

The CIRCULAR



APRIL 2021

Monthly Magazine for Private Circulation to Members of The Royal Selangor Golf Club (351-D)

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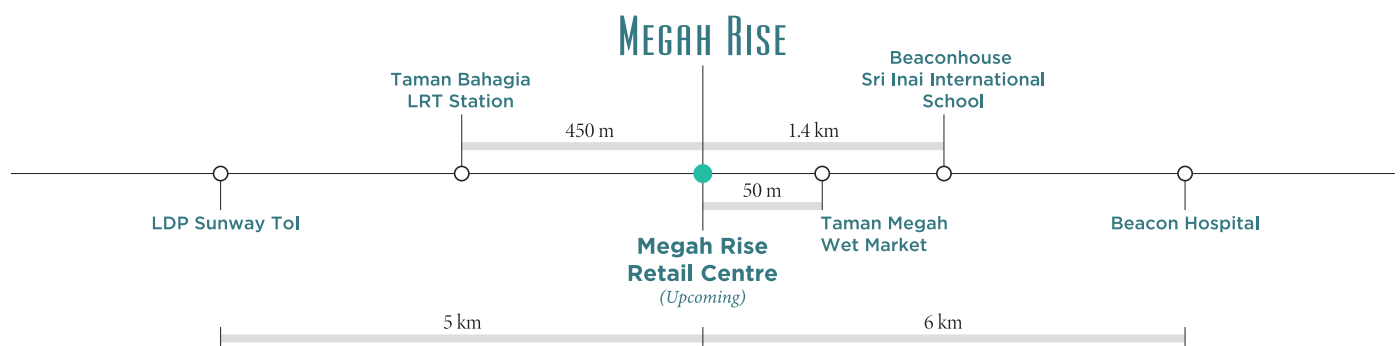
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Deadline: 30 April 2021

For further enquiries, contact Ainie Wahid at info@rsgc.com.my or 03-9206 3247.

*The decision of the judges is final and non-appealable.



APRIL 2021

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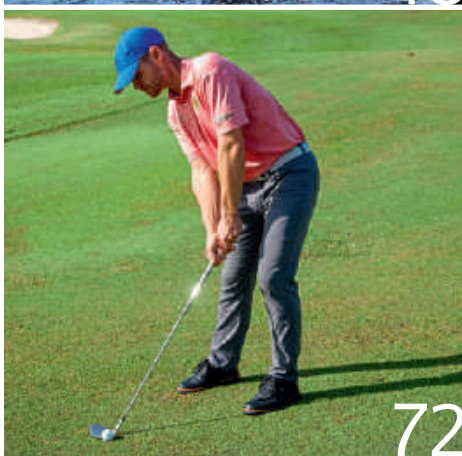
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In my March column, I wrote about the thought outlines of the Master Plan which I expounded on and hopefully evoked some opinions and feedback from Members. It is appropriate that I follow up with a blueprint for our number one priority – our golf course, which is our core asset. The Green Subcommittee has deliberated at length about what we believe should be done and will go to Members for the necessary mandate. When circumstances permit, we will carry out a more comprehensive

engagement with Members to refine our proposal for the course renovation.

As it is, RSGC is a second home to many and to them it is a golf course that they would play on for the rest of their lives. Many before us had done so. This is probably true for aspiring new Members who will continue this legacy. For the “old”, new and incoming future Members, I believe we deserve the best. And why not, if we can assuredly afford it?

THE 2005-2009 RECONSTRUCTION

The last major reconstruction of the RSGC golf course took place from 2005 to 2009. Work started on the 1st and 9th holes New Course before proceeding to the 2nd Nine Old Course. This was followed by the 1st Nine New Course, 1st Nine Old Course and finally the 2nd Nine New Course. There were some major changes to the routing of the golf course – the swapping of the 1st and 9th holes New Course comes to mind – but the reconstruction was mainly to update and modernise the golf course with new design features, and to change the grass on the fairways from cow grass to Paspalum. The old problematic TifDwarf greens were replaced with the latest Ultradwarf Bermudagrass species, TifEagle.

There were some initial issues with regard to drainage on the fairways, and the greens proved difficult to manage as RSGC was the first golf course in Malaysia to plant TifEagle. The drainage issue was mostly resolved by the



4th hole Old Course lake being constructed



4th hole Old Course after reconstruction

installation of a substantial network of sub-soil drainage lines, and the greens gradually improved after the initial difficulties were overcome.

The choice of Paspalum for the fairways was an interesting one. Back in the early 2000s, Paspalum was the grass of the moment, with many major golf courses choosing to switch over to Paspalum as it promised to be a lower maintenance grass and was arguably the most aesthetically pleasing of the warm-season grasses. Not much was known about it in Malaysia, and the decision was made based on the excellent condition of the Paspalum growing in neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, it was later found that Paspalum required saline conditions to thrive and was thus better suited for use on seaside courses or courses with poor water quality.

The Paspalum at RSGC was slowly taken over by grasses better suited to the local environment such as Bermudagrass, Serangoon and Zoysia. Attempts were initially made to control

the other grasses, but due to the extent of the contamination and the resultant large brown patches on the golf course, it was decided that we maintain the other grasses as long as they produced an acceptable playing surface and that we focus on controlling the other weeds instead.

That said, the Field Department managed to work with what was available and was still able to deliver a world-class golf course during the Maybank Championship Malaysia 2016.

PANDEMIC, RECOVERY, RENOVATION AND BENCHMARKING

There have been challenges in maintaining the golf course since then, from constant weed pressures and the near disaster of having to abandon the golf course for nearly two weeks during the first Movement Control Order in early 2020.

Thankfully, the golf course has mostly recovered from that setback. However, it has been 15 years since the reconstruction was completed

and there is a need to consider some structural changes to the golf course to further improve the playing conditions for Members.

What is the recommended time frame before we consider another major golf course renovation? Due to the unique growing conditions and challenges in this region, we should look at other golf courses with a similar geographical location as benchmarks.

The top clubs in Malaysia and Singapore are arguably TPC KL and Sentosa Golf Club. Conveniently, both of these clubs had reconstructed their golf courses at roughly the same time as RSGC – TPC KL in 2007 and Sentosa Golf Club's championship Serapong Course in 2006. It is interesting that both chose to renovate their courses at around the same time, with TPC KL embarking on a renovation of their West Course in 2018 where their Paspalum fairways and greens were replaced with Celebration Bermudagrass and TifEagle, and Sentosa Golf Club renovating their

Serapong Course which was just completed in 2020. Sentosa Golf Club decided to replant their fairways with the same local Zoysia matrella grass as before and maintained the same TifEagle for the greens. As RSGC was reconstructed in 2005, perhaps it is time to consider a renovation of the golf course as well.

"Since the initial works in 2006, which were transformative for the club and the golf course on the world stage, accelerating The Serapong's appearance has also led to a long list of accolades," said Andrew Johnston, General Manager and Director of Agronomy of Sentosa Golf Club. "But golf courses that exist in warm-season locations age faster than the ordinary course. That ageing process almost doubles itself when you are located in the subtropics and nearly on the equator, like we are. Organic build up quickly materialises, making soils heavy and holding excessive water. Combine this with hot humid conditions and the golf course becomes a disease incubator. Other stress points that generate quickly include grass contamination. Foreign grasses begin to creep in and dominate the playing surfaces."

THE ZOYSIA EXPERIENCE - THE GRASS FIT

Trials with Zoysia have actually been going on for many years at RSGC when a decision was made to look into Zoysia grass as an alternative grass species for the fairways. Zoysia is better adapted to local weather conditions and does not require as much sunlight as Bermudagrass. One major disadvantage of Bermudagrass is that it tends to lose density in lower light conditions. This has the effect

of opening up the canopy, which increases the propensity for weeds to invade, hence the continual issues with weeds at RSGC. Zoysia grass is native to the region and has a lower light requirement. It also has a much denser growth habit, which not only results in a better playing surface but also reduces incidents of weed invasion.

Trials were conducted on the 1st hole Suleiman Course, and any bare areas on the golf course were returfed with Zoysia grass. Due to its better suitability to local growing conditions, the Zoysia grass gradually began to take over on certain sections of the fairway. The best example of this would be the 6th hole Old Course fairway. The resultant playing surface is excellent,

and there is much less weed pressure where the Zoysia is growing.

With positive results from the trials, the Driving Range tee and all other tee boxes around the golf course were returfed with local Zoysia grass. The returfing has proven to be a great success and the tee boxes are in excellent condition. Members can evaluate the quality of the potential playing surface based on the conditions of the tees and the 6th hole Old Course fairway.

RAINFALL, DRAINAGE AND SAND CAPPING

Aside from the weeds and grass species, another aspect of the golf course which can be improved is the



10th tee Old Course during reconstruction



10th tee Old Course after reconstruction

drainage of the fairways. The sub-soil drainage has worked well, but there are limitations as the space between the sub-soil drainage lines is still native soil. During extended periods of rain, the soil does not have enough time to dry up and ends up saturated and a bit soggy. This is notable mostly during the rainy season.

Sand capping has always been touted as the solution to this problem. However, sand is very costly and the process of installing a sand cap is very disruptive as it requires that the existing surface of the fairways be removed, which would require a lengthy course closure.

Aside from the cost of the sand, having too thick a sand cap would also increase the amount of irrigation and fertiliser required as sand does not hold water and nutrients as effectively as soil. This physical trait makes sand excellent for drainage but could potentially cause other issues. In order to objectively determine a suitable sand depth for the fairways, more trials were conducted on the 1st hole Suleiman Course where a light sand cap of 4 inches was installed. The benefit of this was that there was sufficient sand to effectively drain the surface and resolve the issue with

soggy fairways, but at the same time, the shallower sand cap provided a raised water table to ensure the fairways would not dry out excessively. This also has the added benefit of substantially reducing the amount of sand required should we want to proceed with the upgrading of the fairways. Members are encouraged to take a look at the 1st hole Suleiman Course to see what can be achieved with our fairways.

Undoubtedly, installing a light sand cap and converting our fairways to Zoysia would resolve most of the remaining issues with our golf courses, eg the soggy fairways during the rainy season, inconsistent playing surface of the fairways and the constant weed pressures with the need for continued herbicide applications. The quality of the playing surface would be greatly improved – the testament to this would be the quality of the tees and fairways mentioned above.

As can be seen from the recent renovations of TPC KL and Sentosa Golf Club, perhaps it is time for RSGC to consider doing the same. Estimated costs of carrying out such works are between RM20-25 million. The costs are high due to the large area of the fairways, which would require a

substantial amount of sand. The greens would also be resurfaced with fresh certified TifEagle, and any other design issues and other improvements could also be carried out at the same time. It is expected that completion should be within three years with the works being carried out on nine holes at a time.

FUNDING THE RENOVATION

In proposing the above renovation, I am mindful of the sensitivity of Members towards large capital spending. However, it is my sincere belief that this cost can be matched by the entrance fees of new Members in the coming years. The renovation is expected to take three to four years, and such funding can be matched as aforementioned while any shortfalls can be partially drawn from our capital account.

CONCLUSION

Let me reiterate here that we are a privileged Club, and I believe we deserve the best and we can assuredly afford it. It is a Club that we will hopefully be able to play on for the rest of our lives, and we should enjoy every moment of it.

The members of the Green Subcommittee are:

Eddy Chen – Chairman/Green Convenor

John Eu – Member

Wong Hong Nung – Member

Chew Seng Poh – Member

Amitabha Guha – Member

K. Harikrishna – Member

Mohamad Gregory Eu – Member ■

Eddy Chen Lok Loi
Captain

For some years now, it has been a bit of a struggle for us to live up to the perception that ours is a premier club – sadly, we're not even among the top 20 golfing destinations in the country. While our courses remain well-maintained and playable, they are starting to show their age. Our F&B outlets are a shadow of their former selves, nothing like what they were in decades past. And although we are now in the 21st century, we still get wet walking from our cars to the Clubhouse when it rains. We have 10 tennis courts – seven of which are the last remaining grass courts in the country – but our player numbers don't appear to be growing. Equally as worrisome, it's becoming more difficult to fill the roster in our Biannual Children's Swimming Galas each year. Clearly, we are no longer attracting Members and their families to the Club at the rate we used to. We seem to have let ourselves go, like an aging diva with a dwindling fan base. (But all is not lost – we still have the best club magazine in the country, bar none!)

To rejuvenate the Club and reclaim our somewhat faded status, our Captain has mooted the idea of a Master Plan for the Club, a 10-year roadmap to raise the level of the Club, if not exactly to world-class, then at least close to it. In the March issue, he offered a glimpse of the different components of the plan. It is a long list of to-dos, which includes, among other things, upgrading the courses (discussed in this issue's Captain's Corner); programmes to cultivate world champions among our Juniors, namely in golf, tennis and swimming, although one wonders if this is achievable in

today's context, seeing as we have to contend with sports academies that are open to the public and have access to pools of talent far larger than ours; overhauling (yet again) our F&B services so as to have at least one outlet that is a culinary destination, and, of course, running the F&B operations without deficit; and building facilities as well as providing amenities to make the Club more convenient for and relevant to Members, such as a multi-storey covered car park and even overnight accommodation should the Membership want such a thing!

Realising the Master Plan is, of course, contingent on the bold and imaginative use of our substantial assets, namely (non-golfing) lands and cash reserves, to generate a recurring income stream to pay not only for our operating costs but capital expenditures as well. Here, we need to ask ourselves what we are willing to give up to achieve this, what the intangible costs will be. Many among us shudder at the thought of yet more buildings encroaching on our lands, laying siege to our enclave of green. There is also concern that such a plan, where we no longer need to pay subscription, will only foster a handout mentality and engender an even greater sense of entitlement. (There is something to be said for the need to pay for things ourselves – it keeps us grounded and prevents us from taking things for granted because they are free or cost so little.) And finally, the ever present niggler: that some among the Membership will profit handsomely from the plan. So, while the plan may be clear about where it wants to take us, it remains to be seen whether we survive the journey there.

At this time, the Master Plan is still in development and we will be asked for our input so that its Subcommittee (the MPSC) may use it to arrive at a final draft that reflects our wishes.

Facilities, however exceptional, are but one half of the whole. A premier club must also have premier members, or it would be akin to a country with world-class infrastructure and third-rate citizens. Any Master Plan is incomplete (and certainly short of holistic) if it doesn't include a policy for curating a premier membership. Premier is not about money or office or station in life; rather it is about *class*, and one doesn't have to possess a net worth of eight figures to have it. (On





the other hand, there are those who possess far in excess of the latter with barely a noticeable trace of the former.) Just as a nation is the sum of its people, a club is the sum of its members.

It all begins with the admissions process. It is necessary to consider carefully whom we accept as Ordinary Members. This is not about choosing persons of high breeding or great achievements or noble backgrounds and impressive sounding titles; it is about selecting persons whose values are similar to ours (certainly, this would include – among other things – integrity, good sportsmanship and respectfulness) and with whom we can be comfortable sharing our space at

the Club to enjoy good fellowship and camaraderie. It is also necessary for each person to take their obligations to the Club seriously. This means knowing and obeying the bye-laws; paying one's bills on time; and always conducting oneself appropriately on the premises and anywhere else where they may represent the Club, such as Interport events or visits to reciprocal clubs. A premier Member also understands the objects of the Club (which are spelled out in our M&A) and does not expect to receive any pecuniary reward (or the equivalent in kind) from their membership; and finally a premier Member will not shy away from having to pay their way and contribute their

fair share towards the running and well-being of the Club.

The Captain mentions inclusivity in his column in the January issue and again the one in March. Clearly, it is a matter of some importance in his estimation. But what does it mean? To accept all comers as long as their cheques clear? We need to think carefully so we don't devolve into an everyman's club, because by positioning ourselves as "premier" we are by definition exclusive and elite and therefore available only to a select few. Making the Club accessible to all and sundry can only dilute its brand; it is precisely because we are known to be "difficult to get in" that people

want to join and are willing to spend years on the wait list – in fact, I was astonished to learn that even our car sticker is coveted as a status symbol! Clearly, our name still holds some cachet, and we should take care not to cheapen it.

Being premier, however, places an onus on us to live up to the characterisation. It means having to hold ourselves to a higher standard of behaviour, good manners, propriety and respect for the Club's rules and property. Over time, unless maintained, these standards are certain to slip, hence the need for constant vigilance against such an erosion. A mechanism to ensure against this should therefore be a part of the Master Plan. The future of the Club is not only about financial matters and physical assets; it rests on a Membership that reflects the objects and traditions of the Club.

Of late, some Members have reflected that our Club is not doing enough for the less fortunate in our community and is instead preoccupied with the well-being of the Membership. While it is true we don't do much in the way of charitable acts, we can hardly be accused of being uncaring or unsympathetic towards the plight of the less fortunate, particularly in time of need. During the first Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020, the Club contributed RM38,995 towards a fund for our caddies; then in November of the same year, an amount of RM45,000. In January this year, when the MCO was reimposed, the Club contributed another RM25,000. Some of our golfers also took up a collection and contributed RM121,700 in March 2020; RM20,120 in November 2020; and RM70,148 in February this year.



In summary, our Club, together with many of its generous Members, has given our caddies over RM320,000 in the last 10 months to help them ride out these difficult times. Beyond our walls, the Club has been conducting charitable activities through its department of Communications and Public Relations since 2016, all of which were planned and executed by Ainie Wahid, the Assistant Manager for Communications and Public Relations. Up until 2019, they largely involved feting children from selected orphanages, who were invited to the Club for New Year and Hari Raya celebrations and given goodie bags to take home after. We can all agree it was a small gesture; but then in 2020, when it was no longer possible to invite the children over, Ainie decided it was time for the Club to up its game and began sending food supplies and other essentials to selected orphanages and old folks homes in the Klang Valley. An account of this activity was reported in the March issue of the magazine. Whereas the Club brought some cheer to 150 children before, it now touches the lives of 500 children and the elderly. Hopefully, the Club continues this effort long after the pandemic is over.

Certainly the Club's philanthropic contributions could be much greater than what they are now. As suggested by some Members, golf

tournaments and other events can be held to raise funds for charity. *But* should supporting charities and other acts of so-called Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR be given priority at this time when we have other more pressing issues to address? If charity work is a matter of immediate importance for some of our Members, all is not lost: They can always organise their own charity events – after the pandemic is over, of course – and hold them at the Club, which has ample event spaces for rent; and our F&B services would only be too happy to supply the refreshments. If a group of determined golfers was able to raise in excess of RM200,000 for the caddies through WhatsApp messages and word of mouth, imagine what a well-organised gala event can do!

Foremost among our priorities should be finding a solution to the problem that refuses to go away: Our annual operating deficit. It's a financial hole that seems to be widening each year with no foreseeable end in sight. Two Finance Conveners have already sounded the alarm bell on the matter in the past three general meetings. Member Low Chee Kein (L0941) has written a series of Letters to the Editor (the last of which is published in this issue) expounding on the matter at considerable length. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that we cannot tolerate the

situation indefinitely. Unless corrective measures are taken, we will exhaust our cash reserves at some point in the future – as soon as 18 years by some estimates, when many of us will still be around and then forced to confront the horror show of sinking finances, similar to the one we encountered just a few short years ago. For details on the causes and possible remedies, I highly recommend a careful reading of Mr Low's letters.

Nevertheless, I should like to submit one solution not previously considered – that we take the net (not gross) operating deficit each year and divide it among the Membership, and each (Ordinary) Member – *without exception* – pays their share of it to the Club. For example, if our net deficit is say RM6 million in 2020, and given that there are 5,300 Ordinary Members (as at the end of December 2020), each of us would be presented with an annual bill for approximately RM1,132 payable to the Club. Of course, if the net deficit widens, we will be faced with a correspondingly larger bill; conversely, if we somehow reduce our costs and raise revenues at the same time, we may end up with a surplus as we did in 2019 and the year before, in which case we would get no bill.

Before you judge the plan to be radical, drastic or simply absurd, consider the merits. First, it would put a stop to the debates about Senior Members no longer paying subscription – this would enable them to keep their exemption privilege (not to mention the peace in our Club). However, as a concession they *must* bear their share of the deficit (as must those who are still required to pay subscription – in fact, the latter pay

more, but not so much as if the burden was all theirs to bear). Second, by eliminating the deficit, we remove the need to commercialise our non-golfing lands – in other words no *skyscrapers*. Remember, it is precisely because of our operating deficit that at sometime in the future we will be presented with an alternative that calls for us to get creative with our lands and cash. Defraying the deficit by sharing it among the Membership may be the cost of keeping our green enclave intact. The question is, are we willing to pay up? Third, having to pay a bill each year makes us more sensitive to the costs of running the Club, resulting in sharper pencils among the Membership – it may well send some of us off in search of ways and means to reduce expenditure, and so we get more creative (hopefully, in a good way). Finally, it unencumbers our cash pile so that it may be employed for capital expenditures that will maintain our well-being and enhance our experience in the Club, and, yes, match reality with perception as per the Master Plan (premier club, remember?).

Lest we wonder what happens to our cash pile if we keep spending it on capital expenditures, how we are going to replenish it, this is where the intake of Members from the public comes in – joining fees go directly to the capital account and are not diverted to cover the operating deficit; as well, we will not be pressured to accept all applicants just because they are able to pay the joining fees; and by keeping our numbers low we will not be confronted with the irritation of having to be placed on a weeks-long waiting list to play a round on Sunday mornings. In addition, we will also

have the freedom to decide how much of our investment income we wish allocate to the capital account.

At the end of the day, at issue is whether our Membership really want – and deserve – the world-class facilities that are being implied in the Master Plan. Because having them also means paying to maintain them, not just on a daily basis but also to renovate (such as replanting) every few years. And somehow we must balance our accounts, or ways and means will be found to do so on our behalf, which may not be to our liking. A well-run club with excellent (or possibly world-class) facilities and services to match; a safe, secure and private place, where everyone knows our name, to which we can retreat for a few hours from the world outside, where we can enjoy fellowship with our buddies on the course, at the poolside, on the tennis courts and at the bar; or a place where we can have a quiet meal with our families or guests, or sit, when it pleases us, in a well-placed chair on one of the terraces and balconies (with a glass of whisky in hand) and simply stare into the vast green expanse... Isn't this what we signed up for all those years ago? ■

Winston Ee

LETTER TO EDITOR

Please email your feedback, letters and stories to:

The Editorial Board

info@rsgc.com.my

Deadline for all submissions is the end of the month.

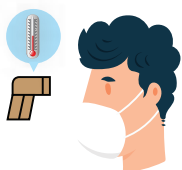


RSGC NEW NORM GUIDELINES



THE MANAGEMENT WILL DECLINE MEMBER'S ACCESS INTO THE CLUB UNDER THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- ANYONE WHO EXHIBITS SYMPTOMS SUCH AS FEVER, COUGH, SORE THROAT, FLU OR ANY RESPIRATORY DIFFICULTIES.
- ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH COVID-19 PATIENT(S) WITHIN THE PAST FOURTEEN (14) DAYS.



TEMPERATURE SCREENING

COMPULSORY TEMPERATURE SCREENING UPON ENTRY AT GUARDHOUSE.



