purposes, as well as bringing the Playing Condition Calculation (PCC) into effect.

### **Launch of New Features in Score Entry Process**

In April 2020, a new feature required golfers to select whether their recent round was a social or competition round, whether it was played as an individual or as part of a team and whether it was a match play or stroke play round.

All the information provided from players regarding the above is now being put into Handicap Management Exception Reports and has been made available to club administrators/handicapping committees/club handicappers.

### **Handicap-Related Guidelines**

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During the first few weeks of the Level 5 Lockdown, some research was completed regarding handicap-related guidelines. From the research conducted, GolfRSA published a Transgressions and Proposed Sanctions document as well as Objections and Appeal procedures. Multiple templates were also posted on the GolfRSA website to help clubs deal with players who deviate from the Rules of Handicapping in a professional and official manner.

The templates available are as follows:

- Notice of Meeting Template
- Decision Template
- Verbal Warning Template
- Lifting of Sanctions Template
- Notification to HNA for Intervention

## **Playing Handicap/Handicap Allowance**

The only Rule of the WHS Rules of Handicapping (RoH) that South Africa had not yet fully implemented came into effect as of the 1st of March, 2021. All club competitions from the 1st of March are now played under Rule 6.2a/Appendix C of the RoH.

A South Africanised Version of Appendix C was made available on the GolfRSA website along with a Playing Handicap Conversion Tables (PHCT) for 50% / 60% / 75% / 80% / 85% / 90% / 95%.

## **BOOKING PLATFORM, GROWING THE GAME AND REWARDS PROGRAMMES**

Much of the work in this respect was postponed during Lockdown. Once restrictions eased we were able to run a series of consultations with clubs around the country that resulted in 19 pages of feedback.

It is clear that clubs are looking for GolfRSA to take the lead on introducing national programmes to grow the game and are also looking for guidance in terms of price structuring for green fees. In

addition to this, the research showed that there is a need and an interest to develop a platform that can bring the social golfer into the fold and offer them a handicap. This would go hand in hand with a strategy that will see these golfers introduced to golf clubs as prospective members. This strategy is currently being actively pursued with potential service providers and stakeholders.

## **SQUAD UPDATES**

Before the hard lockdown, Womens Golf South Africa hosted a camp for their Elite and B-Squads in February and a separate camp for their TID squad members in February.

During the lockdown and even post the re-opening of golf, there were several zoom sessions with the members of the respective squads.

The National Squad had sessions with health and fitness specialist Gavin Groves / Titleist Performance Institute, a ball / club fitting session with Leonard Loxton from Acushnet and rules training with Neil Homann.

Coaches Roger Wessels and Grant Veenstra also hosted sessions with the older and younger members respectively.

WGSA followed up with three further zoom sessions during the lockdown, one of which was a two-day session with the Elite and B-squads and another separate one for TID squad. Dylan Frittelli hosted the National Squad after his top 10 finish in The Masters, while Ashleigh Buhai hosted a session with all three Womens Golf South Africa squads.

## **GOLFRSA HELP FUND**

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During the initial Level 5 Lockdown period, GolfRSA established a Help Fund to provide relief in the form of food vouchers to thousands of caddies around the country. The GolfRSA Help Fund project was headed up by Mr Selwyn Eagle to manage the process and raise funds through raffles and auctions. GolfRSA donated R1 million from retained operational funds, the SAGDB put in R500 000 and the GolfRSA National Squad fund put in R500 000. In total over R5 million was raised and GolfRSA issued 17 630 food vouchers, supporting more than 4 000 individuals from golf clubs throughout South Africa.

I wish to thank Mr Eagle and Mr Paul Adams, who gave of their time and expertise to auction and raffle the sourced items so kindly donated by many of our friends and associates, who we need to also thank. A large part of the fund raising was due to world-renowned golfers and sport stars offering, for example, an

opportunity to win a round of golf with them, through the raffle or to purchase an opportunity of a lifetime through the auction.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution from the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture who contributed significant funds to the caddies on the GolfRSA Help Fund list at the end of Lockdown.