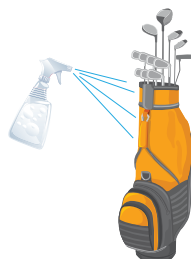
HAND SANITISER

WASH AND SANITISE HANDS REGULARLY. HAND SANITISER STATIONS PROVIDED AT STRATEGIC LOCATIONS.



HEALTH SCREENING

MANDATORY HEALTH DECLARATION FORM. SCAN THE QR CODE, COMPLETE AND SUBMIT THE FORM UPON ENTERING THE CLUB.



DISINFECTION EXERCISE

COMPULSORY DISINFECTION OF GOLF BAGS UPON ARRIVAL AND AFTER GOLF GAME TO BE DONE AT BAG DROP OR STARTER HUTS.



GOLF BOOKING

GOLF BOOKING BY TELEPHONE AND WHATSAPP (6.45AM – 7.30PM).
TEL: 03-92063 333/251/252
WHATSAPP: 016-2190057
OR SIMPLY DOWNLOAD MYRSGC MOBILE APP (GOLF BOOKING ONLINE) - FOR ANDROID AND IOS USERS



SCORECARD SUBMISSION

MARK YOUR OWN SCORECARD, TAKE A PICTURE AND SEND VIA WHATSAPP TO 012-3075034 / 017-2123684 OR EMAIL SPORTS@RSGC.COM.MY



CLUB FACILITIES

- BARBER SHOP: 10AM - 7.30PM (CLOSED ON FRIDAY)
- HAIR SALON: 9AM - 5PM (CLOSED ON SUNDAY & PUBLIC HOLIDAY)
- BEAUTY SERVICES (LADIES' MASSAGE ROOM): 10AM - 5PM (BY APPOINTMENT ONLY)
- MASSAGE ROOMS: 12PM - 7PM (CLOSED ON MONDAY)
- CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE: SAUNA



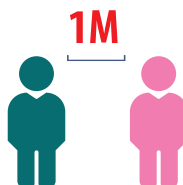
SPORTS FACILITIES

- OPEN DAILY 7AM - 7PM: DRIVING RANGE, TENNIS HARD COURTS, SQUASH COURTS, GYMNASIUM AND JOGGING TRACK
- GOLF COURSE: 7AM - 7PM
- TENNIS GRASS COURTS: 10AM - 7PM
- SWIMMING POOL/TENNIS COURTS/GYM BOOKING BY TELEPHONE: 03-9206 3245/6 OR WHATSAPP: 017-3637097 OR 016-9464558 (8AM - 7PM)



FACE MASK

WEAR FACE MASK WHILE ON CLUB PREMISES. MASKS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST AT RECEPTION COUNTER.



SOCIAL DISTANCING

STRICTLY OBSERVE SOCIAL DISTANCING OF NO LESS THAN 1 METRE APART. AVOID HANDSHAKES OR OTHER FORMS OF PHYSICAL CONTACT.

Dear Members,

At the time of writing, the Ministry of Health has just announced that the Conditional Movement Control Order will take effect from 5-18 March 2021 and we are happy to have received news that we can finally open the Club's changing rooms and shower facilities to Members. Slowly but surely, things are starting to return to normal. The best part of it all, Members can once again enjoy the Club's facilities. However, all outlets in the Club will be restricted to a maximum of 50% of their original capacities. The good news is that the Covid-19 vaccines have arrived in Malaysia, and as the inoculation phases roll out progressively, the whole country will be protected from this dreaded virus and the overall economy of the country will improve as borders will be allowed to open.

On 27 February 2021, RSGC President Abu Talib Othman, Sports Convenor Ally Azwin and Golf Convenor John Eu welcomed the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Senator Wan Ahmad Fayhsal bin Wan Ahmad Kamal, and the ministry's delegates to the Club. After a short meeting in the Heritage Room, the President walked the visitors through the Club's various facilities to show them what the Club had done to fully comply with the standard operating procedure (SOP) guidelines specified by the authorities. On leaving the Club, the Deputy Minister presented the President with a certificate of SOP compliance from the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Now that the Club's F&B service is up and running, the F&B Department has been working on various ways to create new and different experiences for Members, such as the recently introduced Cucur Corner that operates weekly from Friday to Sunday, 4-7pm. Members can order freshly prepared local delicacies, such as *goreng pisang*, *cucur udang*, *cucur badak*, *cucur ubi* and curry puffs to enjoy with their

drinks at the Golfer's Terrace, patio area outside the Men's Bar, and the Main Lounge.

On Saturday evenings, barbeques have commenced on 13 March 2021 and, hopefully, Members will join in and take advantage of the wide selection of food on offer.

The Ramadhan Buka Puasa buffet dinner will commence on 13 April 2021 and run throughout the holy month of Ramadhan. Be sure to stop by and try something different at the Main Lounge. We look forward to your support and would appreciate any suggestions on how we can continue to improve the Club's environment so that all Members can enjoy themselves.

I am pleased to update Members on the progress of our projects:

1. Golf Cart & Facilities Building

The architect's drawings were submitted on 19 February 2021 to Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur for the necessary approvals and records.

2. New Security Company – Falcon Sdn Bhd

If you have been to the Club recently, you would have noticed that, as of 1 April 2021, there has been a change in the Club's outsourced security company. Falcon Sdn Bhd was awarded the new contract through a tender process. They replace Ehsan Security, who provided security services to the Club for many years and finally completed their contract with RSGC.

3. SOP Enforcement by House Marshal

Security has also been tasked to station a house marshal at the Club's lobby area to ensure Members comply with Covid-19 SOPs.

4. Skylight Glass Tinting

The skylight glass covering the courtyard between the Main Lounge and Modesto's has been tinted to provide Members with protection from the bright sunlight when sitting in this area.

5. Refurbishment of Drink Huts

The on-course drink huts renovation, which has been



budgeted for 2021, is the next targeted project. The Project Department is currently looking into matters such as design and estimated costs before seeking the necessary approvals to proceed with the tender process.

6. Relocation of Rubbish Dump Area

The refuse area needs to be relocated away from the main Clubhouse building as it is currently located in the area below the future Junior play area. Identifying a suitable site to relocate the refuse area is a challenge as it needs to be in a central location to accommodate the service refuse coming from the Main Lounge, Modesto's, Fairway, and the new canteen kitchens. We will keep Members updated on the available options for this critical area of operations.

Members are encouraged to download the MyRSGC app on their smartphones as it will help book tee times in advance, book caddies with ease, and record scores into the handicap system after play. Members will be able to view their handicap anywhere, anytime. The app can be downloaded on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our Muslim Members Ramadhan Mubarak. Please bring your families to the Club and enjoy our Ramadhan buffet dinner promotion at the Main Lounge.

May the blessings of the month of Ramadhan, peace and harmony be upon us all. ■

Ray Stopforth
General Manager

This is the final part of a four-part Letter to the Editor submitted by RSGC Member Low Chee Kein. The first three parts appeared in the January to March 2021 issues of *The Circular*.

Looking Out 10 Years and Beyond (Part 4)

Dear Editor,
I am 70. If I forgot my age, the Club didn't. Last year, it sent me a letter to congratulate me on reaching that golden milestone and stated that I would be entitled to enjoy for life the benefit of subscription exemption. Wasn't that great? How often do we get a free gift for life?

Some people receive a pension upon retiring from a lifetime of work or labour. They regard this as a clawback for taxes paid over decades, a sort of tax refund. Many countries have given generous pensions to citizens upon retirement and many are in trouble because those senior citizens are living much longer than the statisticians and actuaries had reckoned. Modern medicine, provided at vast public expense, now enables many to live 20 to 30 years post-retirement. Governments, when designing pension schemes, hadn't quite anticipated that and underestimated the determined efforts of scientists and gerontologists to stretch life to 100, its apparent potential. So in countries such as the US, Japan and many Western European countries, their social welfare and pension schemes are stretched and in trouble, thrusting the responsibility of keeping things ticking along on the shoulders of the young, who are diminishing in number because of lower birth rates, thus skewing the demography towards the elderly end.

How is all this relevant to us at RSGC?

Let's backtrack to 1988. That year we passed a resolution to exempt Members who attained the age of 70 and had been a Member for at least 25 years from paying any more subscription. The arguments put up by The Committee went like this: These people had contributed for 25 years, and since life expectancy didn't stretch too far beyond 70 (a Member who was a doctor pointed out that life expectancy at 70 was four years), let's be generous; besides we could afford it (would only cost RM46,800 in year one) since there were only 74 Members who qualified. Those were the bases on which the resolution rested. Since we haven't got the capacity to resist a "free lunch", the resolution was passed.

Now back to 2021. That 74 has become about 1,400, and the number is projected to grow to about 50% of resident paying Members by 2025. These numbers have completely undermined the contention that there will be very few who would be enjoying that privilege. The 2% in 1988 will soon be 50%, a situation for which the Americans have coined an apt term: *snafu*. How does this change the calculus of the Club's finances?

If we wind the clock even further back to the founding of our Club, we would discover that the founders had intended membership subscription to be the main source of finance for the

Club. That meant that everyone had to pay his share. It was a fair principle since every Member had equal rights to all the benefits of membership whether a Member chose to use them or not. It was simply an obligation of membership.

Then it got complicated when we decided that certain Members should be exempted solely on account of age and seniority. In other words, some would be entitled to a "free lunch". No one quite knows when this term first came into use, but the Nobel laureate economist, Milton Friedman, disabused us of the idea of a free lunch. It has to be paid for by us somehow or someone else. Makes sense, doesn't it? Lunches, like all other things, have a cost, and if so, they have to be paid for.

So in RSGC, who is paying for this free lunch? At the present time, we haven't passed the cost on to younger subscription-paying Members yet by increasing their subscription. The shortfall or deficit caused by exemptions is covered by interest/investment income and rental income. But these sources have proven inadequate, thus causing increasing deficits that will only get worse over time.

Let's return to the other argument put forward to support exemptions, that is, it was to reward a past "contribution" of older Members. Recall the earlier point I made, that the cost of running our Club was intended to be



shouldered by everyone? This implies that the subscriptions were not a gift or donation or a sacrifice. They were our mutual obligations to each other to run the Club so that it can remain open to all. It follows therefore that the continuing payment of subscription was the basic obligation of every existing Member. If the RSGC were a government, it could conduct social policies to tax and give pensions, and if taxes were inadequate it could borrow (though never a good idea). Remember Greece? It went bust 11 years ago because it didn't collect enough taxes to pay for a bloated civil service and pensions, and its borrowings nearly did it in, until an exasperated European Union came to its rescue.

Time has exposed the unsound bases for granting exemptions. We now face two options: continue with current subscription policies that will inevitably lead the Club to financial difficulties or be willing to accept the new reality, that is, we should review and adjust the current subscription structure on the principle that all

Members should shoulder part of the burden of running the Club. If we have to increase subscription, and it is borne only by one class of Member while another class is exempt, would that be fair? The affected class will never agree, and thus would vote down any such proposal. So an equitable scheme is needed. For this, we will have to await a proposal from The Committee. The ball is in the court of the 10 guardians in green jackets.

We might be tempted to think why raise subscriptions when we still have money in the bank? Think of the many countries rich in oil or other resources that have slow economic growth and run big budget deficits that are unsustainable – the oil curse that some Arab countries are suffering from; they have to borrow to survive. Then think about a small country – Norway – which has plenty of oil, but instead of spending it wastefully, they save most of it and invest for the current and future generations. The Norway sovereign fund, worth USD1.08 trillion, is the largest in the world and it funds

20% of Norway's annual budget. Our land bank is worth billions, and we should similarly harness it to build up a cash reserve that can supplement our spending. And like Norway, which still taxes its citizens, we too should continue to pay fair subscriptions so that we will always be financially strong well into the future.

I haven't enjoyed my free lunch for too long, but I am quite happy to give it up if it is part of a scheme of mutuality to redistribute the financial burden to ensure the long-term financial viability of this Club of ours. ■

Low Chee Kein (L0941)

LETTER TO EDITOR

Please email your feedback, letters and stories to:

The Editorial Board

info@rsgc.com.my

Deadline for all submissions is the end of the month.



ONSEN SUITE

LIVE THE ART OF BEAUTIFUL SIMPLICITY



UNIQUE FEATURES

Welcome home to the last prime property in a prominent spot of the embassy enclave in Kuala Lumpur. Designed with just 50 exclusive units based on Zen principles, 18 Madge Onsen Suite offers tranquillity in the city. Located in the strategic central business district, 18 Madge Onsen Suite is for the discerning homeowner in search of simple comfort living within inner city oasis.

- Hot spring facility
- Finest quality of home furnishings
- Low density
- Zen design principles
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SHOW GALLERY OPENS DAILY 10AM - 4PM

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RSGC Member Winston Poon has requested that his correspondence with the Club Management regarding the Covid-19 Update No 37 be published in the Letter to the Editor section. This update, dated 15 February 2021, relates to the F&B staff member who worked at the Club on the 12th and 15th of February despite not reporting to work on the 10th and 11th of February due to a fever.

The email exchange between Mr Poon and Management is reproduced below.

From: Winston Poon
Sent: Tuesday, 16 February 2021
Dear RSGC Management,

Reading about the movement of the staff member in your Update No 37 suggests to me that the Management of the Club is guilty of gross negligence and dereliction of duty, and in this instance, incompetence. How can the Management of a Club with thousands of Members (1) not immediately insist that any staff member with any symptom of sickness take a Covid-19 test and (2) not await for the result of the test before he or she is allowed to return to work and wander freely on the Club premises?? I note that the worker had a swab test only 3 days after getting sick and 2 days after taking sick leave. There is no indication that the Management cared about the result of the swab test before allowing the worker to return, potentially exposing many others. The Management of the Club should be held liable for the

closure of the Club and for causing so much inconvenience to many Members who unfortunately visited the Club during the days when the Covid-19 staff was permitted to continue working.

PS I would be grateful if you could publish my message above in your next monthly magazine.

From: RSGC Management
Sent: Tuesday, 16 February 2021
Dear Mr Winston,

Management was not aware of the staff member having any symptoms or being tested until they were told by the staff member that he is positive once he was informed by MOH at 3.30pm on 15 February 2021. Until the staff revealed this to Management we were not aware. The staff member was irresponsible for his actions by not advising Management earlier that he had gone for a test on 13 February 2021.

Noted on your request, will forward this email to the Editor for Circular magazine.

Many thanks for your feedback and wishing you a pleasant day.

From: Winston Poon
Sent: Wednesday, 17 February 2021
Dear RSGC Management,

As Covid-19 has been raging for over a year in the world and Malaysia is constantly under lockdown, don't you think it is wrong by now that the Management of the Club after so many infected cases on its premises over a long period still does not insist that its staff members take a Covid-19 test as soon as any sickness symptom

is displayed and still allows the staff member to return to work before receiving a negative result from his or her Covid-19 test?? The Management should have been alerted to C21s's condition as soon as he or she failed to report to work for two days on 10 and 11 February. Allowing the staff member to resume working on 12 February without a medical certificate seems most imprudent. If that does not make matters worse, C21s was permitted to continue to work whilst taking a swab test four days later on 13 February until the afternoon of 15 February when the swab test result was known presumably to the Management of the Club, which resulted in the closure of the Club the following day!

Because of the long spell of the pandemic it is all the more unforgivable for the Management to not bother to do this with C21s or any member of its staff despite his or her absence from work? Your reply suggests to me that it is not the employment policy of the Club to demand for the reasons when a staff member is absent from work. It seems to me that the Management does not care at all if any of its staff comes to work or not and the staff may come and go as he or she pleases.

You may wish to publish our exchange of emails in next month's Club magazine so as to enable all the Members to decide if the Management has properly discharged its duties and is acting all along in the best interests of all the Members. ■

Winston Poon (P0485-0)



Ramadhan Buffet

@ THE MAIN LOUNGE

15 April - 10 May 2021

RM65.00 per head

Reservation is preferred. Please call the Main Lounge at 03-92063 273/274 or email norini@rsgc.com.my to make your reservation.

Confirmation of booking is subject to the 50% maximum allowed capacity of the venue.

All bookings are subject to a no-show charge of RM65/pax.

Price is excluding government tax

On Monday, 15 February 2021, the Club issued Covid-19 Update No 37, which was alarming to say the least. In effect, it acknowledged that an F&B staff member had missed work on 10 and 11 February 2021 due to fever and that this same staff member was then allowed to report for work on 12 and 15 February 2021, during which time he was in the kitchen, Main Lounge, maintenance workshop, F&B office, main admin office, *surau* and staff canteen, coming into contact with many other staff members. In the afternoon of 15 February, he left the Club on learning that he had tested positive for Covid-19.

The Management's response to this was that they were "not aware of the staff member having symptoms or being tested". How could this have happened some 11 months into a global Covid-19 pandemic and three months after the first Covid-19 cluster blighted our Club? Ignorance is not

an acceptable response. After all, we have been under a Movement Control Order for nearly a year now. The whole country is under siege, and we have let our defences down yet again. As much as this is a people issue, we must now thoroughly examine whether our internal control procedures (ICPs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for Covid-19 are adequate. Are the procedures in place to avoid such an oversight? Or was this simply a superior overriding the relevant SOP(s) to overcome staffing issues of the day?

It brings up the matter of a petition that was raised by 25 Members on 3 November 2020 following the first six Covid-19 cases at the Club. Mind you, we have recorded 15 more cases since then. Among other matters, the said petition to The Committee asked for "the review of the adequacy of current practices at the Club with respect to the implementation of ICPs and SOPs relevant to Covid-19", "to make appropriate recommendations for

additions, revisions and improvements to people, processes and systems at the Club based on the findings from the exercises above" and "to revise the relevant ICPs and SOPs and/or introduce new ICPs and SOPs as required". It would appear to be a reasonable petition by these concerned Members. However, The Committee decided it was not worthy of attention and chose to put it aside.

We now have a situation that warrants a formal investigation as it exposes worrying issues with our people, processes and systems. The fact that there may not be any outbreak or cluster at the Club caused by this errant staff member was fortuitous and a blessing from above. Will The Committee concede that we have a problem or will it choose to sweep this under the carpet? You can be sure that many Members will be watching what transpires next. ■

Kam Omar (K0495)



Members are required to observe the **3 C's** by avoiding



Crowded places



Confined areas/spaces



Close contact

Please continue to practise the **3 W's** by

Wearing a face mask at all times



Watching your distance from other Members and cautioning others who don't conform

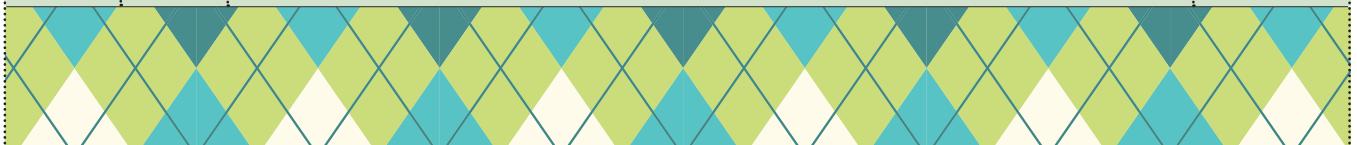


Washing your hands regularly for your safety





DATE	DAY	EVENTS	TIME
12	Mon	Major Maintenance (1st Nine Old Course)	
13	Tue	Major Maintenance (1st Nine Old Course)	
14	Wed	Major Maintenance (1st Nine Old Course)	
15	Thu	Major Maintenance (1st Nine Old Course)	
16	Fri	Major Maintenance (1st Nine Old Course)	
19	Mon	Major Maintenance (2nd Nine New Course)	
20	Tue	Major Maintenance (2nd Nine New Course)	
21	Wed	Major Maintenance (2nd Nine New Course)	
22	Thu	Major Maintenance (2nd Nine New Course)	
23	Fri	Major Maintenance (2nd Nine New Course)	
26	Mon	Major Maintenance (1st Nine New Course)	
27	Tue	Major Maintenance (1st Nine New Course)	
28	Wed	Major Maintenance (1st Nine New Course)	
29	Thu	Nuzul Al-Quran (PH)	
		Major Maintenance (1st Nine New Course)	
30	Fri	Major Maintenance (1st Nine New Course)	



RSGC CLUBHOUSE

CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS
TOURNAMENTS / REPORTS / LADY GOLF NEWS

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID FONG

► P26-46

Necessity Is the Mother of Invention

BY JACK CHEONG

The very first golf course maintenance equipment was sheep. It is believed that grazing sheep were responsible for mowing the fairways of the hallowed Old Course in St Andrews. Not only were they tireless fairway mowers, they also worked hard in their free time by huddling together against the North Atlantic winds and carving out what we know today as bunkers. We could also go on about the free organic fertiliser that sheep produce – sustainable golf course management practices at its best.

An added benefit of having a flock of sheep would be celebrating the retirement of one of the mowers by having a barbeque. A win-win situation for everyone, except the retiring sheep.

So how did sheep fall out of favour as the preeminent golf course maintenance equipment of the time?



Fairway mower



Topdresser

The very first golf course mowers were actually adapted from the carpet industry – the machines that were used to trim carpets were adapted to mow grass. Over the years, the desire for better quality playing surfaces proved to be more important than the occasional barbeque and has led to the development of more specialised golf course machinery for every aspect of golf course maintenance.

MOWERS

The most ubiquitous sight on a golf course would be the fleet of mowers. There are mowers specifically for greens, tees, semi-roughs, fairways and roughs. Each has its own special



Material handler



Green sprayer



Hollow-tine machine

function that caters to the specific area it is supposed to mow. The reel mowers are used on finer playing surfaces and are capable of mowing the lowest grass heights – the smaller the reel diameters and the more blades in a reel, the finer the cut. As we get to the higher heights of cuts in the rough, the mowers are typically either rotary or flail mowers.

TOPDRESSER & MATERIAL HANDLER

A crucial maintenance practice to ensure the healthy growth of grass and the smoothness of the surface is topdressing – the process of spreading a thin layer of sand on the surface of the grass. There is a specialised topdresser machine for this purpose. At RSGC, we use one with a powered brush to ensure a smooth and consistent spread of sand, and a large rear roller to minimise incidents of tyre marks on the greens.

We use a large material handler to refill the topdresser quickly and reduce the manpower required to carry out the task. It is also used to refill bunker sand when required.

GREEN SPRAYER

A specialised green sprayer is used at RSGC. It is not only lightweight but also computer controlled to ensure the proper rate of fertilisers and chemicals is being applied on the greens. The spraying booms have special spray nozzles and come with a shroud to reduce drift from wind.

AIR INJECTION MACHINE

One of the more unique pieces of equipment we have is the air injection machine. The machine actually injects air into the root zone, which not only

improves the condition of the roots but also reduces compaction and improves drainage.

HOLLOW-TINE MACHINE, FAIRWAY VERTICUTTER & SWEEPER

During major maintenance of the golf course, the hollow-tine machine is used to punch holes and pull out the cores from the surface of the green. This reduces compaction and is critical in controlling the build-up of organic material. Various sizes of tines can be used with different spacing to achieve the desired result. During this time, the fairways are also verticutted with a fairway verticutting machine, which cuts vertical grooves into the fairway and pulls out excess organic material from the surface. This is usually followed by a sweeper to collect the material that was removed from verticutting.