**As a result of the positive media coverage gained from our GolfRSA Help Fund initiative, DSAC offered to contribute to the livelihood of the caddies over a period of four months. In total almost R31 million was paid by DSAC through GolfRSA to 3 352 caddies. This was a much needed, welcome and timely contribution. GolfRSA can be proud that the Help Fund project led to this initiative from DSAC.**

## TRANSFORMATION

Though Social Responsibility and Transformation initiatives were largely curtailed by the lockdown, this space remains a high priority

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for GolfRSA. Our transformation charter is actively implemented, but the scorecard is unfortunately not tracking well due to the enforced halt of activities.

2020 was supposed to be the year for the culmination of a three-year process to meet transformation targets in Provincial representative teams. This unfortunately did not happen due to the forced suspension of tournaments. However, future tournaments will have representivity as a condition of participation and will be applied as per pre-agreed guidelines in September 2016.

We are proud to indicate that access for previously disadvantaged individuals to play elite amateur golf at all age levels is a remarkable success story of GolfRSA and its partners in development, the South African Golf Development Board. There is a proliferation of black talent regularly winning national tournaments and holding their positions in Order of Merit standings on absolute merit.

Ground roots development is another success story largely attributable to the activities of the South African Golf Development Board and long may GolfRSA's association with the SAGDB continue.

Truth be told, these are merely two successful steps on a transformation ladder of many rungs. More commitment and effort must be put into expanding representation in the fields of Team Managers, Golf Coaches, Rules Officials and Golf Administrators.

The GolfRSA office also recognises its challenges in the employment equity and preferential procurement endeavours. This situation is not due to lack of trying and a clear and fresh approach is being adopted and embarked upon to achieve an accelerated turnaround.

## FINANCIALS

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Despite the challenges faced by us in 2020, it is very positive that we were able to collect 99% of the affiliation fees due from Unions. Thank you to our constituents for the role that they played in this.

Inevitably, the lockdown forced us to cancel most of the tournaments throughout the year. The effect on our financial reserves was therefore positive as most income was still received. The lockdown had a severe impact on golf clubs and provincial golf unions, especially those with smaller membership bases. The going concern of these clubs and unions will have a direct impact on the going concern of GolfRSA and the Board will continue to carefully monitor the situation.

We created a member fee reserve in excess of R1.3m to cater for the discount that was passed on to affiliate member fees for 2021. We are also carrying a liability of R1.3m in our reserves, which is the development levy surplus that will be distributed to Unions as per usual practice.

Our staff related costs are 14% lower than the previous year, largely as a result of the employees generously agreeing to voluntary salary reductions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

GolfRSA realised a surplus of R12.8m for the 2020 financial year. Though this result reflects positively on our cash situation, it came at the cost of curtailment of normal tournament operations for most of the year. The GolfRSA Board, together with the SAGA NEC and WGSA NEC, will seek to leverage this position and bring assets into the GolfRSA fold to embed financial resilience and ensure our future sustainability.

## **SPONSORS AND BENEFACTORS**

On behalf of the GolfRSA I wish to extend my gratitude to all our sponsors and benefactors who continue to assist with the promotion, growth and development of amateur golf in this country. These include Titleist, Tempest Car Hire, Srixon, Tsogo Sun, Bridge Fund and Antonij Rupert wines. It was sad to see the departure of AON as a sponsor due to the Covid-19 crisis.

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We remain grateful to the Nomads for injecting money into junior golf and for continuing to place amateur golf high on its agenda. We recognise and thank Mr Johann Rupert, GolfRSA Board Chairman, for his personal contributions, particularly to our National Men and Women Squad, who are having unprecedented success.

As the world began the long road to getting back to normal, it is promising that a truncated 2020 season has ended with GolfRSA in a healthy position and with great promise for a successful 2021.

On a personal note I would like to thank Mr Naadir Agherdien for his many years of service and for his support and dedication to Amateur Golf. Sadly, his term as President of the SAGA was cut short by illness but the work and efforts that he has put in will have a long and lastingly positive effect on our sport. We wish him well as he faces his own challenges ahead.

Mr Martin Saaiman stepped in as Acting President in Naadir's absence and we are grateful for Martin's willingness to take up the role. He will have a tough act to follow but we know that with Martin's many years of success and experience in Amateur Golf, he is up to the task.

Yours Sincerely

Grant Hepburn  
Chief Executive Officer

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