Fairway verticutter



Air injection machine



Mini excavator



Sweeper

HEDGE TRIMMER & MINI EXCAVATOR

Other equipment we have include a hedge trimmer, which allows us to reduce the manpower required to maintain the substantial amount of hedges throughout the golf course. The work used to be done manually, and the hedge trimmer has significantly sped up the process.

A mini excavator has allowed us to effectively carry out upgrading projects around the golf course, including the installation of sub-soil drainage and the upgrading of bunkers.

The goal of having a piece of machinery on the golf course is to either improve the quality of the playing surface or to increase productivity and efficiency.

We have come a long way since the early days of golf in St Andrews. Perhaps the only similarity between golf course equipment back then and now is the occasional barbeque when the golf course equipment breaks down. ■



Hedge trimmer



Triplex tee mower

At the Park – A Visit During the MCO

BY SALLEH HARUN

The park/playground is about a five-minute walk from my house. It is small, roughly two football fields in size with fairly good amenities. I would be at the park two or three times a week after breakfast, walking and stretching for about an hour.

The regulars would usually be there.

The “clapping man” at his favourite spot, clapping and pounding his arms and legs; his claps reverberating around the park.

The “sun worshipper” walking, stopping now and then, paying homage to the sun.

The “trekkers”, a husband-and-wife pair with two trekking poles each.

At one of the brick steps is the “up and down” guy. That is all he does!

The “stick man” walking briskly while carrying a big stick. For protection, he says!

The “leaf pusher” walking around and clearing leaves to the left and right with his walking stick.

The woman with the red cap, visor pulled low over her eyes, walking the circuit, eyes glued to her handphone. She normally adjourns to the open gym for a workout.

The “cross country guy” walking briskly along the perimeter of the park. He may cut across the park and appear anywhere!

Oh must not forget him, the guy who walks backwards. Helps to reduce back and knee pains apparently!

We regulars are on nodding terms with one another.

On weekdays, mostly senior citizens patronise the park. On weekends, the park attracts families and children in addition to the regulars. Roller skating/blading and cycling seem to be a favourite among the kids. A small

group of housewives doing stretches on pliable strings is sometimes there with a trainer. Noisy lot with their oohs, aahs and giggles. Another ladies’ group does weights with a trainer who has a camera set up, perhaps for uploading to YouTube.

Following the announcement of the second Movement Control Order (MCO) from Wednesday, 13 January 2021, I cleaned, tidied up my golf equipment and put them away. The next morning, I went to the park after breakfast at around 9am. It was deserted. Oh, the park sweeper was there ensconced on a bench with his handphone, oblivious to my presence. He may do some sweeping sooner or later, perhaps later! Plastic rubbish and discarded face masks littered the ground for days. We have inconsiderate night visitors, unfortunately. They leave behind beer cans and styrofoam food containers as well. Dried leaves piled up, with more falling all the time! At least these leaves rot and nourish the soil, unlike plastic and face masks!

The sun was shining bright. I walked my usual circuit, which takes roughly 10 minutes per round. After about an hour, I rested on a bench under a canopy of leaves. Was it my imagination or were there more birds flying, chirping and singing? Perhaps the serenity of the park accentuated my senses, or perhaps I paid greater attention to the surroundings? The magpies seemed to be singing non-stop. The *merboks* were cooing. The migratory black birds were screaming *pu woo, pu woo*, which could be heard half a kilometre away! *Merbahs* (warblers) abound with their long chats. Ah, an iridescent kingfisher just flashed by. “Go away bird, no fishes here!” There were other familiar bird

calls, but I could not name the singers.

Surveying the deserted park, my thoughts wandered. I couldn’t help but reflect on the MCO. With the number of Covid-19 cases rising by the thousands each day, how and when will the pandemic ease off? With few exceptions, the pandemic is fast spreading all over the world. Its toll on humanity is astonishing. Some countries appear to be at a loss as to how to deal with the pandemic. Some citizens still regard it as a hoax. Others do not seem to care about precautions. Even potential vaccines, touted lifesavers, are regarded with disdain.

I resign to the fact that we may have to hunker down and live with this virus for most of 2021. All must put shoulders to the wheel to overcome this pandemic. The blame game is futile. Economic woes are prevalent. Everyone and everybody must help each other – corporates, businesses and citizens. The government has an obligation to the *rakyat*, which must be discharged with paramount sincerity and honesty.

I sensed, rather than saw, another person entering the park. Ah, the “cross country guy” just arrived! The sweeper was still engrossed in his handphone! Oh, oh, I have to run home, rumblings in my tummy. No toilet facilities at this park! ■

Salleh Harun has been an RSGC Member for over 30 years. He is a keen golfer and has actively participated in Club competitions. He spent most of his working life in banking and finance but is now retired. Salleh loves reading, writing, listening to music, fishing as well as hiking. He has gone on an eight-day hike to Annapurna Base Camp following retirement.

Introducing RSGC Subcommittees

The subcommittee members and their convenor, all volunteers, play a very important role in our Club, doing much of the work to ensure the smooth operation of the Club and advising The Committee on issues under their jurisdiction. They are an essential cog in our Club machinery and the decisions they make have a direct impact on your enjoyment of our facilities. We restart our series on the Club's subcommittees so that Members will be more informed on who sits on the various subcommittees and what their roles are.

BY DAVID FONG

I am happy to share with Members insights into the Club's facilities and human resources (HR) practices during what has been a difficult period, and a peek into our plans for 2021. Managing a club as large as ours is challenging at the best of times, and even more so during the Covid-19 pandemic. Both the Facilities and HR Subcommittees have been working closely with our General Manager, Ray Stopforth, and his team to keep the Club safe for Members, their families and the staff. I am sure all of you will join me in commending them for their dedication and hard work.

FACILITIES AND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE (FSSC)

Convenor: David Fong

Members: Henry Lee Inn Seong, Jon Song Siew Hwa, Jim Tan, Lim Chin Tong, Robert Frager, Wong Lee Ming

RSGC sits on just over 300 acres of land in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. Within this property sits two 18-hole championship golf courses (plus a short nine-hole course), three hard and seven grass tennis courts, and 50m and 25m swimming pools (and a children's pool). In the middle of this magnificent property sits the historical clubhouse, which houses F&B and other facilities that cater to approximately 6,700 Members.

The job of ensuring that everything in the Club works 24/7 falls on our Facilities Manager, K. Thiruvengkatarajoo, or Thiru for short, and his team of forty-odd staff. Thiru joined RSGC in 2019 with over 20 years

of experience in facilities management in the private sector.

The management of the Club's facilities is broadly organised into three areas, namely:

1. Maintenance. This involves making sure that existing infrastructure (building and other structures, pumps and piping, power supply and communication, septic tanks and sewerage, etc) and equipment (air conditioning, F&B, fire safety, health and emergency, etc) are in good working order, regularly serviced and properly insured. In addition to ongoing maintenance, the facilities team continuously identifies areas where upgrading or replacement is needed, and these are included as capital expenditure in the annual budget. Just over RM2.2 million was approved at the December 2020 Extraordinary General Meeting to replace and upgrade "Building, Structure and Fittings" in 2021. These include the ongoing major repairs and replacement of the Club's roof structure (which has not been upgraded since the last major renovation in 2001) and the upgrading of the drink huts on the golf course.

2. Housekeeping. This involves ensuring the overall cleanliness and hygiene of the Club at all times, such as regular sanitising, pest and termite control, and laundry services. This area has assumed added urgency and importance due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, the Club has incurred over RM100,000 in Covid-19-related expenses, such as the purchasing of sanitising equipment

and personal protective equipment, and the daily sanitising of facilities such as the Main Lounge, changing rooms as well as other high-traffic areas. The expenses also include deep cleaning and sanitisation, which are carried out as and when necessary in accordance with the Ministry of Health's (MOH's) guidelines. Additional measures implemented for the safety of Members and staff include the installation of automatic doors in high-touch locations, such as the Main Lounge and changing rooms. Management is also currently looking into solutions to sterilise the air and surfaces on a 24/7 basis.

3. Security. The large area of the Club and the high frequency of use of its facilities require constant security presence. Currently, we employ 11 in-house security staff members for security-related work, such as traffic and car park control and monitoring, CCTV monitoring, emergency responses such as fire and rescue, and security and crowd control for large events such as sports tournaments and annual meetings. In addition, the Club engages an external security firm to provide, on a 24/7 basis, guards for the external premises, including to man the front and back entrances and patrol the Club's perimeter. Security enhancement projects for 2021 include the upgrading of 42 existing CCTV units to infrared units and the installation of new CCTV units at Car Park C.

The main role of the FSSC is to oversee the above activities to ensure that they are carried out properly, promptly and in an efficient manner,

and that the physical facilities of the Club are upkept to high standards. As many of the services are outsourced to third parties, an important function of the FSSC is to ensure the integrity of the tender process and the awarding and renewing of contracts, in particular, avoiding any potential conflicts of interest. On an ongoing basis, Management continuously looks at ways to modernise and improve the Club's facilities, such as in energy conservation and adopting environmental-friendly initiatives.

The FSSC has seven members comprising individuals with experience in design, architecture, construction, and the management and maintenance of properties. They include Jon Song, an engineer, consultant and licensed plumber with over 30 years of experience; Henry Lee, former President of the Malaysian Institute of Architects; Robert Frager, a retired senior manager of a leading hotel chain; Wong Lee Ming, Past Captain and Clubhouse and Facilities Convenor; and Jim Tan and Lim Chin Tong, who both have extensive experience in property management.

HUMAN RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE (HRSC)

Convenor: David Fong

Members: Michael Lim Heen Peok, Robert Frager, Edmund Liew Yin Chiang, Yau Su Peng, Kamaruddin Taib

To support and manage its many facilities and operations, the Club employs about 196 permanent staff members comprising 60 executives and 136 non-executives. Of the non-executive staff members, about 100 are classified as "Unionised Employees" under a Collective Agreement between RSGC and the Club Workers' Union Peninsular Malaysia. The Club also has non-permanent staff members, comprising primarily about 170 registered caddies who work on a



freelance basis and about 91 contract workers who are employed by third party contractors to provide various services, such as security, facilities and field operations, to the Club.

The HR Department is headed by Nagammai Suppiah, or May for short, who joined the Club in 2017 with 10 years of HR experience in the private sector. She is assisted by three staff members.

The key functions of the HR Department include payroll, performance management, training and development, performance appraisal, recruitment, industrial relations, and health and safety. Other activities undertaken by the HR Department in the past year include facilitating regular engagements between staff and Management, providing financial assistance to employees and their families, implementing a whistleblower policy, and assisting employees in obtaining relevant certifications such as in food handling and arboriculture.

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, ensuring the health and safety of employees has become a priority. Some of the steps taken by the HR Department include:

- Liaising with relevant authorities such as PDRM (Polis Diraja Malaysia) and MOH when positive cases arise and during lockdowns
- Monitoring the daily health of all employees
- Regularly reminding employees on proper Covid-19 prevention measures
- Arranging for Covid-19 swab tests for Club employees and obtaining government (eg PERKESO) subsidies

for such tests where available

- Regularly engaging with and monitoring infected employees.

The Club and Members have also provided financial assistance to those who suffered a loss of income due to the pandemic.

The role of the HRSC is to oversee and assist Management in all HR-related matters, and where appropriate, make recommendations to The Committee. In particular, the HRSC periodically reviews and monitors the following:

1. The Club's HR philosophy and its related policies, including compensation
2. Policies for hiring, retaining and extending employment of staff
3. Cases involving the Industrial Court
4. Annual salary increments and bonuses
5. Renewal and changes to the Collective Agreement. The current agreement expired in July 2020, and Management is currently in discussion with union representatives for a new agreement
6. Adequacy of training and development programmes to improve the skills and overall performance of the staff.

The well-being and safety of the staff will continue to be a priority for Management and the HRSC in 2021.

There are six members in the HRSC. Both Michael Lim and Robert Frager have many years of experience in managing large corporations and have remained in the subcommittee to provide continuity. Yau Su Peng was previously a Governance Convenor. Edmund Liew is a practising lawyer and provides us with legal counsel when required, such as with Industrial Court cases. Kamaruddin Taib has extensive experience in corporate senior management. Collectively, they provide a diversity of experience to assist The Committee and Management. ■

Lady Golf Captain's Report

BY YASMIN YUSUFF

STAY SAFE

How swiftly time flies when you can't do much. Thankfully golf is back, and it is good to see everyone at the Club observing the Covid-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs) with greater care now. The shock of having so many positive cases at RSGC, so close to home, has made many Members extra cautious, putting on their masks immediately when they come off the course before cleaning their clubs and shoes, maintaining social distancing, and making good use of the soap that is now provided at the shoe cleaning areas for washing hands. A very good idea indeed!

Among the ladies, I have noted that many no longer stay on for a drink or a snack at the Club, and instead, as per the government SOPs, leave the Club as soon as their game is over. It is good to be careful. Many of the cases we have had at the Club could not be traced to the source of

infection, so we can only ensure that we take extra precautions to keep not only our friends but also our families and ourselves safe. Speaking as someone who has had to self-isolate twice as a close contact, it is no fun being trapped in your house for 10 to 14 days, unable to even go to the supermarket to buy food. The multiple Covid tests before and after are even less fun! I think I am up to my seventh now. Thank goodness we overstocked during the first Movement Control Order (MCO), and have enough cans of soup and sardines to last several earthquakes!

ADDICTED TO GOLF

This time around, the second MCO hardly feels like an MCO compared to the first round, where we all suffered intense cabin fever and many became pretty successful vegetable farmers and bakers. This time, shops are open and all sources of food are operating

– from the *goreng pisang* stalls to the posh restaurants – and we can finally dine in. In the beginning, golf was not allowed, but somehow people kept themselves busy. It didn't stop the ladies from sharing their MCO golf experiences though. Wow, some of our Members were really serious about their game, with golf nets and swing speed metres installed at home. Necessity being the mother of invention, we were entertained by photos of fitted bed sheets hung up in the garden to catch balls and Japanese slippers being worn instead of golf shoes on indoor putting practice mats.

Then the day came when golf courses were finally allowed to open! Back to the same SOPs of not touching the pin and no rakes in the bunkers. It is very obvious how much the ladies love their golf! From the very first flight available (Chinese New Year celebrations notwithstanding) until today, the ladies have been out on the course from the crack of dawn! And as is traditional during the Chinese New Year season, the weather has been hot, hot, hot. We are willing to play in temperatures of high 30s – such is the addiction to the game. The course is turning brown, although I still don't see my ball running as far as it did in the drought-like conditions we had a few years ago.

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE GOLF COURSE

Although we have had no competitions or events, golf is being played and new golfers are being tested. This month, I would like to welcome Kalsom Ismail as our successful golf testee. We look forward to more ladies taking their golf test in the coming weeks.

I would also like to extend a huge congratulations to Raihan Abdul Rahman who scored her first hole-in-one on the 6th New. That is a tough



Chizuko Hirata holding on tightly to Peg Wong as her umbrella is retrieved from the lake

one, so well done, Raihan!

Our third photograph emphasises the importance of having a ball retriever in your golf bag – you never know when you might need it to retrieve your golf umbrella from the lake! I'm sure Chizuko Hirata was very glad that Peg Wong had one in her bag!

LADIES GOLF SECTION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Ladies Golf Section Subcommittee's (LGSSC's) 2020-2021 term is coming to an end, albeit a shorter term than normal and one with a notable difference – that of not having had any competitions or events to run, whether they be Medals, Interclub games, our Ladies Amateur Open or even our Triangular, which were all cancelled last year. I was particularly sad about having to cancel our extremely enjoyable social games, such as the Committee's Prize (no strange costumes), Grandmothers' Challenge, Year-End Game, and of course, our very popular games with the Club staff and caddies. Until the end of last year, our caddies were still hopefully asking if the game would be held. No such luck.

Our Ladies Golf Section Annual General Meeting is slated for the end of April 2021. We have all been looking out for enthusiastic ladies to take over the role of taking care of our lady golfers. The current Subcommittee is in its sixth year, and I am very proud to be able to say that we have made many positive contributions to the Club's Ladies Golf Section. On top of that, the number of female Ordinary Members has been growing by leaps and bounds, and women now have a strong voice in our Membership. Very soon, nomination forms for the next Subcommittee will be out, and we really look forward to seeing new people take over.



Congratulations to Kalsom Ismail on passing her golf test!

Overall, it has been really enjoyable and gratifying to see the successful results of good teamwork over the last few years. This Subcommittee is the best I have had the privilege to be a part of in my many years on the LGSSC. They are an excellent combination of experience, fresh ideas, talents and skills in many different fields, and some of the Club's top lady golfers working together to make our lady golfers' experience the best it can be. My immeasurable thanks and appreciation to each and every one of them – Vice-Captain Liow Foong Kwan, Honourable Secretary Kam Su-Shuin, and subcommittee members Chizuko Hirata, Wong Ai-Dee, Low Yun Ting, Stella Chau and Kee Shih-Lene. Their hard work and

contribution have made the RSGC Ladies Golf Section what it is today.

Our Golf Convenor has also brought many new ideas to the table, and I am very pleased that the Ladies Golf Section will no longer be left to exist as a separate section as it has for all these years. It will be fully integrated into the Golf Section as a whole with the men and Juniors, which means the sharing of resources. This is great news and it brings us one step closer to acceptance as simply just golfers – something that I have been advocating for years.

My personal thanks to all our lady golfers for their positive and enthusiastic support all these years. It's all about YOU.

See you at the tee box! ■

Touring Jaipur

BY MOHD FADZIL MAN

My wife, Fareeda, and I had been to Jaipur twice before our trip to attend the Jaipur Literature Festival in 2013. In both trips, however, Jaipur was only an overnight stop. As I wrote in my Jaipur Literature Festival article in the March 2021 issue of *The Circular*, the first trip was a one-week family trip in a group tour of about 40 tourists. It was a rush through the Golden Triangle of India, covering New Delhi, some cities in the state of Rajasthan, and Agra. It left us with only memories of long, tiring bus trips across the barren countryside and short stops at forts, palaces and crowded cities with noisy traffic, dust and beggars.

The second trip was a more memorable one with a small group of friends and fellow doctors. We splurged on The Palace on Wheels, a tour of Rajasthan on luxurious five-star trains that used to belong to the Maharajas of Rajputana states, which I will write about in a forthcoming article. Still, we returned home feeling like we did not get enough of the many attractions Rajasthan had to offer. So when we signed up for the five-day Jaipur Literature Festival, we decided to extend our stay for three days to enable us to revisit some of the attractions in Jaipur at a more leisurely pace and to check out what we did not cover in the previous two trips.

Jaipur, the capital city of the state of Rajasthan, was founded by Maharaja Jai Singh II in 1727. As the previous capital city, Amber (also known as Amer), faced an increasing population and a shortage of water supply, the Maharaja decided to build a new capital city 11km to the south of Amber which became known as Jaipur.



An elephant ride up to Amber Fort

AMBER FORT

The Amber Fort was constructed in 1592 by Maharaja Man Singh I on the remains of an 11th century fort. It is located on the *Cheel ka Teela* (Hill of Eagles) on the Aravalli Range, a mountain range that is visible from downtown Jaipur on clear days. Access to the fort from the base of the hill is via a narrow, winding road that zigzags up the hill either on jeep or, more stylishly, an elephant.

The fort is divided into four sections, each with its own gate and courtyard. The *Jalebi Chowk* is the first section – the arrival courtyard or square where the elephants and horses are tethered. A walk up a flight of stairs through a gate leads to the second section, which houses the *Diwan-i-Am* (Hall of Public Audience). The third section is where the palaces of the Maharajas are located, and the fourth section is the *Zenana*, the quarters where the

Queens, princesses and concubines resided.

I find it difficult to put into words the beauty of this fort and its complex of courtyards and palaces with intricate wall murals and pictures made of inlaid mirrors, coloured glass and stones. Only pictures can convey its beauty.

THE JAIGARH FORT

The Jaigarh Fort, also known as Victory Fort, was built in 1726 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II. It is located near the Amber Fort on the *Cheel ka Teela* and offers visitors a panoramic view of the surroundings 500 feet above sea level. Built to protect the Amber Fort, the Jaigarh Fort is made of sandstone and stretches to a length of 3km. Both forts are connected by subterranean passages and are considered as one complex. The Jaigarh Fort also houses an armoury chamber where war armours, cannons, arms and



Amber Fort and the surrounding Amber city and beyond as seen from the Jaigarh Fort

ammunitions are kept. It was where the Maharajas and their families would escape to safety whenever enemies attacked Amber.

Other attractions within the fort are the royal palaces and a large central Persian garden. A unique feature of this fort is the latticework windows through which one can view the expanse of the surrounding landscape.

JAIPUR CITY

When Jaipur city was built to replace Amber, a Brahmin scholar from Bengal, Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, and an Englishman, Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, were commissioned to design the city. Work started in 1727 and took four years to complete. It had nine precincts, two of which were allocated for palaces and government buildings. Fortification walls with seven entry gates protected the city from enemy attacks.

When the Prince of Wales, King Edward VII, visited Jaipur in 1876, the whole city was painted pink to welcome him. Since then, the city became known as the Pink City. Jaipur itself offers several interesting tourist attractions.

PALACES WITHIN JAIPUR

City Palace

The most important palace is called the City Palace of Jaipur. Designed by the original designers of the city, it is a blend of Rajputana/Rajasthani, Mughal and European architectural



The ornately frescoed Ganesh Pol in Amber Fort that leads to the private palaces of the Maharaja



A section of the courtyard wall at Jaipur City Palace from inside the Diwan-i-Am



Amber Fort

styles. Situated in the city centre, it has four entry gates leading into the complex of palaces, temples, gardens, balconies and patios beautified by latticework, carved marbles and inlaid ornamentations.

The family of the former ruler of Jaipur still lives in one section of this palace, while the rest of the complex has been turned into a museum that exhibits antiques and belongings of the royal family. These exhibits can be viewed at the *Diwan-i-Khas* (Hall of Private Audience), *Diwan-i-Am* (Hall of Public Audience), *Baggi Khanna* (Hall of Chariots and Coaches), etc.

Rambagh Palace and Rajmahal Palace

The Rambagh Palace is another former residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur situated 8km away from and outside of the city wall. Upon the independence of India, the royal families of Rajasthan states gave up their hereditary powers in favour of the Union of India for a democratic Indian republic. In return, the British government persuaded the Indian government to continue providing financial stipends to the royal families.

Some members of the royal families took part in politics and joined the ruling Congress party. During the tenure of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the opposition party in Rajasthan, led by the Maharani of Jaipur, Gayatri Devi, grew too strong and threatening to the government. Indira Gandhi used her powers to crush this threat, jailed the opposition politicians and even abolished state stipends to the

royal families. The royal families, who previously accumulated wealth from taxes collected from their citizens and were supported by state stipends after independence, had to convert many of their palaces into hotels and museums. Rambagh Palace was turned into a five-star hotel, and during the Jaipur Literature Festival, most of the prominent writers were housed at this august hotel. Unfortunately, I did not manage to visit this hotel during the Literature Festival.

The Rajmahal Palace was previously the house of the British Resident. When the Maharaja converted Rambagh Palace into a hotel, his family moved in to the Rajmahal Palace. With decreasing income, this palace was eventually turned into a hotel. As this was a less luxurious and less

expensive hotel, my wife and I chose to stay in this hotel. We were still able to experience and capture a small part of the royal abode. The gate to the Rajmahal Palace Hotel is a grand entrance in itself. The hotel is not a big one with hundreds of rooms – it is a homely building not without its quaint charm.

Hawa Mahal

Also known as the Palace of Winds, this is probably the most commonly featured landmark of Jaipur in tourist brochures. It was built by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh in 1799. It is a five-storey building with balconies and arches and 953 small windows called *Jharokhas* decorated with intricate latticework. It is more of a façade as it is only one chamber deep in the top three floors, while the first two floors have patios in front of them. The purpose of this building was to enable the royal ladies within the confines of the *Zenana* to look out to the outside world through the windows without flouting the rules of *purdah*. The building also allows cool air to pass through the windows from the Venturi effect of its design.



The Nadivalaya at Jantar Mantar, one of a pair of circular sundials facing north and south, representing the two hemispheres of the earth



The Albert Hall Museum, one of the finest examples of Indo-Saracenic and Indo-Mughal-Muslim architecture

Jantar Mantar

This is an astronomical observation site built in the early 18th century. It includes 19 fixed instruments designed for the observation of astronomical positions as well as the estimation of time. This is India's best-preserved historical observatory and an expression of the astronomical skills and cosmological concepts of the court of a scholarly prince at the end of the Mughal period.

Albert Hall Museum

The foundation of this museum was laid during the Prince of Wales's visit to Jaipur in 1876. It was originally meant

to be a concert hall but was first used as a city hall. It was later turned into a museum and opened to the public by Maharaja Madho Sawai Singh II. It is an Indo-Saracenic architecture with Islamic and neo-gothic influences popular during the Victorian era. It houses a collection of paintings, jewellery, carpets, ivories, precious stones, crystals, sculptures and even an Egyptian mummy.

Besides these historic sites, the extra days in Jaipur also enabled us to explore Jaipur's colourful streets, bazaars and markets. One can go crazy shopping for Jaipur's textiles and jewellery. If



Room in the Albert Hall Museum featuring the Maharajas of Jaipur



Façade of the Hawa Mahal

you are adventurous enough, there are various culinary offerings to explore and experience. We were glad that we made the extended stay and decided from that trip onwards that any trip we made to anywhere would no longer be a one-night stopover but a stop of at least a few days. ■

Dr Fadzil became an RSGC Member in the 1980s but only took up golf more actively in the past 15 years after his children left home for college. Now a semi-retired psychiatrist, his other hobbies include travelling, reading, writing and cooking.

The Roots & Shoots Malaysia Award

BY T. P. LIM

“Only if we understand, will we care.
Only if we care, will we help. Only
if we help shall all be saved.”

– Dr Jane Goodall



PHOTO CREDIT TO CHAD MERCHANT

Colugo

Roots & Shoots Malaysia was established in 2015 as a precursor to Dr Jane Goodall's first visit to Malaysia. But the journey really began six years earlier, when I first met her in person while volunteering as the moderator of her dialogue with the eminent Zen master, Sheng Yen, of Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan.

I have always been a huge fan of Dr Goodall, having devoured National Geographic magazines and videos detailing her groundbreaking studies of wild chimpanzees in the forests of Tanzania. I, literally, could not contain myself at our first meeting and blurted out, “Jane, even though you can't see it, I am screaming with excitement inside.”

To which, in her characteristic cheekiness and with a smirk on her face, she replied, “I know, I have that effect on people.”

The more I got to know her, the more of a “fan” I became.

Dr Goodall speaks consistently about having hope and empowering the young to take better care of our planet. I felt very strongly that her message to the youth was crucial for young Malaysians to hear. So at our first encounter in Taipei, I extended an invitation to her to visit Malaysia to give one of her famous talks. She said, “yes”, straightaway,

scribbled her personal assistant's email on the back of a piece of napkin and asked that I write to her to schedule a visit. Pre-Covid, Dr Goodall (at the ripe young age of 85) would be traveling 300 days in any given year, crisscrossing time zones and continents to deliver speeches and lectures, and most importantly, to promote her youth movement, Roots & Shoots.

I waited patiently for a date. That was in 2009. To show her my seriousness, I “stalked” her in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan over the next six years, each time reminding her to come to Malaysia. An opening finally came up in her busy schedule to visit Malaysia in 2015.

She has since visited Malaysia on two more occasions in 2017 and 2019, and with each visit, she sparked a fire in those attending her talks to do more for the wildlife, environment and human societies. Inspired by Dr Goodall's message, I wanted to find an appropriate and localised way to encourage Malaysian youth to spend time in nature, learn about Malaysia's amazing biodiversity and actively contribute towards making Malaysia a better place.

With the support of fellow RSGC Member, Kee E Lene, and a group of Malaysian volunteers, the service-based award programme called Roots & Shoots Malaysia Award (RASMA) was conceived and rolled out in 2019. We are very grateful to Yayasan Hasanah (the foundation arm of Khazanah Group) and our non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners for putting their trust in us.



Dr Jane Goodall celebrating the inaugural graduation of RASMA 2019 participants

“What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”
– Dr Jane Goodall

RASMA PARTNERS

RASMA seeks to empower Malaysian youth by curating a “buffet” of opportunities for them to volunteer with Malaysian NGOs, companies, foundations and social enterprises that are working hard to address the issues faced by our wildlife, environment and society. We started with 15 partners in 2019 and grew to 20 partners in 2020. This year, we have 30 partners to give our youths an amazing opportunity to discover and go behind the scenes of Malaysia’s conservation and humanitarian work.

ALUMNI STORIES

In the two years that RASMA has been running, nearly 100 Malaysian youth have contributed more than 9,000 volunteering hours. More importantly, their young minds have been inspired because they now firmly believe that each individual can make a difference. Armed with inspiration and a new network of like-minded people to carry on with projects of their own, here are updates on some of our RASMA alumni.

Fresh graduate Alex Lim knew he wanted to continue to make an impact after volunteering with the Kota Damansara Community Forest Society (KDCFS), where he saw firsthand how



Nurfatin Najihah giving a talk about her experience with the Orang Jahai community in Belum rainforest

powerful a community can be when it comes together to protect something it cares for – in this instance, the green belt of Kota Damansara. He knew he wanted to have a career that contributed to saving the environment and was deciding between working for an NGO, a consultancy or a corporate body. His experience with the KDCFS led him to apply for a job in a corporation to help shape sustainable corporate policies and strategies, as he felt that was where his skills would be needed the most. He also realised that, without corporate buy-in, conservation efforts in Malaysia would be severely hampered. In order to push the urgency of environmental sustainability to corporates, he would need to be a part of the decision-making process. He now works with CIMB in the Sustainability Department to continue driving the importance of sustainability in its corporate policies.

University students Max Han and Nurfatin Najihah were so inspired after volunteering with RASMA that they have since gotten together to start their own social media campaign called

Project YUFE (Youth United For Earth). This campaign seeks to highlight young environmentalists to inspire other youths to get involved and contribute towards conserving Malaysia's environment. RASMA not only encourages our volunteers to become leaders and self-starters but also seeks to build a community of like-minded youths who can support each other, share information and expertise, and inspire and motivate one another. Project YUFE has recently launched a sustainability-related Mentorship Programme targeted at university undergraduates who are interested in pursuing an impactful career in sustainability. The programme connects selected youth with leading industry figures at home and abroad who share the same passion for the planet. They continue to be committed to growing this vital network of like-minded youth to empower them to become leaders of tomorrow.

RASMA also provides an opportunity for youth to make a direct positive impact on the environment and those in the communities affected



Alani Wahi and the endangered freshwater turtle

by it. Alani Wahi volunteered with the Turtle Conservation Society of Malaysia (TCSM) in Terengganu and was initially hesitant as she had never been away from home for an extended period of time. However, she left with a heavy heart at the end of her programme as she got to experience firsthand how impactful her efforts were – not just on the freshwater turtles that were being released but also on the village community around the release site and the visitors who came to learn more about these turtles. She was also inspired by the village women who sewed merchandise to raise funds for TCSM, and learned about the importance of economically empowering the local community whilst getting them involved in the conservation efforts.

Ahmad Wafiq had never seen a colugo in his life prior to volunteering with the Malaysian Primatological Society's Night Spotting Project. Since then, his passion for this furry nocturnal tree glider has grown in leaps and bounds, prompting him to submit a contribution to Wikipedia in Bahasa Malaysia to further educate the public of its existence and the threats it faces. He never expected to be so fascinated by this little-known mammal that he would further develop his writing and oratory skills



Max Han conducting an outreach class on recyclables



PHOTO CREDIT TO PETER ONG

Siamang

to better spread the message about this endangered creature to save it from becoming extinct. Following the researchers on ground as well as personally observing and studying this animal taught him about the importance of perseverance and patience. He continues to be involved with the work at the Night Spotting Project and has become a passionate advocate for Malaysian wildlife, especially the colugos.

Simran Kaur, 18, discovered the many wonders of Malaysia after volunteering with Roots & Shoots Malaysia's Project Monyet, EcoKnights, as well as the Perak State Park Corporation. Her three-month volunteering stint brought her to the mountains of Ulu Kali to observe siamangs in the wild, taught her the process of applying for grants to sustain the work of an NGO and showed her the ancient wonders of the Belum rainforests where she helped the Orang Jahai in their village. Apart from truly experiencing some of the most amazing sights in Malaysia, she also discovered much more about herself during the programme. "One thing I learned through this whole experience was that, I never knew I was capable of so much. These invaluable experiences pushed me. Those weeks where I got

"My job now is to try and help people understand every one of us makes a difference. And cumulatively, wise choices in how we act each day can begin to change the world."

– Dr Jane Goodall

so overwhelmed, I would come out thinking, 'I can't believe I just did that', and throw myself right back into it again. To be able to experience that hustle and working culture at my age also taught me how important it is to do what you love because you can only give it 110% if you truly care about the work you're doing. At the end of the day, I would rather have 10 things on my plate and feel overwhelmed rather than not do anything at all," she said. She is determined to be a part of the solution to Malaysia's environmental issues and continues to volunteer by assisting the International Union for Conservation of Nature to formulate a national action plan to protect Malaysia's endangered gibbons.

RASMA 2021

RASMA 2021 is looking forward to giving more of our youth (aged 16 to 25) the opportunity not just to discover the amazing biodiversity and

environmental wonders of Malaysia, but also to ignite a spark in them that will hopefully encourage them to always seek to be a part of the solution to any problem. To become involved. To lend a hand. To lend a voice.

RASMA 2021 was launched in March 2021 to offer opportunities and to provide amazing experiences towards personal growth and exposure. Youth can also opt for online volunteering. To find out more, please visit our official website: www.rootsandshootsaward.my ■

RSGC Member T. P. Lim is the Managing Director of Infinitus Entertainment Malaysia, which produces movies and TV series for local and international audiences. He founded Roots & Shoots Malaysia in 2015 and currently serves as its President. He enjoys spending time in nature and hopes to promote Malaysia's biodiversity to a wider audience.

Sports & Juniors' Corner

BY JENNI AZNAH

Goodbye March and hello April! I hope April will bring us courage, strength, confidence, patience, self-love and inner peace, and fill our days with hope, love, good vibes and energy.

SPORTS NEWS

Sporting activities, such as golf, tennis and swimming, have finally been allowed to resume, so Members can once again enjoy the facilities at the Club.

At the time of writing, the Club has decided that the Annual Club Championship and other competitions scheduled for Q1 will be postponed until further notice as the safety of Members comes first.

I am also proud to announce that the Club received a Certificate of Compliance of Standard Operating Procedures from the Ministry of Youth and Sports during the official visit of Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports Senator Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Bin Wan Ahmad Kamal to RSGC on Saturday, 27 February 2021.

Led by President Abu Talib Bin Othman, Vice-Captain and Golf Convenor John Eu, Sports and Junior Development Convenor Ally Azwin, General Manager Ray Stopforth and the respective Heads of Department were also present to welcome Senator Wan Ahmad Fayhsal and his entourage of 10 officials to the Club. They spent a good 45 minutes visiting the swimming pools, poolside pavilion, tennis courts, clubhouse men's changing room and *surau* before heading to their next destination.

Thank you to the Golf and Sports and Junior Development Subcommittees for constantly encouraging us to strive to do better. To the Sports Department, you guys are amazing!

GOLF UPDATES

The MyRSGC app, which was launched on 1 January 2021, has received positive and constructive feedback from Members mostly in regards to golf booking, daily handicap and online scorecard submission. The app not only attracted the younger generation

but also the seniors, who highly recommended it to their peers once they learned how easy it was to secure bookings and submit scorecards.

The starters and marshals have also benefitted from using the Starter app – registration is done simply by scanning Members' booking QR codes at the starter's hut while the tracking of pace of play is based on the tee-off time recorded in the app.

Effective 1 March 2021, the tee-off time interval has been standardised to eight minutes for all courses. The dress code for the golf courses, including the practice facilities, recommended by the Golf Subcommittee has been revised and approved by The Committee.

Caddies, whose incomes were impacted the most during the Movement Control Order, received another round of relief funding, comprising donations from generous Members and a top-up of RM25,000 contributed by the Club. Payment to the caddies was made in four stages. The caddies also received care packages from Yayasan Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, which were handed



Kumaran a/I Chenayo, Lana Asyikin, Hassan Jantan

over to the Sports Department by the foundation's representative, Shazan Kamal.

FEMALE MARSHALS, WHY NOT?

With no competitions to organise, I encouraged some of our sports personnel to multitask by assisting the course marshals. In the past six months, Lana Asyikin and Rachael Sri Ranjini have been part of the male-dominated group of marshals, where they monitored and supervised golfers and caddies on the course.

This effort was well received by convenors and Members. Whilst marshalling, Lana and Rachael got to learn about the golf course, players' and caddies' behaviour and conduct, as well as the Rules of Golf. Isn't that a worthwhile experience for them at the end of the day?

Now that we have female marshals, what about female caddies in the future? This was what some audacious Members asked me. Well, to be honest, the temptation is there but I would not dare dream of it. Nevertheless, the Sports Department strives to serve Members better every day.



Leonard Raj and Rachael Sri Ranjini

JUNIORS' CORNER: APRIL PERSONALITY

Edward and Eileen Unwin have become regulars at the Club ever since they became RSGC Members in the past year. The English couple is joined by their children, Amelia, 17, Arthur, 15, and twins Charles and Frederick, 11, who were both featured in the July 2020 issue of *The Circular* for the Tennis Junior Development Programme.



RSGC golf pros Stewart Ginn and Nate Stevenson coaching Arthur

This month, I am featuring Arthur, who recently passed his golf test after taking some lessons with our teaching professionals, Nate Stevenson and Stewart Ginn, to improve his golf skills and technique.

Eileen revealed that Arthur was inspired by his father on the course, and since then, had set his mind to excel in the game and frequently practised whenever he had the time. Having met the friendly but soft spoken Eileen many times at the Club, I found out that she was a creative person who loved writing, painting, practising yoga and modelling, to name a few. I noticed that Arthur had a deep respect for his parents and the adults around him, and got along well with others.

"We love being a part of the RSGC family, where the children get the opportunity to play on this beautiful golf course and meet so many people and other Juniors," said Eileen.

Arthur and Eileen both agreed that RSGC has a great golfing community, which is beneficial for them as a family.

Arthur attends the International School of Kuala Lumpur (ISKL), which has its own golf club as part of its co-curricular activities. As some of his RSGC friends are also his ISKL Golf

Club teammates, Arthur felt that being a golfer would help him build a good social life.

About Arthur:

- Loves golf and cycling, and has been playing rugby with the KL Tigers Academy since he was 7 years old
- Loves English food such as shepherd's pie and toad in the hole, as well as local food such as *roti canai* and noodles
- Loves practising at the Driving Range, and putting and chipping at the practice green
- Was previously a level 4 Golf Junior Development Programme student with OneTA
- Hits very well on the fairways according to his dad!

Juniors and parents, if you have anything interesting to share about yourselves, your siblings or your children, please drop me a message at jennsports@rsgc.com.my. Let's curb the Covid-19 pandemic together. Your safety is our priority!

Until then, stay safe and healthy, everyone! ■



Arthur and mum Eileen



RSGC PRIVILEGE GYM PASS

Kickstart Your Fitness Training After MCO for **RM99**

With the gym pass you will receive:

- **One (1) full fitness assessment** complete with InBody analysis and detailed fitness report.
- **Two (2) personalised training sessions.** Each session is 55 minutes.

Available Exercise Programmes:

- **Fitness Programme:** Weight loss, general fitness, sports performance training.
- **Golf Fitness:** Increase clubhead speed and lower your handicap with our comprehensive golf fitness programmes.
- **Medical Fitness:** Fitness programmes for Members with both acute and chronic medical conditions.


TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Offer valid until **April 30th, 2021.**
- All sessions are by appointment only.
- Expiry Date: 30 days from first appointment.
- Open to the **first 30 RSGC Members only.**
- Offer is not available to Members with an existing heart condition or who are currently pregnant.
- One (1) gym pass per Member.
- No cancellations or rescheduling permitted under the Gym Pass so we do recommend that you only confirm your session once you are able to attend.
- Cancelled or missed sessions are forfeited.
- All sessions are 55 minutes in duration.
- We recommend you arrive at least 15 minutes prior to your session to warm up.
- If you arrive late, your session will finish at the pre-designated finishing time.
- Dietary review and individual programmes are not provided under the Gym Pass.
- Fee excludes prevailing government SST.
- All RSGC rules and regulations apply.

CALL OR WHATSAPP 016-244 9963 (PETER) OR 012-300 2204 (MARK) TO REGISTER
OR EMAIL [INFO@PINNACLE.NET.MY](mailto:info@pinnacle.net.my) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

 pinnacle.net.my

 info@pinnacle.net.my

 +6012-334 1511



Congratulations to Our Hole-in-One Scorer



Husband and wife Abdul Azim bin Mohd Zabidi and Raihanah with caddie Emran

Raihanah Begum binti Abdul Rahman (A0883-1)

Scored a hole-in-one on 22 February 2021 at the 6th hole New Course.

"I didn't realise it. I knew I got the ball on the green. When I bent down to pick up my tee, my caddie, Emran, started jumping for joy."

Driving Range Schedule Effective 1 January 2021

The opening and closing hours of bays at the open grass area and covered bays inside the Driving Range building are as follows:

MCO/RMCO/CMCO operating hours: 7am to 7pm

DAY	TIME	BAYS ON OPEN GRASS AREA	COVERED BAYS INSIDE RANGE BUILDING
Monday (excluding public holidays)	7am – 9am	Closed	Open
	9am – 2pm (Closed for maintenance)	Closed	Closed
	2pm – 4.30pm	Closed	Open
	4.30pm – 6.30pm	Open	Closed
Wednesday & Friday (excluding public holidays)	7am – 10am	Open	Closed
	10am – 12pm (Closed for maintenance)	Closed	Closed
	12pm – 4.30pm	Closed	Open
	4.30pm – 6.30pm	Open	Closed
Tuesday, Thursday, weekends & public holidays	7am – 10am	Open	Closed
	10am – 4.30pm	Closed	Open
	4.30pm – 6.30pm	Open	Closed

NOTES:

1. On weekends from 8.30am to 12.30pm, five bays (no 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17) are reserved for the Junior Golf Development Programme (TBC).
2. Bays no 16 and 17 are reserved at all times for the teaching professionals. Members are allowed to use these bays when there are no lessons.

CLOSURE OF GRASS AREA DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER

1. During inclement weather conditions (rain and lightning as indicated by the siren), all the bays at the open grass area will be closed immediately until the weather improves.
2. The attendant will determine when play at the open grass area can be resumed.

All Members are strictly advised to follow the above schedule.

TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE

TRAVEL / SOCIAL EVENTS / CITY LIFE

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID BOWDEN

► P48-76

Rompin' on the East Coast

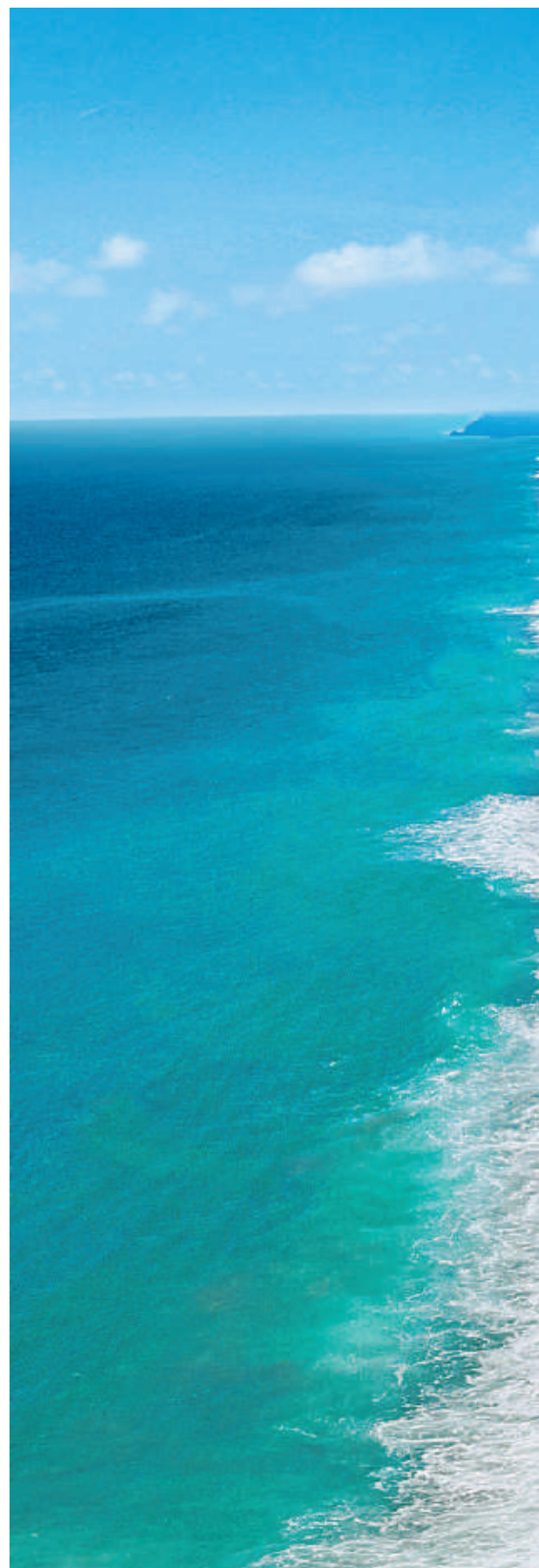
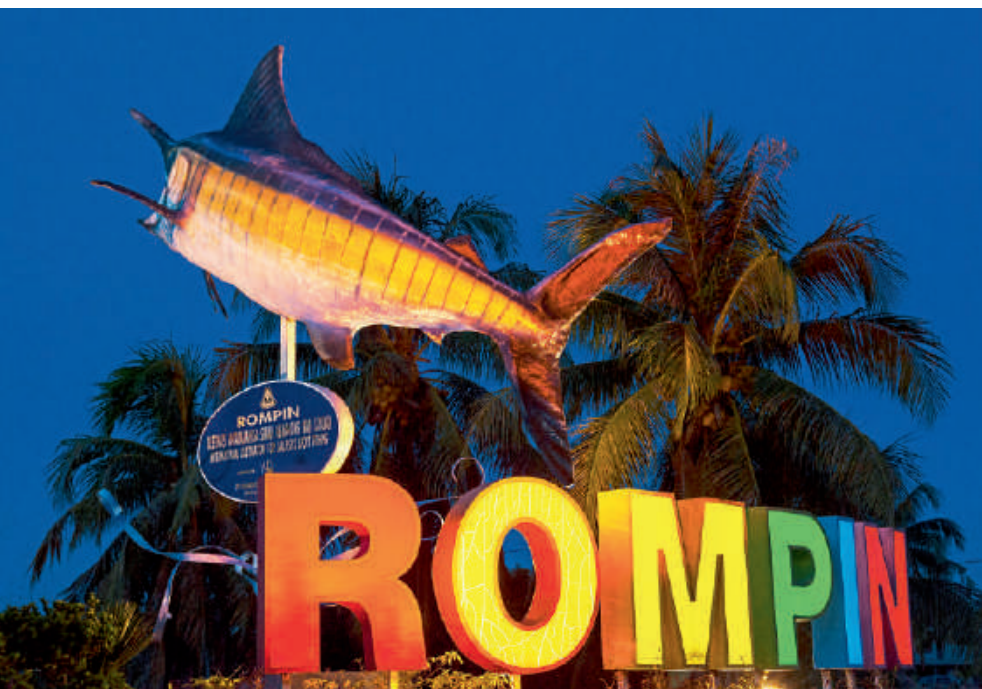
BY DAVID BOWDEN

The East Coast around Kuala Rompin provides access to several long beaches fronting the South China Sea, as well as to the huge expanse of Rompin State Park in the hinterland. The small town, which is mostly just referred to as Rompin by locals, makes a good base for visitors to explore the region or as a stopover for those heading off by ferry to Tioman Island. Relaxing at Villea Rompin Resort and Golf (formerly Lanjut Beach and Golf Resort) and enjoying a round of golf on the adjoining 18-hole course is something that golfers will also eagerly anticipate.

Rompin is situated between the mouths of the Rompin and Pontian Rivers which meander across the flat

coastal floodplain and into the sea. There are several interesting places to explore here (or just offshore), and visitors can join a river cruise to admire the mangrove forests lining the estuarine reaches of both rivers. Charter fishing boats are available for hire along stretches of the rivers and to offshore waters where the biggest fish await. The marlin statue in the town centre provides an indication of what awaits offshore for those who enjoy the challenge of deep sea fishing.

Hiburan Rompin Beach is a long shallow beach of golden sand with a backdrop of towering casuarina trees. The beach is a popular venue for local residents, especially at sunset when food stalls and trucks open to serve hungry patrons.



Aerial view of Villea Rompin Resort and Golf



A BREEZY ROUND

Its coastal location ensures that the breeze can be a factor on most holes of the 18-hole Villea Rompin Golf Course, especially during the monsoon season. These winds tend to be stronger as the day progresses and therefore of lesser importance for an early tee off. Located just back from Pantai Lanjut north of Kuala Rompin, the par 72 course makes Villea Rompin Resort and Golf the natural accommodation choice for golfers visiting the region. Noted Malaysian-based golf course designer Ted Parslow provided input when the course was initially developed. Large trees within the original coastal forest

were retained and now line many of the fairways.

Early on in a round here, golfers will quickly find that the large greens are quite fast and may need to adjust their putting accordingly. The signature fifth hole of 167m requires accuracy from the elevated tee boxes. The challenge here is to be mindful of the expanse of water that extends along much of the right-hand side of the fairway. While some may attack the hole and aim for a birdie, less ambitious golfers will be content to finish with par on the three-stroke hole. Driving to get a good lie as close to the hole is admirable, but the large bunker on the approach and the

two-tiered green may make that more difficult than it would initially appear.

The seventh, 161-m long, par three hole has a small semi-island green guarded by a bunker on both the front and back of the green. Normally, a strong headwind can create problems for a hole that looks easy but proves to be difficult in attaining par. The most difficult hole to play is the par four, number three of 389m in length. The slight dogleg left along the fairway is made more complicated with a pond on the right and out of bounds on the left along the course fencing. Once on the green, golfers have to contend with three-tiered layering. Meanwhile, the



Teeing off at Lanjut Golden Beach Golf Resort



Udang galah



Iced cendol

longest bunker of 120m is located along the right-hand side of the 15th hole.

Course facilities include a functional clubhouse and a fleet of buggies. The rates are competitive, and there are also play and stay packages which include discounted golf and accommodation deals. The resort's facilities are just a short walk from the clubhouse and include meals and beverages in Pegaga and Café Strada. Beachside or poolside barbecues are offered on weekend evenings and there are even facilities for meetings and conferences for those who want to combine work and play.

FANTASTIC FOOD

The town's coastal location ensures that the bounty of both the rivers and the sea is available in most of its restaurants with river prawns (*udang galah*), the dish that many visitors seek out. These giant prawns are served in several roadside restaurants just north of Kuala Rompin where they are freshly caught in Rompin River. Restaurant Udang Galah Mak Ngah is highly rated by locals, but it's worth noting that there are quite a few restaurants serving giant prawns prepared in several different ways such as with petai, curried, or steamed.

Immediately adjacent to these roadside restaurants is a recreational forest that is well worth exploring.

Hutan Lipur MENCHALI is an accessible recreation-designated forest which extends on both sides of the road leading into Kuala Rompin. This peat swamp forest located between the road and the sea is a significant bird habitat, and a few trails provide access to the forest, beach, and birdwatching sites. The medicinal plant *tongkat ali* also flourishes in the forest here and a *tongkat ali*-rich research plot is accessible from the food stalls, although the site is for viewing, not harvesting.

In Rompin, the roadside *warung* of Cendol Awe offers hungry diners complimentary refills of its cooling *cendol*, as well as a rather unique *nasi lemak hijau*. The latter features rice cooked with pandan to provide its distinctive green colour. Local pineapple marketed as 'Rompine' is sold everywhere and is considered by many to be Malaysia's sweetest.

ROMPIN RETREATS

Visitors can enjoy their time in Rompin while staying in a few beachside resorts, comfortable local hotels in the town or riverside chalets. The preferred accommodation is immediately adjacent the golf course at Villea Rompin Resort and Golf. This 196-room hotel in Kampung Lanjut facing the beach opened in July 2018, although there was an older chalet-style resort just to the north of the



Room interior at Villea Rompin Resort and Golf

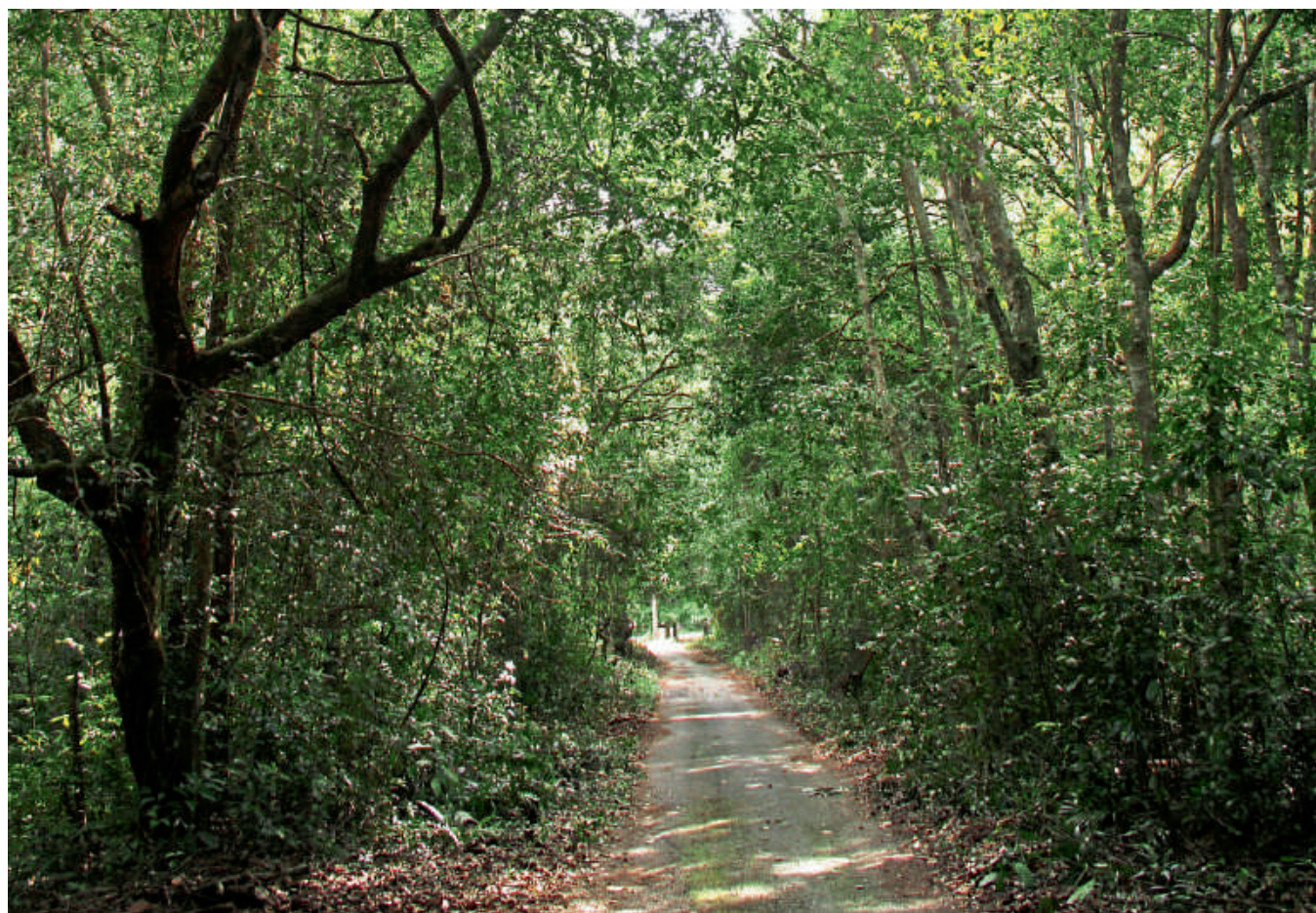


A green with an adjacent copse of trees

existing property that closed with the new opening.

The rooms are set up as superior twin, superior triple, and superior family, with the latter having adjoining rooms to accommodate families. All have a balcony to make the most of the pool view or beachfront setting and the fresh air. Rooms with a seaview are the preferred ones, with the beach less than 50m away from a beachfront area protected by tall casuarina trees.

Apart from the golf course, the main



Trail through Hutan Lipur Menchali, north of Kuala Rompin



Asian paradise flycatcher

recreational facilities at the property are two pools, including the main one, which is of Olympic proportions. A gym, archery centre, beach soccer and volleyball areas, and bike hire complete the range of activities offered. The property covers 200 hectares, so there is also ample space for walking and cycling.

Closer to town, Cemara Riverview Chalets includes some raft accommodation on the river where visitors can fish from their riverside balcony. The resort is popular with families, those who enjoy fishing, and small groups, as they can spend time fishing in the river and then later dining on their catch.

RAINFOREST ROMP

Located some 45 minutes from the town, Rompin State Park is a vast expanse of rainforest that adjoins a similarly large forested area in Johor. While I wondered how they know this,

I read that scientists have determined the forests to be 130 million years old, and nobody seems to be arguing. Numerous plant species thrive in the tropical setting, and visitors should be able to sight ferns, bamboos, pitcher plants, and fan palms on a forest walk. The extensive bird and animal life, especially birds, makes a visit to the park most rewarding. Birds such as hornbills, kingfishers, and pheasants are just some of the 250 species which have been recorded in the park.

The park has two sections with the Pahang Park Headquarters located at Sungai Kincin Base Camp, 35km from Kuala Rompin. The remote and rugged forest ensures that the vast majority of the 870-sq km park remains a wilderness, with its only infrastructure restricted to park headquarters.

Activities in this remote park include kayaking, jungle trekking, swimming, camping, fishing and birding. Park facilities have been



Peaceful river kayaking in Rompin State Park

upgraded with chalet accommodation, an interpretation centre, camping grounds, suspension bridge over the river and an observation tower. The 50m-drop of Seri Mahkota Waterfall is one of the highlights and just a short walk from the road into the park. The brand new Rainforest Discovery Centre has an educational interactive interpretation display with detailed information and engaging photos of the fascinating flora (including the large endemic fan palm *Livistona endauensis*) and park fauna. Seeing animals is not always easy in the rainforest, but the park's sheer size ensures the survival of large animals like the Asian elephant. Well-prepared adventurers can head upstream to

remote camping sites and mountain summits. Joining a guided walk is recommended and essential for the longer treks into the park's more remote sections.

TIOMAN GATEWAY

Tanjung Gemok, a riverside town just 20km south of Kuala Rompin, is the departure port for Tioman Island. Located on the northern riverbank near the mouth of the Endau River, Tanjung Gemok is more than a transit town as there are a few hotels, restaurants and some services to accommodate travellers. However, my recommendation would be to enjoy what Kuala Rompin has to offer rather than Tanjung Gemok. ■



Pontian River, Rompin



Cataferry arriving at Kampung Genting, Tioman Island

TRAVEL FILE

Getting There

Kuala Rompin is located 133km south of Kuantan and 290km from Kuala Lumpur

Accommodation

Cemara Riverview Chalets (+6019-985 0921) and Villea Rompin Resort and Golf (+609-415 8888, attanahotels.com).

Contacts

Rompin State Park (+609-414 5204, www.rompinpark.my). Golf enquiries should be made directly with Villea Rompin Resort and Golf.

The African Tulip Tree (*Spathodea campanulata*) A Community Tree with Beauty and Benefits Judith@mymalaysianbackyard

BY JUDITH LEE VON NOSTITZ

What do the African tulip tree, ginkgo tree, Homo sapiens, duck-billed platypus, Tasmanian devil and the narwhal have in common? You guessed it – they are each a monotypic genus, a genus with only one single representative species. The genus, *Spathodea*, is in the flowering plant family Bignoniaceae and the single species it contains, *Spathodea campanulata* P. Beauvois, is commonly known as the African tulip tree. Among the most beautiful of flowering trees, the African tulip tree comes from the dry forests of tropical Africa, where it reaches heights of 60 feet (18.3m) or more and lives between 50 to 150 years. Although a popular, ornamental transplant to Malaysia, due to our uneven distribution of rainfall, it does not grow or flower as luxuriously here as it does at home on the Gold Coast of Africa – in the basin countries around the Gulf of Guinea, where in 1787, Europeans first identified the tree. They named it using the Greek words *spathe* and *oida*, referring to the distinctively large, coloured bracts that enclose the whorl-like calyx.

The African tulip tree is indeed an impressive specimen with gigantic, reddish-orange or sometimes golden yellow, bell-shaped flowers that are arranged in dense clusters – with

petals that are fused together to look somewhat like a tulip flower. The leaves are huge and glossy. It is a large, upright tree with a spreading crown and a slightly buttressed trunk. The branches are thick and marked with small whitish-coloured corky spots, as also seen on rambutan tree bark. Younger branches can have a sparse covering of small hairs. Because it grows so quickly, the wood is soft, making it a favourite of cavity nesters or birds, such as Barbets, that use holes in trees. The roots are shallow, which means they are susceptible to falling over in windstorms.

The fruit is an elongated capsule-like pod. When mature, it dehisces to release more than 500 papery seeds, which are very light and surrounded by a translucent membrane wing that helps to catch the wind for dispersal. This very successful seed dispersal system has led to it being nominated as one of the 100 “World’s Worst Invaders”. In North Queensland, African tulip trees are considered a serious environmental weed as they are highly invasive. A single planting can produce dense stands in gullies and along streams, crowding out native vegetation.

Being a monotypic genus, the African tulip tree has evolved a very interesting propagation system. Out-crossing or out-breeding is



A grouping of African tulip trees





A myriad of winged seeds in each pod of the African tulip tree



Seed pods hold 500 seeds in translucent, gossamer casings

the technique of crossing between different breeds with no common ancestors, thus introducing unrelated genetic material and allowing recessive traits to migrate across a population. The African tulip tree is an "obligate out-crosser", meaning that it has a self-recognition and rejection system that makes it "self-incompatible" or unable to be fertilised by its own pollen. Therefore, the species relies solely on cross-pollination with other members of its own species.

Birds have acute colour vision and can see red from great distances in the forest, so to insure the species survival, this tree calls out to these important pollinators by producing spectacular, brilliantly hued, red on the outside, orange on the inside and gold-rimmed flowers. The African tulip tree makes itself immensely attractive to bats, birds and insects, as without them, this singleton species, with its hermaphroditic flowers, would be unable to produce seeds.



A yellow-vented bulbul helps pollinate in return for flower rewards

The floral rewards are much prized, and here at RSGC, one can observe a host of different bird species dipping in and out of the open, cup-shaped, calyx water and nectar-rich flowers. Squirrels and monkeys often eat the whole flowers as part of their daily diet. Swarms of bees can often be seen buzzing around the blossoms, but they seem overwhelmed by the bounty and tend to stay in one flower rather than move around between blossoms or other nearby African tulip trees. This behaviour only promotes self-pollination and is not helpful towards cross-pollination and subsequent fruit set. This has led to a useful defensive adaptation where the nectar and pollen are still very attractive but actually toxic to certain bee species such as *Trigona*, the native stingless bee that produces *kelulut* honey. The *Trigona* perish in the flower, creating a valuable, added protein-rich element to the floral rewards.

With recently renewed pharmaceutical interest, traditional medicines around the world are receiving more attention and are being evaluated for efficacy. In the basin countries around the Gulf of Guinea, the African tulip tree has traditionally been an important medicinal plant. The

traditional preparations used in Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Gabon are being studied. Numerous phytochemical and pharmacological studies have been conducted on the stem bark, leaves, flowers and fruit of the *Spathodea campanulata* P. Beauvois. Collected data is promising and shows that the various parts of the tree contain antimalarial, anticancer, antidiabetic, antioxidant and antibacterial properties. Observing the great enthusiasm that wildlife have for ingesting the various parts of the African tulip tree, it seems they have always had inside information on the salubrious nature of this very special tree.

Those who planted *Spathodea campanulata* P. Beauvois at RSGC made a lovely and wise choice. Amidst the other tall and mostly green species, the African tulip tree adds glorious colour all year round. This transplant from the forests of West Africa has established a perfect give and take relationship with the wildlife that has also made a home in our city sanctuary. Its soft wood invites the building of nesting holes, while bats, birds, insects, mammals, rodents and even reptiles eat and drink of its flowers, nectar and seeds in exchange for helping this monotypic genus and obligate out-crosser survive far away from its native home. ■

Distractions on the Greens

BY STEWART GINN

Fellow golfers, it is now 11 o'clock in the morning, and I have just completed nine holes on the New Course after teeing off at 9am. I was very disturbed to see that the greens were already in such a poor condition, despite the first tee-off being only at 7am. I have to bring this matter to all golfers' attention.

Pitch marks have always been a problem and still are, but when I see shoe scuff marks from twisting one's foot on the green, that is another set of problems. I believe these golfers were not thinking about how they should walk around the golf hole or cup. The marks that they left were very disturbing, and it showed me that they were not considerate of fellow players behind them.

If this happens while playing on tour, any player can raise a hand and call for a referee who would then watch the groups in front to see who the culprits are. It is up to every one of us to be considerate of our fellow golfers, especially when it comes to the putting surface. It should be fair for everybody as the rules of golf now allow golfers to tap down pitch marks, loose impediments and spike marks. Fellow players, let's be careful when walking on the greens and take care of them so that Jack and his staff do not have to pull their hair out every week when they mow them.

Let's putt well and look after our beautiful greens. See you on the fairway! ■



In this month's profile of RSGC's golfing champions, we interview 2016 Club Champion Mohamad Gregory Eu. The previous articles in the February and March 2021 issues featured Ichiro Suzuki and Dilsher Singh, respectively.

Slow and Steady Wins the Championship

BY EZANI ABU BAKAR & LEONG KWAN YI



As an official at the 2020 Club Championship

Mohamad Gregory Eu is veritably the youngest Member to have held the esteemed title of RSGC Club Champion. He was 27 years old when he triumphed in the 2016 edition, fulfilling a long-running dream that had been 11 years in the making. By then, the young Greg was a seasoned golfer and had toured with the men's national amateur team before he even turned 20.

So it may seem uncharacteristic that his beginnings in golf were rather reluctant. "My earliest memory of coming to RSGC was when I was 5 or 6, starting the Junior golf programme under Eshak Buah. I didn't really like it initially. My sister, Elle Natasha Eu, was better than me – actually a lot of people were better than me. They used to call me *cangkul* boy because I wasn't able to hit the ball and took big divots," Greg recalled.

The moniker didn't stick for too long. At the behest of his father, Greg started joining junior tournaments at the age of 10, and when he began defeating other players, he realised that golf might be something he enjoyed doing.

"It was never a case of someone, in my family anyway, realising that I was good. A lot of it was self-realisation. A lot of it was hard work. Because my family members are somewhat accomplished in their own rights – individually and as a group – we all own our accomplishments," said the 32-year-old Greg.

The Eu family's long and distinguished history with RSGC is



Greg, Leroy Chiam and Christian Boshoff at the 2016 Club Championship

indeed steeped in accolades. Greg is a fourth generation Member, so his connection with the Club goes back to his great grandfather, the late Eu Eng Hock, who was one of the Club's early Malaysian presidents. His grandfather was the late Leslie Eu, the 1990-1991 Club Captain. His uncles, Alfie Eu and John Eu, are the past F&B Convenor and current Golf Convenor, respectively. Greg himself serves in the Green and Golf Subcommittees currently, and hopes to join the ranks of his family members in serving The Committee one day.

Just as there are RSGC stalwarts in the Eu family, there are also skilled athletes in their midst. Greg's great grandfather loved golf and was the first Malaysian to have qualified for the Olympics 120-yard hurdles in 1932 (although he reportedly did not make the trip to the US to participate). His aunt, Gaby Eu, was both a tennis and golf champion. His uncle, John, was a national golfer and two-time Club Champion, and the one he looked up to as a role model.

Greg participated in his first Junior Club Championship at the age of 14. It turned out to be the first of three consecutive wins. "It wasn't that big of a competition [then], but I was happy to be the Junior Club Champion," he

said. "After that, a Member said to me, 'Stop bullying the kids and play in the men's one.' So even though I was still eligible to play and I could have won it two more times, I stopped playing to give others a chance. I thought as much about growing the game as I did about my personal accolades."

He graduated to the Men's Club Championship when he was 16, playing against older golfers the likes of past Club Champions Mohd Chudi Ghazali and Dilsher Singh. It was daunting for the teenage Greg, but even more frustrating as he had high expectations for himself.

"I put a lot of pressure on myself [to do well], which can sometimes be a heavy burden to carry because I don't share my feelings often. When I was younger, I didn't know the right way to channel my anger or energy properly. I think that's the biggest thing that has changed in my game," he shared.

He certainly paid his dues for an imminent victory. In 2016, Greg finally made the honour board, becoming the second Eu to win the prestigious title, 30 years after John's first. It was a check off his bucket list and his biggest achievement yet, as he had always wanted to follow in the footsteps of his uncle.

"No one was more excited than my



Receiving the 2016 Club Champion trophy from Past Captain Wong Lee Ming

father and grandfather. Everyone owns their accolades in my family. I got a pat on the back and that was it. There was never any pressure from them, but it was good to get it off my back," he said. "Getting my name on the board, you know, it's there forever – as long as our Club stands anyway. But that's long enough for me."

"I feel a lot of honour and joy knowing that I have walked the same courses and birdied the same holes my great grandfather, grandfather, father, uncles and aunts have. RSGC will always have a special place in my heart and will always be more than a golf club to me," he added.

His brief venture into the amateur golf circuit may have laid the foundation for his success. After completing high school, he joined the men's national amateur team under the Malaysian Golf Association for two years, playing off handicap +2. The late RSGC Member and Malaysian pro golfer, Arie Irawan, was his teammate and good friend. The experience gave him a taste of life as a pro, but it was not without its challenges. He was often on the road and living out of a suitcase, the longest being one and a half months at a time.

"I guess, like Ichiro [Suzuki], I felt that sense of acceptance and



Hitting a textbook shot

affirmation that I was part of a team, something larger than myself, and that I was considered one of the best amateur golfers in the country. That was when I thought I could do something more with golf. It was a really good two years of my life," he said. "What I learned most was how to channel my energy the right way. I've always been competitive by nature, I just may not come off that way because I'm very friendly to everyone."

Greg then had a choice of staying on the path and turning professional or furthering his studies. His supportive family left the decision entirely up to him. "I've always had guidance, but I made a lot of decisions on my own from a very young age. I think that is partly because a sport like golf matures you very quickly. It forces you to make decisions all the time – every shot basically. So if you apply that to your life, it's the same thing," he explained.

Greg made earnest attempts to apply to Division 1 golf colleges in the US, such as UCLA and the University of Florida (John's alma mater). But when

they proved unfruitful, he decided to place golf on the back burner, and in 2008, headed off to the Edith Cowan University in Perth, Australia, to study physiotherapy. After graduating, he switched lanes yet again and pursued a career in the media industry.

"Since golf isn't my livelihood, it's just a game for me now. The only real goals I have left in this game is to win the Club Championship 10 more times, which would put me at 11. It's a long-term goal. I'll just take it one year at a time," he laughed.

The self-effacing golfer admitted that he has never been the best of players, but that his edge on the course is his grittiness, particularly in getting himself out of trouble and scrambling for a par.

To complement his scrambling skills, having the right clubs in his bag is essential. He has currently returned to blades (his first golf set was the demanding Wilson Staff Blades inherited from John), using Titleist Muscle Backs and 4 or 5 iron Cavity Backs for a little help. He also uses an Evnroll putter he bought from Arie,

which carries a huge sentimental value, as well as a 2 iron that is ideal for when he is "in the trees", which is fairly often.

Still, a certain level of discipline is required when it comes to tournament and Club Championship preparation, and Greg was happy to share the advice that his uncle John gave him when he was younger.

"The driving range is for repetition – getting your reps in, creating muscle memory and that's about it. You're not going to forget how to swing a golf club. But you might get nervous on the golf course when you're in an unfamiliar situation," he said. "You can hit a thousand perfect shots at the driving range, but then you hit your first shot on the golf course and it is nothing like the thousand balls you've just hit. So my approach is to just play more [on the course]."

Simply put, familiarity on the course is the key to success. One way Greg practises is to play two balls when the course is empty. He hits two shots, picks the worse shot, tries to get it up and down, and then tries to score a par or, at worst, a bogey.

"In the last year, I have really matured as a person as well as in my game. I've been hitting some purple patches and had quite a number of rounds I've shot under par, surprisingly," he remarked of his recent progress.

With his enduring passion and appreciation for the game, we are sure that Greg will continue to outdo himself and reach new heights in his game.

"Apart from the friendships, there's no better feeling for me than putting, reading the line, feeling what kind of pace a shot requires, then executing and watching the perfect putt go in. It brings me immediate satisfaction," he said introspectively. "So if you enjoy golf, you'll play better. If you don't, figure out why and do something about it." ■



ONOFF's Labospec FF-247III Irons Created for Distance and Ease of Use

FF-247III, the pursuit of maximum distance and forgiveness.

ONOFF Labospec FF-247III is designed to provide the ultimate in distance performance and ease of use regardless of player level, player style and power. It is packed with technologies and features to make ONOFF's concept of (F)LY (F)AR a reality for all golfers.

DIRECT REPULSION FACE

The FF-247III features ONOFF's new and original iron face structure, designed to focus on distance performance. The

face features two levels of thickness, which help optimise the flex and repulsion of the lower section of the face. The two sections are separated by a Power Trench and combined with an L-CUP face structure. The sweet spot is positioned where players actually hit the face with the ball, creating the largest repulsion point in ONOFF history. This also expands the sweet spot so that even mishits, such as topped shots, lose minimal distance and direction.

Three grooves – Full Core Grooves – are placed at the toe and heel, which help widen the sweet spot on the left and right.

GRAVITY CONTROL = OPTIMAL CENTRE OF GRAVITY DESIGN

A heavy 110g tungsten weight covers the entire sole, creating a low and deep centre of gravity. This makes it easy to launch the ball in the air and reduces distance lost on mishits by expanding the sweet spot. High trajectory equals easy carry and easy distance.

CONFIDENCE INSPIRING

ONOFF was able to achieve a high-performance iron that has both functionality and feel by using an orthodox head shape that is easy to address. This creates a sense of comfort and confidence, which allows golfers to swing naturally and in a relaxed manner. With the FF-247III, golfers can achieve easy, forgiving

distance with a satisfying impact sound and feel.

SPORTY YET PREMIUM DESIGN

The FF-247III features a stylish head finished in a durable gunmetal ion plating finish. The iron has a handsomely coordinated design with visually matching shaft and grip. The FF-247III is for golfers who desire both form and function.

MADE POSSIBLE WITH DAIWA CARBON TECHNOLOGY

The standard shaft is an original mid-kick shaft, designed and produced in-house by ONOFF with DAIWA CARBON TECHNOLOGY to match strong-lofted irons. With careful focus on the butt and mid-section, ONOFF was able to produce a shaft that allows players to feel the shaft load and accelerate towards impact. By creating a smooth rigidity distribution curve, the shaft is able to increase swing speed while at the same time increase stability, which means less twisting of the head on mishits that results in straighter and longer shots. Better impact equals more distance.

The ONOFF Labospec FF-247III Irons are exclusively available in MST Golf stores at a suggested retail price of RM7,890 (six pieces of irons – 6-9PA). MSTGolf is the exclusive distributor of ONOFF. ■



The Power of Golf – Testing for Strength

BY MARK PAJICH AND PETER LOUIE @ PINNACLE FITNESS

This is the third installment of our “The Power of Golf” series. In the February 2021 issue of *The Circular*, we showed Members how to perform four power tests that seek out any power leaks in your game. For those with power leaks, the next step is to find out if any power leak is caused by weakness. So in this issue, we test for strength.

WHY IS STRENGTH IMPORTANT?

Strength is imperative for a number of reasons. Firstly, strength is needed to generate power. Having no strength is equal to having no power. Secondly, the body needs to be able to withstand the forces generated by the golf swing. You also need good strength to effectively play through different types of terrain. The stronger you are, the less likely you are to come off the golf course with aches and pains or an injury.

The Titleist Performance Institute (TPI) recommends the following three strength tests:

- The Single-Arm Press Test
- The Single-Arm Pull Test
- The Split Squat Test

These three tests measure your push strength, pull strength and your ability to generate ground force up through the body.

The Single-Arm Press Test, also known as the Standing Decline Cable Chest Press, tests your push strength.

Stand with your feet together and your non-dominant arm away from your body, and push with your dominant hand. Your goal is to be able to complete eight reps with proper technique at 25% of your body weight, ie if you weigh 80kg, then you need to be able to complete eight reps with 20kg resistance. Do the same with your non-dominant arm.

The Single-Arm Pull Test, also known as the Standing One-Arm Cable Row, tests your pull strength. Like the press test, stand with your feet together and your non-dominant arm away from your body, and pull the cable towards your rib cage. Your goal is to be able to complete eight reps with proper technique at 30% of your body weight. A person who weighs 80kg would need to complete eight reps with 24kg resistance. Do the same with your non-dominant arm.

The Split Squat Test is an advanced test. As shown in the photo, stand with your feet apart with your dominant leg in front and your arms by your side. Squat almost to the ground without touching the ground or leaning forward. Return to the starting position. If you can complete eight reps with weights that are 25% of your body weight in each hand, you have passed the test.

We do not recommend that you attempt any of these tests if you have an existing injury or limitation.

HOW DID YOU DO?

If you managed to achieve excellent results in each test, then you are on par with the average professional golfer. If you struggled, then you are in the majority. In fact, more than 90% of amateur golfers fail one or more of these strength tests. If you found these tests challenging, this might be a good time for you to hit the gym. ■

TPI Certified Instructors at Pinnacle Fitness

Mark Pajich is the Director of Pinnacle Fitness and has more than 20 years' experience in the fitness industry. Mark is a TPI Certified Level 2 Fitness Coach and TPI Certified Level 2 Power Coach. Please contact Mark at 012-300 2204 or mark@pinnacle.net.my.

Peter Louie is the Head Trainer of Pinnacle Fitness with more than six years' experience. Peter is a TPI Certified Level 1 Coach. Please contact Peter at 016-244 9963 or peter@pinnacle.net.my.

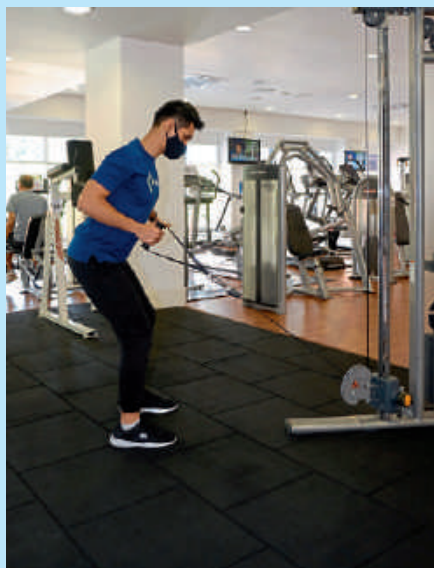
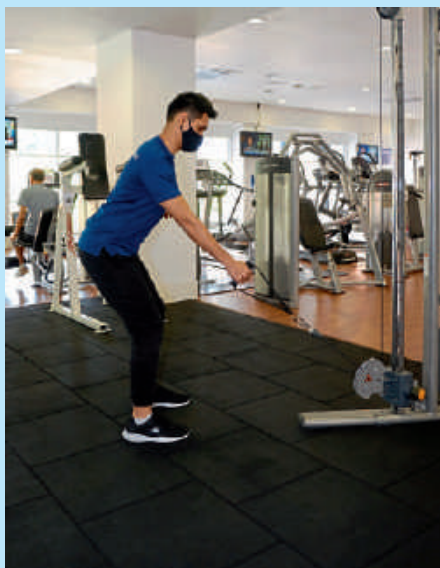
WHO IS TPI?

TPI, or Titleist Performance Institute, is the world's leading educational organisation dedicated to the study of how the human body functions in relation to the golf swing. For more information on TPI, check out www.mytpi.com.

Single Arm Press



Single Arm Pull



Split Squat



The Covid Vaccine: Separating Medical Fact from Social Media Fiction

BY CHAD MERCHANT

THE COVID-19 VACCINE HAS COME TO MALAYSIA, AND WITH IT, THE INEVITABLE SURGE OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA NONSENSE. IF YOU'RE FEELING CONCERNED OR UNEASY ABOUT GETTING IMMUNISED, THIS ARTICLE IS FOR YOU.

If it weren't so dangerous, it would be laughable. Shortly after Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin received his Covid-19 vaccine, filmed and broadcast in a bid to raise awareness and increase confidence, the rumours started flying.

"They switched the needles! Look, you can see that at first, it's one needle, but in the next shot, it's *changed* – they obviously changed the needle to give him *something*, but it's not the Covid vaccine they're trying to give us!"

Within hours, a dozen or more versions of this nefarious-sounding story were rocketing around on social media and chat groups. This is how gossip and conspiracy theories work in the 21st century. What used to take days or weeks to build to a fever pitch now takes minutes.

Were two different needles used? Yes, but there was a perfectly sound and logical explanation. According to the Ministry of Health, "The different colour needle means different bore

size. The needle used to aspirate from the vial is bigger in size (blue) to ensure smooth extraction. Smaller bore size needles (red or orange) are for inoculation to ensure less pain and bruising," the ministry explained. "In addition, different needles are required to prevent cross-contamination between patients. Importantly, the vaccine drawn from the vial and given to the patient is unchanged."

Conspiracy theories are nothing new, but social media has amplified the messaging and greatly expanded the reach and allowed these wild comments to spread unchecked at astounding speed – virally, if you will.

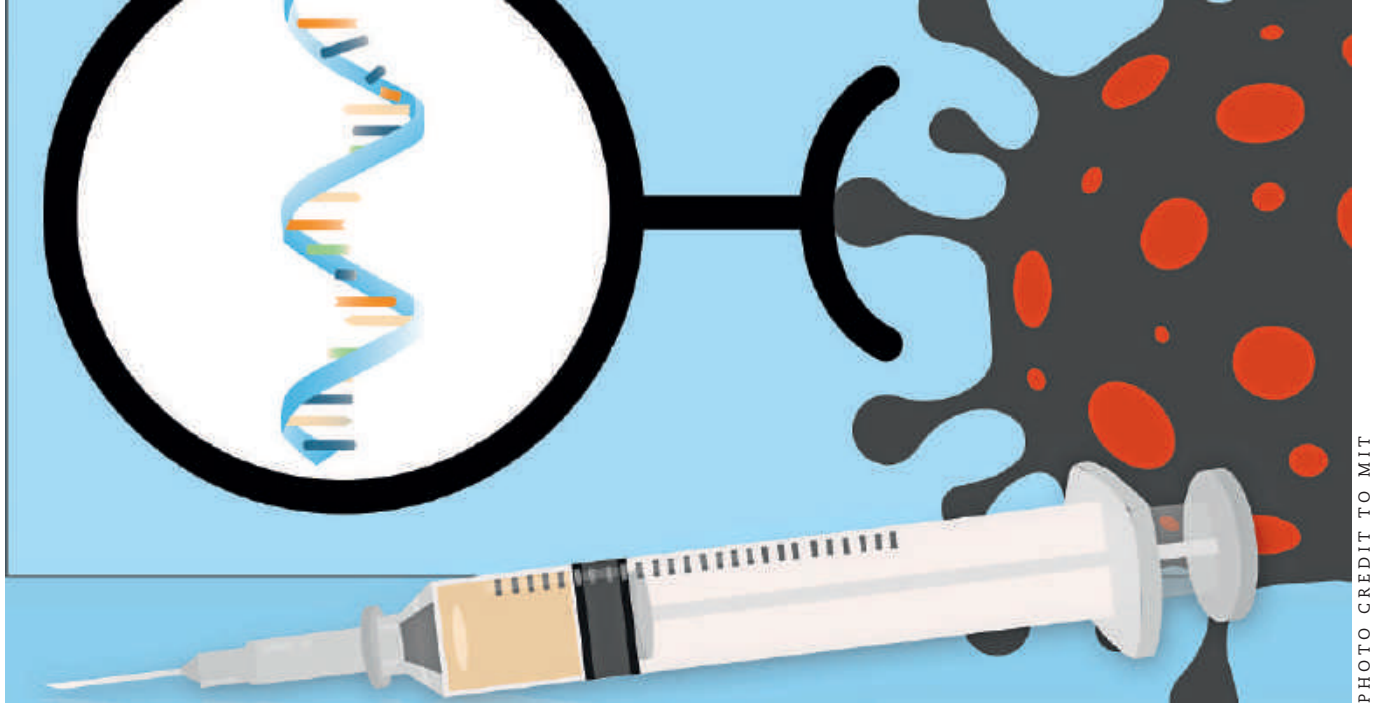
But even today, just as it has always been, the best antidote for nonsensical conspiracy theories is education. Facts, for anyone willing to learn them, lead to genuine understanding, which will always win out over the "I heard from someone on Facebook whose cousin told him that she had read..." approach.

HOW DO VACCINES WORK?

A typical vaccine works by training your body's immune system to recognise and combat specific pathogens, either viruses or bacteria. To do this, certain molecules (called antigens) from the pathogen must be introduced into the body to trigger an immune response. Typically, a weakened or otherwise inactive strain of the pathogen is used to synthesise



PHOTO CREDIT TO PIXABAY



The well-known spiky shape of the coronavirus has aided scientists in defeating it

the vaccine. The body's immune system attacks the pathogen upon its introduction, but since it's a weak strain, symptoms are mild. Your body's immune system 'learns' how to fight the pathogen, so if and when a stronger strain attacks, your immune system then has the tools and the know-how it needs to aggressively battle the invading pathogen before it can spread in your body. This is the basis of immunity, both in the natural sense and in the introduced, or vaccinated, sense. In fact, this is exactly how the two Covid vaccines from China work. They use the time-tested inactivated virus method, and like the others, are safe and effective.

Typically, successfully researching, developing, and introducing a vaccine can take several years, often approaching a decade. A *fast* schedule would see that vaccine approved for introduction to the market within, say, four or five years. So how did the Covid-19 vaccine get rolled out in a year? Part of it is just down to the urgency catalysed by a global pandemic that was upending all aspects of human life. Necessity is, after all, the mother of invention, so it stands to reason that urgent necessity might be the mother of rapid invention. But another reason is the breakthrough use of something called messenger RNA used in some versions of the Covid-19 vaccine, including Pfizer's,

and here's where the science kicks in. If you took biology in school, you may recall something about ribonucleic acid. That's RNA, which works in concert with its much more famous sibling, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).

Basically put, DNA and RNA are biological 'coders' which write, decode, and regulate the expression of genes and control cellular protein synthesis. (That last protein synthesis part is really important for the whole vaccine thing, so remember it.) These nucleic acids are complex macromolecules that, along with three others – lipids, proteins, and carbohydrates – form the fundamental building blocks of life.

Like any good team, the two nucleic acid macromolecules work smoothly together, but have very different roles. DNA is double-stranded, has a long chain of building blocks (called nucleotides), and can replicate on its own. On that long, intertwined double strand, DNA carries all the instructions necessary for a living organism to survive, develop, and reproduce, so it's pretty important.

RNA, however, is single-stranded, considerably shorter, and cannot self-replicate. The role of RNA is complex and broad in scope, but in short, it functions as a translator, converting the 'codes' stored in DNA into proteins. There's much more to it, but for the purpose of vaccines, that's the key role of RNA.

For a good translation, you need a good messenger. If you're using Google Translate, the messenger is pretty basic: it's the keyboard you use to input the word or phrase you want translated. RNA doesn't have a keyboard, but it does have a good messenger that's essential to RNA's functionality. Appropriately called messenger RNA, or mRNA, this single-stranded molecule carries information that is read by a specific structure found inside every living cell, the ribosome. Remember, the key role of RNA is to convert information in DNA into proteins – the process is called transcription.

The synthesis of that protein is the function that's leveraged in the mRNA Covid-19 vaccine, and it's fundamentally different to how the aforementioned traditional vaccines work. Covid-19 mRNA vaccines give instructions for our cells to make a harmless piece of what is called the 'spike protein.' The spike protein is found on the surface of the virus that causes Covid-19.

Once the mRNA instructions have been delivered, the cells use them to make the protein piece. After this piece is made, the cell breaks down the instructions and gets rid of them.

Another type of vaccine uses a viral vector approach, which is similar to the mRNA method, but uses a 'vector virus' – that is to say, not SARS-CoV-2, but

CHART CREDIT TO SCMP

DEVELOPER	TYPE	DOSES
Pfizer-BioNTech US, Germany	mRNA	● ● 2 doses 3 weeks apart
Moderna US	mRNA	● ● 2 doses 4 weeks apart
Oxford-AstraZeneca UK, Sweden	Viral vector	● ● 2 doses 4 weeks apart, or up to 12 weeks in UK
Sinopharm China	Inactivated virus	● ● 2 doses 3 to 4 weeks apart
Sinovac China	Inactivated virus	● ● 2 doses 3 weeks apart
Gamaleya Russia	Viral vector	● ● 2 doses 2 weeks apart
Johnson & Johnson US	Viral vector	● 1 dose —

Comparing vaccines

a different, harmless virus – to enter your cells, where the ribosome will produce that piece of spike protein, similar to what happens with the mRNA vaccine, and this prompts the body's immune response.

Finally, as noted, two of the vaccines use an inactivated strain of the virus to trigger the body's own immune response. Worth noting is that most of the Covid vaccines, regardless of which type they are, require two jabs given a few weeks apart for maximum efficacy.

Though the Covid-19 vaccines do use different means, the ends are the same: All of these vaccines ultimately work by triggering the body's natural immune system to produce the antibodies required to effectively fight the virus. As a result, you gain immunity without ever having to risk the potentially serious consequences of getting sick with Covid-19.

BUT ARE THEY SAFE?

Yes. All vaccines being produced to fight Covid-19 are put through tests, peer-reviewed studies, and clinical trials before gaining approval. Even the mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna, which are new to the market, have been known and studied for many, many years. What changed? Simply put: Modern advancements. These vaccines can now be made in laboratories using available materials and technology. Unlike in decades past, today, the whole process can be standardised and dramatically

scaled up – something that comes in handy when you're trying to immunise billions of people.

Another helpful fact is that several countries were working hard using multiple techniques to create this vaccine. Currently, six have been at least preliminarily approved and authorised by various countries, with another from Johnson & Johnson, which requires just one dose, receiving FDA approval in the US on 27 February 2021. Another nine vaccines are in the phase 3 clinical trial stage as of this writing, so there could be as many as 16 different Covid-19 vaccines in the coming weeks and months.

COMPARED TO OTHER VACCINES, ARE THE RESULTS OF THESE mRNA VACCINES ANY DIFFERENT?

Any vaccine has the twin goals of preventing infection and stopping transmission. Some achieve only one of those goals, some achieve parts of each goal. Some achieve both goals.

So far, all the studies and reports for the Covid-19 vaccines have been encouraging. It's still early, though, and there are always caveats to consider, but some of the latest research, a study from Israel, indicates that the Pfizer vaccine (technically, the "Pfizer-BioNTech SE Covid-19 vaccine") is remarkably effective at both preventing Covid-19 and at halting the spread of the virus.

That is basically the 'holy grail' for any vaccine, according to a report published

by Bloomberg. When this happens in a population at a 100% level, it's called 'sterilising immunity' and simply means that no one can be infected and sickened by the virus. That is a *really* lofty goal, though, so the runner-up prize is the prevention of sickness by stopping the pathogen from causing the disease. That's what most vaccines do, and that's certainly what the Covid-19 vaccines do, including Pfizer's.

But now, there's a strengthening claim that says that this vaccine also prevents the *transmission* of the virus by close to 90%. That's very encouraging, but as the Bloomberg piece notes, comes with a lot of caveats, and it's also worth pointing out that the Israeli study hasn't yet been fully published. It could ultimately all turn out to be a very good thing, but it's too soon to say.

That said, though, a similar study to Israel's has been conducted in the UK with very similar curbs on transmission (86% vs 89.4% in the Israeli study). The body of evidence is growing, and it's growing more and more positive.

In other words, as one report makes clear, "Even as we wait for more definitive studies on the vaccines' effects on transmission, more and more scientists think we do have enough information to feel pretty good about the vaccines' capacity to give us back a semblance of normalcy as we approach a year of life in a pandemic."

But none of that will happen if too many people refuse to take the vaccine.



During the last global pandemic in 1918, fear of vaccines was just as present as it is today

HOW DO I DEAL WITH MY OWN SECOND THOUGHTS? OR WORSE, WITH CONSPIRACY-LOVING FRIENDS OR FAMILY?

The underlying psychology that drives our fascination with and belief in conspiracy theories is in itself fairly interesting, but not really the point. Suffice it to say that there is no one factor nor any set of factors – not gender, not intelligence, not age, not education, not socioeconomic status – that can create a perfect shield against believing falsehoods and conspiracies. It affects everyone, though to highly variable degrees. And it's nothing new.

The real problem these days is social media. According to a report by Financial Times, "The extent of the problem on social is hard to overstate."

They referenced a 2018 study of 126,000 news stories, sampled between 2006 and 2017, and found that by every metric, the sheer volume and spread of rumours, hoaxes, and lies utterly eclipsed truth.

The report also referenced another telling study, which showed that misinformation thrived in this realm because users tended to congregate in communities of interest or of similar viewpoints, "which causes reinforcement and fosters confirmation bias, segregation, and polarisation." We've all seen this: The online echo chamber.

Dealing with people who strongly subscribe to outlandish (5G towers caused Covid-19!) or even relatively mainstream conspiracy theories

(vaccines lead to autism!) is a delicate balancing act. Many are actually themselves victims of their own beliefs. In one example, a man named Brian Hitchens and his wife Erin, living in the US state of Florida, believed in a number of Covid hoax claims and did not take any precautions because of these beliefs. Erin contracted the virus, and ultimately died from its complications at age 46. Since then, Brian has publicly campaigned and posted on Facebook, urging others not to make the same mistake.

Recognising that these 'believers' are also victims, you want to be empathetic and understanding, as much as you can. Nobody likes being mocked or ridiculed, least of all for something they really believe in, and if you're dismissing or insulting them, you can see how that would be counterproductive if you're trying to get them to embrace facts and reality.

So, rather than being openly adversarial, asking questions in a sincere and empathetic manner can stimulate their own critical thinking skills and ultimately be effective. This also gives them a face-saving way to change their mind or adjust their beliefs under their own agency. So rather than admonishing someone for their hesitancy to get the vaccine, simply ask them a question like, "So given what you know, what information would you need in order to accept a Covid vaccine?"

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT IN MALAYSIA?

Malaysia has set a target to immunise at least 80% of the country's population. Given a broad public acceptance of the vaccination here, something that is sadly lacking in many other countries, this target is realistically attainable, though by no means a sure thing.

Malaysia will receive 66.7 million doses of the vaccine, by the following breakdown (each vaccine will presumably be authorised for use in



Frontliners are among the first group to receive the vaccine in Malaysia

PHOTO CREDIT TO BERNAMA

PHOTO CREDIT TO YAHOO NEWS



Many things had to go right for scientists to bring the Covid vaccine to the world so quickly

Malaysia by the time the government makes it available):

- 32 million doses from Pfizer-BioNTech (US/Germany)
- 12.8 million doses from AstraZeneca (UK/Sweden)
- 12 million doses from Sinovac Biotech (China)
- 6.4 million doses from Gameleya Research Institute (Russia)
- 3.5 million doses from Sinopharm (China)

The government is also in early talks with Johnson & Johnson to possibly procure some of their recently approved one-shot vaccine. (All the others require two shots.) However, reports suggest that any supply of this vaccine would be relatively small – perhaps just 2 million doses – and would not arrive until late in the year.

If you look at the “Would you get a Covid-19 vaccine?” graph on the right, you can see where Malaysia falls with regard to its overall scepticism about the Covid-19 vaccine. Essentially, the less red on the graph, the more likely a country is to achieve sufficient vaccination levels for herd immunity in its population. Surveys in Malaysia suggested about 15% of respondents did not think they would accept the vaccine. That’s better than most other countries, and something else needs to be considered, as well.

The survey dates ran from November 2020 to January 2021. For

most people, a vaccine during those weeks was hypothetical. Now it’s here. Even by the beginning of February, the global number of vaccine jabs had surpassed the aggregate total number of infections since the pandemic began. Now, nearly 400 million doses have been safely administered worldwide – and almost 300,000 in Malaysia – and that number is growing significantly every day.

With regard to the Covid-19 vaccination drive in Malaysia, it’s

accurate to say that the country is starting in a very enviable position. The government has already contractually secured 66.7 million doses, more than enough to inoculate everyone over 18 in the country with the necessary two doses. They are, quite commendably, providing the vaccine free of charge to *everyone*, citizen and non-citizen alike with no regard to a person’s legal residence status here, which will absolutely increase the rate of acceptance. And with only 15% reporting over a month ago they’d say ‘no’ to the vaccine – 60% said ‘yes’ and 25% ticked ‘unsure’ – that’s a pretty strong start point.

WILL YOU BE ABLE TO CHOOSE YOUR VACCINE?

This is unlikely to be an option, particularly in the early stages, and experts suggest there is little benefit to the population as a whole for people to individually select a specific brand, as they all work. Yes, some brands may

Global range of vaccine scepticism

Would you get a Covid-19 vaccine shot if and when it becomes available?

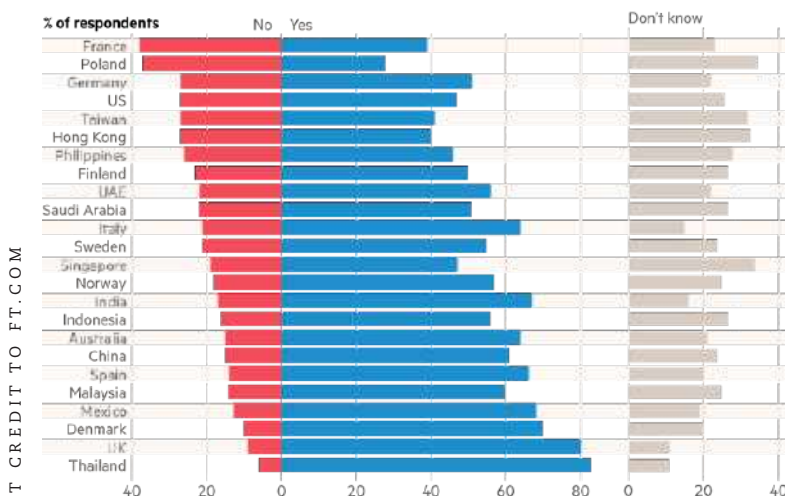


CHART CREDIT TO FT.COM

Source: YouGov, Nov 17-Jan 10 © FT

Malaysia is starting its vaccine drive in a fairly enviable position

Target groups for the 3 phases of vaccination and the estimated number of individuals to be vaccinated

PHASE 1 (February – April 2021)

Priority group 1

Frontliners comprising of public and private healthcare personnel

500,000 people

Priority group 2

Frontliners consisting of essential services*, defence and security personnel

* Will be updated from time to time by JKJAV

PHASE 2 (April – August 2021)

Priority group 1

Remainder of healthcare workers as well as those in essential services and defence and security personnel

9.4 million people

Priority group 2

Senior citizens (those aged 60 and over), high-risk group with chronic diseases such as heart disease, obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure and people with disabilities (OKU)*

* The information will be reviewed periodically

Pandemic control measures

PHASE 3 (May 2021 – February 2022)

Priority group

Adult population aged 18 years and above (citizens & non-citizens)

Priority will be given to those in the red zones; followed by those in yellow zones and finally those in green zones

Target
13.7 million people/more

Pandemic control measures

Source: MOH

Malaysia's vaccine programme is divided into three phases

have shown higher efficacy rates in clinical trials, but those numbers don't always translate precisely to the real world; in fact, one of the issues with China's Sinovac vaccine has been the lack of consistency in the reported numbers during trials. The AstraZeneca vaccine has also shown wide-ranging fluctuation in efficacy rates. However, each of these vaccines has met safety and efficacy standards and should be considered a worthy weapon in the fight against the pandemic.

Also, the goal is not to ensure person A or person B is individually immunised, but rather to get enough of the entire population to receive their shots to allow herd immunity in the broader community. Also, beyond providing personal immunity, these vaccines also inhibit the transmission of the virus. That's what will spell the end of Covid-19.

Some have suggested that as months go by and a steady and comprehensive supply of vaccines is available, people may be able to

find out which brand they're slated to receive, and possibly even request a different location which may offer a different brand. This is far from guaranteed, however, so it's important to schedule your jab and to accept the vaccine you are given.

So if you're on the fence about whether or not to get the vaccine, get off social media and get real information from experts and authorities. The CDC, WHO, and Malaysia's Ministry of Health are all good places to start for factual, science-based information about Covid-19 and its vaccines. (Refer to the first three links under 'Sources'.)

These days, with the whole of the internet at our fingertips, it's all too easy to get a lot of misinformation, but it's equally easy to get the facts, and to double- and triple-check them against other sources, too. The more we learn, the more empowered we will be, and we can then make well-informed decisions based on facts... not speculation and misinformation. ■

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If You Care About Wild Animals, or Your Own Health, Please Don't Touch or Feed Them

BY JUDITH LEE VON NOSTITZ



DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS AT RSGC

Here at RSGC during the Movement Control Orders (MCOs), there have been many Members complaining about the aggressive behaviour of wild animals that share the grounds with us. There are very clear reasons why this has become a serious health and safety issue – and the fault does not lie with the animals but with the manner in which we, humans, interact with them. I hope this article will shine some light on this issue and convince Members to change THEIR habits in order to restore natural order... please.

Many of us have grown up with unrealistic depictions of wild animals in stories and films, which pose a great risk to animals' health and well-being. We must not confuse wild animals with pets. Especially during these MCOs, RSGC Members have thought that it is harmless – even a beneficial entertainment – to feed and touch wild animals on the grounds. Whether it is picking up a turtle, chasing a monitor lizard, feeding the monkeys, interloping packs of dogs or tossing breadcrumbs to the fish in the ponds, these Members do not realise the harmful repercussions of these acts. Animals can look cute and they might seem hungry, but scientists say that touching or feeding wildlife is generally a bad idea, no matter what the species or where you are because doing so can have dangerous consequences for both animals and humans. If we want to act responsibly, we must learn

to not feed or touch wild animals – whether in our own backyards, in a park or at RSGC.

There are more and more frequent complaints from Members about monkeys chasing them and displaying frighteningly fierce and threatening behaviour. Yet one sees that some Members and staff have made it a habit to interact and feed them regularly. Generally, wild animals avoid human contact but feeding them can make potentially dangerous animals lose their natural and healthy fear of people. Hand-fed wild animals associate humans with food, and once animals learn they can panhandle for food, they may approach people who are fearful or unfriendly and cause safety risks. This creates altercations with humans, leading to incidents that make injuries such as bites and scratches more likely. The animal may even have to be put down by wildlife managers. Irregular feeding can lead to aggressive behaviour towards humans as well as towards other animals. The unnatural conditions can also increase the spread of diseases, some of which may be transmitted to humans. Canine distemper, parvovirus, leptospirosis, *Baylisascaris*, avian pox, rabies, bubonic plague or hantavirus can all be transmitted to humans. Recently, the World Health Organization announced that they found no basis to believe that the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) was man-made and “escaped” from a Wuhan laboratory. Rather, they are investigating the

markets in the area that sold wild animals. The coronavirus pandemic is a cautionary event that should make us think more than twice before approaching any wild animal.

In general, human food is not healthy for wild animals in a number of ways and they do not need food from humans to survive. Local wildlife have specialised diets, and they can become malnourished or die if fed the wrong foods. Many human foods aren't nutritious enough for animals and may cause serious health problems (this includes us!). Processed human foods containing little protein are empty calories that fill animals up but provide minimal nutrition. Just as in humans, these foods become addictive because they are often high in fructose and sucrose. This dependency can lead animals to stealing human food and developing aggressive behaviours to obtain them. Examples of this are the frequent complaints from Members about monkeys chasing them and



Crested serpent eagle living up to its name



Long-tailed macaque with a gifted sandwich



Tricoloured squirrel nibbling on oil palm fruitlets

displaying fierce and threatening behaviour – yet one sees Members and staff insisting on feeding them leftover food like sandwiches, snacks and bananas. It is important to consider the cause and effect of these behaviours.

Katharine Milton, who wrote *The Foraging Strategy of Howler Monkeys: A Study in Primate Economics* and has studied the diets of primates for decades, says, “Actually, the monkey-banana connection is a total fabrication. The edible banana is a cultivated domesticated plant and fruit. In their natural habitat, wild monkeys never encounter bananas at all unless they are around human habitation where bananas have been planted.” Compared to the food they would eat in the wild – fruits along with leaves, flowers, nuts and insects – bananas are much more energy dense with lots of calories. A zoo in England even decided to stop feeding its monkeys bananas because they are too sugary and therefore bad for their teeth and can lead to diabetes and similar conditions. The wrong foods given for even just a short period of time may cause developmental problems. Pregnant females who are fed human food during their pregnancy will not give birth to healthy infants. The babies will be malnourished or never develop to term and die before birth. Thanks to our Senior Horticulturist, Raminder Kaur, and her staff, our monkeys at RSGC have a wide and healthy choice of fruits, leaves, flowers, nuts and insects to feast year round. On top of the importance of a healthy diet, wild animals need to forage for good physical and mental health. If they know that food is available in a particular location, they will not leave that area and as a result will not get the exercise

they need. Therefore, it is best that we leave them to forage for their own specialised natural and healthy diet.

Regarding fish in the wild, specifically, fish feeding should be avoided as it is harmful to them. Hand-fed fish are more vulnerable to predators. A healthy marine community relies on competition for habitat and food. Different species feed at different times of the day. Introducing an unnatural meal disturbs these competitive relationships and can lead to feeding frenzies during which fish can be injured. Conditioning fish to associate humans with food is not healthy. Fish need important amino acids in their diets, which they can only receive from their natural diet – not bread or any other human food. A fish’s natural diet is quite complicated and may be seasonal, daily or spatio-temporal (decision-making in a group such as a school of fish). When fish start to anticipate meal times with humans, it interferes with their natural feeding cycles. So, please do not feed fish in the wild – they don’t need it. Thinking you are doing them a favour or feeding them for your own entertainment is a harmful practice.

Some experts say it is OK to feed birds if you’d like, but only from a birdfeeder – never by hand. Nevertheless, this is a tricky issue, especially since food put out for birds can also attract many other creatures. “Just like any other kind of food station, birdfeeders can be culprits in the spreading of diseases,” says Kate Plummer, a research ecologist at the British Trust for Ornithology. Feeding interferes with and upsets the balance of the food chain which, for birds, is often centred on eating wild fruits,

seeds, small animals and insects.

Human touching stresses animals and they can die from stress-related illness. Handling wild animals increases the likelihood that they will get physically damaged. The disturbance factor is usually the main reason why there are times when animals cannot be reunited with their own. For example, birds that have been flushed from a nest by humans or other predators do sometimes abandon their eggs or young, according to bird biologists who do nest surveys. Birds have a weak sense of smell, so generally it is not the scent but the disturbance that is the real problem. When handling baby animals, biologists must work quickly and carefully to minimise disturbance. Even so, the parents do sometimes fail to reunite with their young. The best rule of thumb, if you find a baby bird or any animal infant, is to just leave it alone. In most cases, the parents are nearby and may be waiting for you to leave the area. Touching animals can also result in diseases passing from wildlife to humans or vice versa. However, if you do inadvertently happen to touch a bird’s egg or nest, know that your scent alone won’t cause the parents to flee and abandon offspring. Just leave the area as quickly and quietly as you can, and do what is possible to minimise your disturbance.

We are so very fortunate to be able to enjoy our little “Garden of Eden” during this challenging time. Jack Cheong, our Course Superintendent, and his staff are maintaining and improving it beautifully for us. Let’s be sure to keep a healthy and safe balance between considering RSGC our own recreational oasis and the responsibility of sharing a property with very special wildlife. ■

The Ups and Downs of Uneven Lies

BY NATE STEVENSON, DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTION @ MST ACADEMY AT RSGC

One of the great aspects and challenges in the game of golf is that no two shots are the same, and true mastery of the game requires the ability to constantly adjust to different length shots and different lie conditions on the course. The focus of this instructional is to address the different slopes that you will encounter on the golf course, how to change your setup and ball position, and in which ways the slope will steer the trajectory and curvature of the golf ball.

In a perfect world, all tee shots would land in the middle of the fairway, sitting up nicely on a perfectly flat lie. However, golf is not a game of perfect and flat lies are often hard to come by. Due to the natural or architecturally created contour of the land, as well as to provide necessary drainage, most courses tend to have a great deal of slope to negotiate as you navigate your way around 18 holes. To play your best golf, it is critical that you know how to adjust for these varying slopes and what type of impact they will have on the flight of the golf ball.

In addition to flat lies, there are four other slope conditions that you can find yourself facing on the golf course. Each is unique and requires an adjustment to your setup and ball position, and will directly impact the trajectory and curvature of the golf ball.



BALL BELOW YOUR FEET

- Place the hands higher than normal on the grip to make the club as long as possible.
- Lower your centre of gravity by increasing the flex in both knees.
- Adjust your alignment in anticipation that the golf ball will cut (curve left to right for right-handed players) from this most difficult slope.
- Shift the ball slightly back in the stance toward your trail foot to reduce the severity of the cut.
- Anticipate a slightly shorter carry distance when on a severe slope.



BALL ABOVE THE FEET

- Place the hands lower than normal on the grip to make the club as short as possible.
- Stand as tall as possible while still maintaining bent knees and proper spine tilts.
- Adjust your alignment in anticipation that the golf ball will draw (curve right to left for right-handed players) from this moderately difficult slope.
- Shift the ball slightly forward in the stance toward your lead foot to reduce the severity of the draw.
- Anticipate a slightly shorter carry distance when on a severe slope.

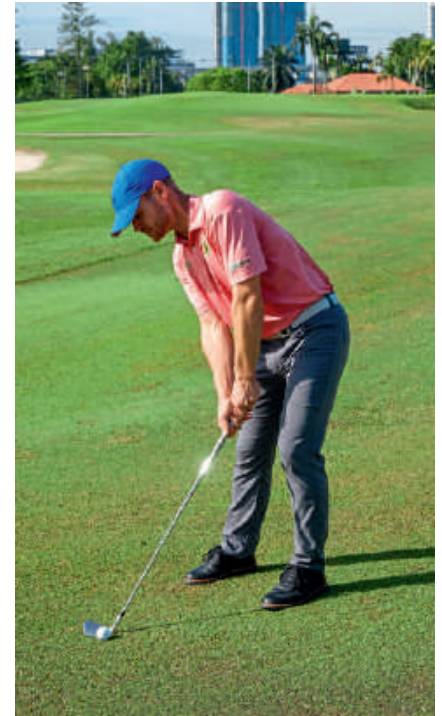


DOWNHILL LIE

- Ensure that your shoulders match the slope.
- Adjust your alignment in anticipation that the golf ball will cut off this most difficult slope.
- Shift the ball in the stance slightly toward the trail foot to reduce the severity of the cut.
- Anticipate a lower trajectory, slightly longer carry distance and less spin due to a reduction in dynamic loft of the club at impact. Severe slopes may require selecting one shorter club.
- Be certain to make a full turn on your takeaway and maintain your posture throughout the swing.

UPHILL LIE

- Ensure that your shoulders match the slope.
- Adjust your alignment in anticipation that the golf ball will draw off this moderately difficult slope.
- Shift the ball in the stance slightly toward the lead foot to reduce the severity of the draw.
- Anticipate a higher trajectory, slightly shorter carry distance and more spin due to an increase in dynamic loft of the club at impact. Severe slopes may require selecting one longer club.
- Be certain to transfer the weight forward before impact and finish strong on your front lead foot.



RSGC is built on relatively flat land, so you may not find slopes as difficult here as the undulating terrain and hills found in other courses in Malaysia. However, the golf course architects have still used slopes to ensure proper drainage, and to create character and challenge for the Championship courses at RSGC. Uneven lies are difficult to practise and prepare for, so acquiring the basic understanding of how these slopes will impact the swing and flight of the golf ball is extremely important in your pursuit of great golf.

All great players utilise practice swings to prepare for the next shot, and the practice swing is one of the best tools on the golf course to get comfortable over the ball and make final adjustments before executing. With the correct understanding, adjustments and pre-shot routine, uneven lies will be far less difficult and nerve-racking. Enjoy the variety of shots that you encounter out there on the golf course, and please stop by the practice tee so that we can talk more about uneven lies or whatever shots cause you the most trouble. As your resident golf professionals, Stewart Ginn and I are here every day to help you overcome all of the difficulties that this game presents. It is a challenging game, but every shot can be conquered with the right approach and mindset.

Keep it in the short grass! ■



Local Luxury

BY CHAD MERCHANT

Easily among local carmaker Proton's biggest, splashiest success stories, the X70 C-segment SUV has been tooling around on Malaysian roads for just over two years now. The latest model was released about a year ago, so I had seen more than a few of them in city traffic. An attractive enough vehicle, to be sure, though nothing especially striking, at least to my eyes. But upon opening the door and taking a seat in the newest and highest-end variant for 2021 – at least until we see a rumoured-but-not-confirmed facelift later in the year – all I could think was, "Wow."

Apart from the upmarket design elements – including a digital instrument cluster, wide centre console touchscreen, and an array of brushed

aluminium accents – and truly beautiful leather seats, there are a lot of other luxury car goodies in this vehicle, though it carries a decidedly non-luxury price tag. Small wonder that drivers in Malaysia have welcomed the collaborative Proton-Geely X70 with open arms.

This newest variant, the Proton X70 1.8L TGD Premium-X, is now a CKD model that's assembled in Malaysia. It boasts a seven-speed, dual-clutch automatic transmission mated to a 1.8-litre turbo engine. That's good enough for both 181 hp *and* affordable road tax. Proton says the SUV will sprint from 0-100 km/h in just 9.5 seconds, a fairly impressive stat. On the road and in traffic, there was ample power for passing, merging, and general acceleration off the line. The

transmission was remarkably smooth and consistent, too, which isn't always the case with a dual-clutch gearbox. This particular transmission is shared with Volvo models, so you'll get all of this high-end carmaker's demands fully met, including an impressive expected lifespan of 350,000 km. The collaboration between Volvo and Geely R&D teams is a winning one for the X70, and it's one of the most responsive, smoothest-shifting transmissions you'll find.

But despite the inclusion of a 'sport mode,' this is a distinctly well-behaved SUV that will never trick you into thinking it's capable of more than it can deliver. Handling and body roll were both good, but not so good that I felt inspired to press my luck in a tight turn. But that's not to say the suspension is



Proton X70 1.8 TGD CKD

mushy or unpleasant. In fact, I'd say that the ride is more comfortable than that of most similarly priced competitors, including the wildly popular Honda CR-V. It's just not a setup that's engineered or tuned for high performance. But that's okay: for the vast majority of people driving this car, the suspension is ideally suited for general city and highway driving with the height a Goldilocks-approved 'just right' – allowing that extra bit of height in traffic but an easy and comfortable entry and exit when parked, too.

In the X70, the user interface relies primarily on the centre-console touchscreen for input. There's a voice command feature, too, but it's still pretty hit or miss, which has been the case even in cars priced four times higher than this one, so it's hard to take off



A modern, comfortable cabin with ventilated Nappa leather front seats



Fully electronic shifting and dual-zone automatic climate controls

too many points for this. The full-grain Nappa leather seats are attractive, comfortable, and offer excellent support. (At the X70's price point, however, I suspect the Nappa leather, a grade usually found on select luxury cars, may be limited solely to the seating area, not the full seat. In fact, most of the front seatbacks are covered by an attractive hard plastic shell. That said, the seats look terrific and are supremely comfy, so no complaints.) Also worth a note, the front seats on the Premium and Premium-X variants are ventilated, something I've previously only seen on a small handful of cars, including an upper-tier Mercedes and some of Kia's higher-end models. In a hot country

like Malaysia, cool, ventilated seats are a wonderful treat.

This feature, however, is somewhat better in theory than in execution on the X70. Though it's great to see this inclusion, activating it is a bit of a chore. Rather than giving the function a dedicated button, Proton has decided that you need to wade into the touchscreen's menu, go to the home screen, swipe to the second page, and choose the bizarre, industrially named 'HVAC' submenu – only there can you access the ventilated seat controls (with three levels of bum-cooling). The worst part? The car doesn't remember, so every time you turn off the engine, the seat cooler defaults back to 'off', forcing

you to repeat the multi-step exercise each time you want to activate the ventilated seats.

Possibly the chief annoyance, however, is at least able to be turned off or moderated, and that's the somewhat overzealous suite of active safety features. Some are quite welcome – the six airbags are as expected, the tyre pressure monitoring system is excellent, and the emergency autonomous braking is a good thing. I'm sure (though I am glad to say I didn't find out). But the X70's various sensors are oftentimes just much too eager. More than once while stopped at a traffic light, the usual swarm of motorbikes would methodically wind their way to the front, and if one was close to the car, a non-stop alarm would drone on incessantly with no easy, obvious way to stop it. Clearly this part was designed

by Geely because any Malaysian would know about this particular motorbiker habit in local traffic. Also, every time you open the door, the car admonishes you with a soothing, "Caution when opening the door" warning. (If this is your very first motor vehicle, I suppose that warning would come in handy.) I'm not sure what the thinking behind adding this was, but fortunately, you can do a deep dive into the menu system and turn that little feature off.

The highest variant, the Premium-X, differs from the Premium in one way only, and that's the inclusion of a panoramic sunroof and a price tag that's RM3,000 higher. The sunroof is a very nice feature, but some drivers don't want one, as they feel it just makes the car hotter. (I'm not sure that's empirically true, but perception counts for a lot.) So if that's the case, simply opt for the Premium variant, and you'll get all the available upgrades, except for the sunroof. It's a smart move by Proton to meet market demand in a meaningful and straightforward way.

So for the most part, there is a lot to like in the X70. It's easy to see why the model has been so enthusiastically embraced by Malaysians, particularly families who benefit from the space it provides. Modern connectivity is also quite good, with effortless Bluetooth pairing for integrated music and phone call ease, an onboard navigation system that's attractive and easy to use, and no fewer than six well-placed USB power points so every passenger can have their own. However, there is no Android Auto or Apple CarPlay connectivity.

A few additional minor quibbles cropped up, but nothing that would be a deal-breaker. I immediately felt the steering wheel was on the small side; even a bit of extra cushioning might have helped on this point. I was also surprised that there was no handy slot for a Touch & Go card, something other local car models feature. The Kenwood sound system is good enough



A 360-degree camera system is standard on Premium models

(nine speakers and a subwoofer), but the door-mounted speaker grilles are decidedly unattractive – though this is admittedly subjective. The touchscreen interface isn't the greatest or most intuitive, and changing the various information displayed in the digital instrument cluster isn't at all straightforward, though this is something drivers will sort out over time. I also felt that there just wasn't enough customisation and fine-tuning available for the driver assist and safety features – most are strictly either on or off. Beyond these little grouches, it's hard to find much serious fault with the car.

Overall, the X70 is a joy to drive and an easy vehicle to recommend for those who want the space, comfort, and stability on the road that a C-segment SUV provides. At almost the exact same size as the Honda CR-V and Mazda CX-5, the X70 is perhaps a little bigger than I'd like for some KL city driving situations, but certainly not overly so. It's a sure-footed performer with a premium feel, boasting not only a very capable engine and transmission combo, but also a long list of high-spec standard equipment that will impress most owners. Coupled with more safety and comfort features than its competitors and an attractive price tag many thousands lower, it's easy to see why this model has been a solid winner for Proton – and is a worthy contender for best-in-class honours. ■



An attractive design, if not an exciting one

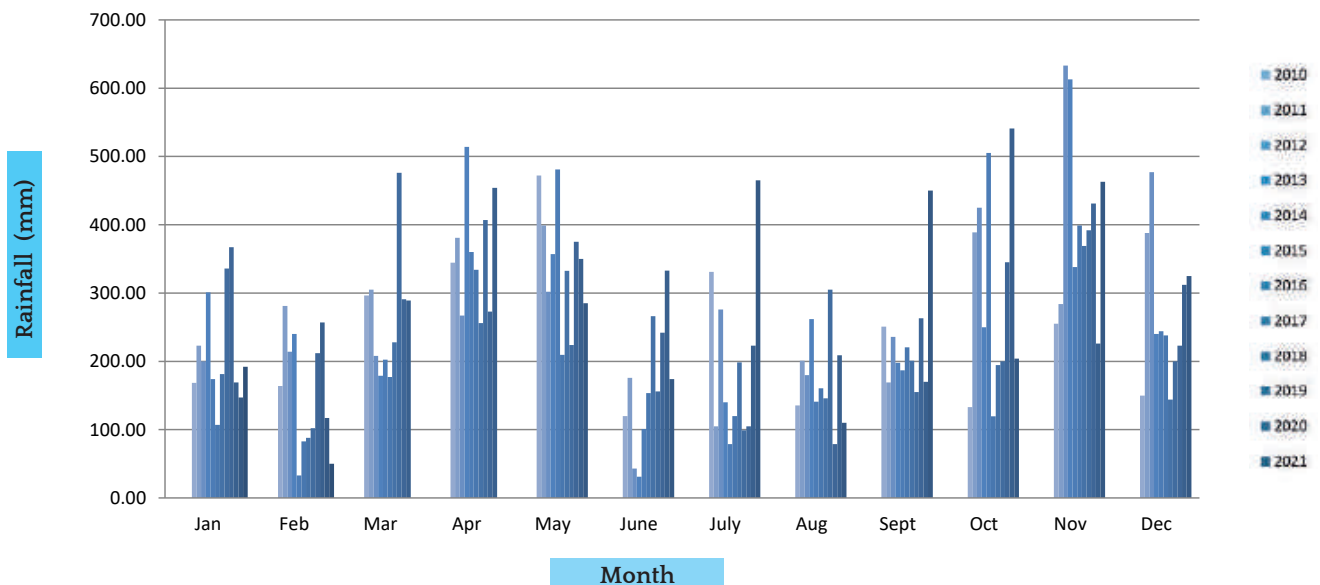
The newest Proton X70 CKD is priced at RM94,800 for the Standard, RM106,800 for the Executive, RM119,800 for the Premium, and RM122,800 for the Premium X. (All variants are 2WD.) Prices include a five-year, unlimited mileage warranty.

Monthly Rainfall Totals (mm), 2010 – 2021

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	168.6	223.0	200.0	301.0	174.0	107.0	181.5	336.0	367.0	169.0	147.0	192.0
February	164.0	281.0	214.0	240.0	33.0	83.0	88.0	102.0	212.0	257.0	117.0	50.0
March	296.5	305.0	208.0	179.0	202.5	177.0	228.0	476.0	291.0	289.0	no data	
April	344.5	381.0	267.0	514.0	360.0	334.0	256.0	407.0	273.0	454.0	no data	
May	472.0	399.0	302.0	357.0	481.0	209.5	332.6	224.0	375.0	350.0	285.0	
June	120.0	176.0	43.0	31.0	101.0	153.5	266.0	156.0	242.0	333.0	174.0	
July	331.0	105.0	276.0	140.0	79.0	120.0	198.5	99.0	105.0	223.0	465.0	
August	135.5	201.0	180.0	262.0	141.0	160.5	146.0	305.0	79.0	209.0	110.0	
September	251.0	169.0	236.0	198.0	187.0	220.5	201.0	155.0	263.0	170.0	450.0	
October	133.0	389.0	425.0	250.0	505.0	119.5	194.5	200.0	345.0	541.0	204.0	
November	255.0	284.0	633.0	613.0	338.0	339.0	369.0	392.0	431.0	226.0	463.0	
December	150.0	388.0	477.0	240.0	244.0	238.0	144.0	200.0	223.0	312.0	325.0	
TOTAL	2,821.1	3,301.0	3,461.0	3,325.0	2,845.5	2,321.5	2,605.1	3,052.0	3,206.0	3,533.0	2,740.0*	242.0

*Note: Total rainfall for the months of March and April 2020 could not be recorded due to the Movement Control Order

Rainfall Graphic, 2010 – 2021



Note: All golf competitions have been cancelled until further notice

MEN as at 31.12.2020

Current Leaders

Position	Name	Points
1	Mohd Faiq Abu Sahid	300
1	Liew Kim Seng	300
3	Mazeed Abdul Wahab	250
4	Leroy Chiam	240
5	Zulfikar Hashman	220
6	Tony Yoon	210
7	Jordan Long	195
8	Zakimi Zaman Khan	180
8	Tunku Muin	180
10	Ashok Kumar	170
11	Wong Kean Keong	160
12	Ichiro Suzuki	150
12	Ryan Lee Wei Jian	150
12	Nicholas Mark Tay Teck Son	150
12	Eidan Jamzidi	150
12	Devin Nair	150
17	Syed Hazrain	140
17	Dilsher Singh	140
17	Shahrir Roose	140
20	Daren Chan Yen Yu	130
21	Mohd Rozhan	120

Participation Leaders

Position	Name	Points
1	Azlin Khalid	90
2	Liew Kim Seng	80
2	Hazwan Asraff	80
4	Adrian Ng	70
4	Chia King Hong	70
4	Jamzidi Khalid	70
4	Derek Daniel	70
4	Tg. Johanez	70
4	Mazeed Abdul Wahab	70
4	Nik Marzilim	70
4	Ariff Imran Roose	70
4	Jordan Long	70
4	Dilsher Singh	70



LADIES as at 31.12.2020

Current Leaders

Position	Name	Points
1	Alyah Tan	440
2	Dania Lau	365
3	Asako Suehiro	310
4	Pauziah Abdul Kadir	290
5	Sheryl Long	280
6	Nguyen Thi Lien	250
6	Kelly Low Ka Yan	250
8	Hiroko Suzuki	220
9	Ai-leen Tan	210
10	Chizuko Hirata	200
10	Dorothy Ng	200
10	Siti Zainab	200
13	Lilian Liew	175
14	May Ho	170
14	Mika Nishimura	170
16	Anisah Khadar	160

Participation Leaders

Position	Name	Points
1	Anisah Khadar	130
1	Rika Lai	130
1	Yasmin Yusuff	130
4	Ainon Aznam	120
4	Chizuko Hirata	120
4	Dania Lau	120
4	Eriko Todokoro	120
4	Hiroko Suzuki	120
9	Mah Kit Yi	110
9	May Ho	110
9	Nguyen Thi Lien	110
12	Ai-leen Tan	90
12	Alyah Tan	90
12	Woo Xer Li	90



JUNIORS as at 31.12.2020

Current Leaders

Position	Name (Boys)	Points
1	Aiden Kei	350
2	Lloyds Kueh Jia Rong	295
3	Nicholas Mark Tay Teck Son	292
4	Eidan Ngah Bin Jamzidi	227
5	Chan Yen Yu Daren	185
6	Leon Lau Chun Mun	180
7	Sulyman Shah	140
8	Lionel Yong Kwok Liang	130
9	Ryan Chia Wern Jien	115
10	William Foong Hsien-Loong	110
11	David Tok Yi Xiang	90
12	Daniel Tok Jun Xiang	80
12	Ryan Lee Wei Jian	80
14	Tan Jin Wen	60
14	Navjosh Singh Rikhranj	60
16	Kenta Izawa	50
17	River Aw Zhi Khai	25
17	Ryan Low Ka Yoong	25

Participation Leaders

Position	Name (Boys)	Points
1	Lloyds Kueh Jia Rong	90
1	Nicholas Mark Tay Teck Son	90
1	Eidan Ngah Bin Jamzidi	90
4	Leon Lau Chun Mun	80
4	Lionel Yong Kwok Liang	80
6	Ryan Chia Wern Jien	70
7	Aiden Kei	60
7	Chan Yen Yu Daren	60
7	Sulyman Shah	60
10	William Foong Hsien-Loong	50
10	David Tok Yi Xiang	50
12	Daniel Tok Jun Xiang	20
12	Tan Jin Wen	20
12	Justin Lee Jun Wei	20
12	Mika Maliqc Chong	20
12	Kael Maliqc Chong	20
17	Ryan Lee Wei Jian	10
17	Navjosh Singh Rikhranj	10
17	Kenta Izawa	10
17	River Aw Zhi Khai	10
17	Ryan Low Ka Yoong	10

Position	Name (Girls)	Points
1	Dania Lau Sook Wan	570
2	Momoka Suehiro	100

Position	Name (Girls)	Points
1	Dania Lau Sook Wan	90
2	Momoka Suehiro	10

SUNDAY CARVERY LUNCH @ THE MAIN LOUNGE



(Available from 12pm to 3pm)

Roasted beef striploin served with roasted garlic potatoes, mixed vegetables, beef jus and Yorkshire pudding

RM 28.00

Roasted mixed herbs whole leg chicken served with roasted garlic potatoes, mixed vegetables and thyme reduction sauce

RM 22.00



MAIN LOUNGE

Available from 12.00pm to 4.00pm

1-15 April 2021



Chicken cordon bleu with blue cheese cream sauce
RM24.50+



Sang har mee (freshwater prawn noodles) with yee mee and spring onion
RM23.50+

16-30 April 2021



Nasi daging bakar utara
RM18.50+



Prawn mee
RM18.50+



Modestos



Spaghetti aglio olio with sliced duck and capsicum
RM32+

Photos for illustration purposes only

Ultime Atelier & Boulangerie

CHAD MERCHANT | ADDITIONAL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ULTIME



It's a curious place for an upscale restaurant, but the eclectic, sprawling fourth-floor space somehow works. Located in Menara Noble Land on Jalan Changkat Ceylon, just around the corner from the popular Changkat district, the brand-new Ultime Atelier & Boulangerie boasts both indoor and outdoor spaces, and is gearing up to offer something exciting to KL-area food lovers.

Bread is the foundation of many good meals, and Ultime pays serious homage to that with an impressive array of outstanding breads baked in-house every day, and trust us when we say, Ultime is worth the visit for the bread – and the accompanying gourmet butters – alone. Diners get a free-flow from the bakery, but as hard as it is to limit yourself, it's advisable not to fill up on these warm, crusty baked goods. Though delicious, the breads are just a precursor of things to come.

We attended a pre-opening dining preview and found the concept and ambiance to be appealing. Service was on point, too, with the staff friendly, sincere, and engaging – a nice twist from too many dining rooms in which even good service often feels somewhat scripted and stilted.

The kitchen is led by Executive Chef Shiroasan and Head Chef Azan, who bring their experience and creativity

to bear on an eclectic array of dishes that impressed us with their culinary flair and presentation. The menu focus is largely on a degustation offering for both lunch (RM200) and dinner (RM380), but if you go for lunch, do set aside a good chunk of time, because Ultime's philosophy favours a measured approach that allows diners to enjoy their time along with their procession of dishes. We found the pacing to be quite agreeable, neither too rushed nor too languorous.

The dinner degustation begins with the aforementioned range of fresh breads (*choix de pain* for Francophones) and an interesting trio of savoury bites to tickle your palate: a miso waffle with trout roe, a croquet madame with uni and truffle, and a monkfish sea *foie gras* with a piquant ponzu sauce. Two cold courses follow, and we particularly enjoyed the second, a herring and beetroot salad that had both great flavour and an enjoyably varied texture.

The warm courses offer a choice, and you won't go wrong with the mouthwatering *foie gras brûlée* with black truffle and the *shirako* with cod milt. The langoustine with cold soba noodles was a bit of a letdown, so we can't recommend that choice. After a palate cleanser, the main course arrives and while we were served the signature six-day aged smoked duck, we think

a better choice may have been the A5 Wagyu with madeira sauce (RM80 surcharge).

Dessert was a lovely Napoleon *mille feuille* with Chantilly cream and salted caramel, followed by a selection of enticing *petit fours* and a choice of coffee or tea. Impeccable wine pairings are an option, should you wish to indulge. Ultime also offers private dining salons and an impressive wine room.

As we were treated to a preview meal just prior to the restaurant's official opening, it stands to reason that some various bits and bobs were still being fine-tuned, but with what we saw, and knowing the people who are behind the restaurant, it's safe to say that we expect very good things indeed from this new player in the luxe dining scene and will be eager to return soon to check the expected progress, as well as the weekend brunches launching in April! ■

Ultime Atelier & Boulangerie
Level 3A Menara Noble Land
No. 2 Jalan Changkat Ceylon
50200 Kuala Lumpur
T: +603-2704 0988
(reservations encouraged)
W: www.ultime.com.my

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or call 03-9206 3251/3252

Driving Range

7am to 7pm
Closed for maintenance on:
Monday 11am to 2pm
Wednesday & Friday 10.30am to 12pm

Pro Shop

7am to 7pm (03-2181 2264)

Swimming Pools

6am to 7pm
(Baby Pool remains closed)

Tennis Courts

7am to 7pm (Hard Courts)
10am to 7pm (Grass Courts)

Squash Courts

Daily 7am to 7pm

Gymnasium

Daily 7am to 7pm
03-9206 3290 (For Members only)

Fitness Programme by Pinnacle Fitness

Monday to Sunday 7am to 7pm
Trainer: Hashim Abdullah (012-770 1612)

Barber Shop

Daily 10am to 7.30pm
(Closed on Friday)
03-9206 3292
Barber: Masdari (012-247 5005)

Ladies' Hair Salon

Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm
Closed on Sunday/Public Holiday
03-9206 3293 Hairstylist: Jennifer

Men's Massage Room

Men's Changing Room
Tuesday to Sunday 12pm to 7pm
03-9206 3304 or Akmal (013-251 3486)
Poolside Area
Daily 1pm to 7pm 03-9206 3232

Ladies' Massage Room

Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm
(Including Public Holidays)
Masseuse: Cynthia Lee (012-310 7398)

Reading Room

9am to 9pm (For Members only)

Card Room

7am to midnight
(For Members above 21 only)

Ballroom Dancing

Thursday 8pm to 9pm
Friday 10.30am to 11.30am
(Private class)
Instructor: Eric Tan (012-321 2083)
Venue: Multi-Purpose Hall

Line Dancing/Social Dancing

Line Dance:
Wednesday 11am to 1pm
Dance Foundation & Conditioning:
Thursday 11.30am to 1.30pm
Social Dance:
Monday 2pm to 4pm
Instructor: Bronya Bishorek
(012-299 1787 / 014-222 9902)
Venue: Multi-Purpose Hall

Bridge Games

Monday & Wednesday
9.30am to 1pm
Coordinator: Hildah Lee (016-281 3432)

Tai Chi

Tuesday & Friday 7am to 8am
Instructor: Koh Ah Tee (016-660 2998)
Venue: Poolside Recreational Terrace

Tae Kwon Do

Saturday 5pm to 6pm & 6pm to 7pm
Instructor:
Low Koon Lin (03-7726 7773)
Low Leong Tuck (017-873 7778)
Venue: Multi-Purpose Hall

Junior Tennis Development Programme

Resident Coach Hasrul Hisham
(012-923 1398)

Tennis Lessons

Resident Coach:
Johann Tan (012-310 0193)
Coach: Adrian Wee (012-203 6977)
Farizul Yunus (019-287 0170)
Hasrul Hisham (012-923 1398)

Squash Lessons

Coach Chris Teoh (019-387 9802)

Zumba

Thursday 10am to 11am
Instructor: Nuna Malm
(011-2855 3715)
Venue: Multi-Purpose Hall

Swimming Lessons

Coach Desmond Yeo (017-872 6688)
Coach Chui Lai Kwan (016-586 5005)
Coach Eileen Leung (016-832 1064)
Coach Allen Ong (017-614 3218)
Coach Siow Yi Ting (016-681 9836)
Coach Michael Ong (infants to
5 years old) (013-331 3642)

Masters Group Training

Tuesday & Thursday
7am to 9am
by Coach Yi Ting
(016-681 9836)

Junior Swimming Development Programme

Resident Coach
Desmond Yeo
(017-872 6688)

Junior Group Training Competitive Swimming

Wednesday 6am to 7.15am
Monday & Friday
5pm to 6.30pm
Saturday 5.30pm to 7pm
Sunday 8am to 9.30am
by Coaches Lai Kwan and Eileen

Fitness/Recreational Swimming

Daily:
Afternoon sessions on weekdays;
morning sessions on weekends
(call Coach Desmond for times)

Golf Lessons

Royal Selangor Golf Club Academy by MST Golf

Director of Instruction: Nate Stevenson
Master Instructor: Stewart Ginn
Pro Shop (03-2181 2264)

Junior Golf Development Programme (JGDP lessons are suspended until further notice)

Every Saturday and Sunday
at RSGC Golf Academy
Level 1 (Beginners)
8am to 9am
Level 2 (Intermediate)
9am to 10.30am
Level 3 (Ready for Course Test)
10.30am to 12pm
For any enquiries,
please contact Nate or Stewart in the
Pro Shop (03-2181 2264) or email
rsgcgolfacademy@rsgc.com.my

Availability of facilities subject to RSGC's post-MCO guidelines

For more details on Sports & Recreation, please contact the Sports Department on (03) 9206 3243/3244 or via email at sports@rsgc.com.my

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