


NOMADS

Nomads – Unsung part of the fabric of South African Golf

YOU may or may not have heard of Nomads or of the immense contribution the Nomads Golf Club makes within the sphere of South African golf and within our local communities. Hopefully that will all change by the time you have finished reading this article.

The Nomads Golf Club was founded by visionary Mike Florence in 1960. It has very defined aims and objectives which have remained pertinent for over 50 years and these are:

- To provide an opportunity for persons of all walks of life to meet one another at least once a month, to play a game of golf and to make new and cement old friendships.
- To encourage, promote, foster and support the game of golf.
- To generate funds for distribution to charitable causes and assist those persons, regardless of race, color or creed, in a less fortunate position than ourselves.

The fact that all service to golf and the general community is provided on a voluntary basis shows the Nomads commitment to their motto 'Through golf the remembrance of others'. Their approach to these worthy endeavors is embodied in their creed which is taken from the meditations of the famous poet John Donne (1573-1631) whose words have for centuries served to inspire mankind to think of others: 'No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind. And therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls, It tolls for thee'.

The story of Nomads starts way back in the late 1950s when the New Union Merchant Industrial Corporation Social and Supporting Club (NUMIC) ran, amongst other activities, monthly golf games.

Even though NUMIC was disbanded in 1959 it firmly highlighted the need for such monthly gatherings of like-minded individuals. This then led to the formation of a new golfing group similar in philosophy and interest. It seemed only natural that being a club without a formal home they should be called NOMADS and thus in April 1960 Transvaal Nomads was formed and 106 members were scheduled to play their first game at Glendower Golf Club.

54 years on, original founder members Gary Player, Andrew Mentis, Arthur Ferneyhough and Jack Matthews are still with us and I am sure they marvel, as we all do, at the incredible story that has unfolded.

From the original Transvaal (now Gauteng) Club, South Africa now boasts 12 active and viable clubs operating throughout the country. The ethos and message have also spread internationally through Nomads clubs formed in

Zimbabwe, Botswana, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Swaziland, Mauritius and Zambia maybe added in the not so distant future. Nomads meet once a month at a course within their local area, and having no "home" courses are solely dependent upon the good grace of local clubs in their areas. This gives members the opportunity to meet and further their aims by making new friendships and cementing long standing ones.

Nomads also strengthen the bonds between clubs by participating in a host of inter-club games throughout the year. At no time is this more evident than in March of each year when qualifying members meet for the annual National Tournament.

The first National Tournament was held at Kyalami Country Club in 1966, hosted by the Transvaal (now Gauteng) club. This year, 2015, saw Nomads participate in their 50th consecutive National Tournament and unlike normal years, where the tournament is hosted on a rotational basis and organised by one of the 12 Clubs in their own areas, this one was hosted by the Nomads National Executive Committee at a neutral venue, the Champagne Sports Resort in the KZN Central Berg.

The tournament is reputed to be the largest amateur tournament of its kind worldwide and qualification for participation is based upon the commitment of each member and their Club over the previous two year period. In 2004 the tournament was expanded to accommodate 540 competitors, however the number is adjusted every year to suit the particular course played. Entrance is also not only open to the South African clubs, a certain percentage of the available spots are allocated to our international friends and each year sees a die-hard contingent from the antipodean clubs as well as our Southern African neighbours participating.

Each participant plays four games over six days on a Medal Stableford basis and with a budget averaging R3.5 million, the tournament serves to showcase the Club to the various sponsors as well as provide a focal point for the camaraderie that is now famous between club members from across the globe.

There are prize categories for individual performance and most importantly the Bert Hunt Trophy, is awarded to the best performing team over the duration of the event.

The tournament is opened and closed with a flag ceremony, at which all the Club Captains along with the various National Chairmen raise and lower their local flags, effectively taking over and handing back formal "ownership" of the course for the week.

Each Nomads club plays their games in specific club colors which make them easily identifiable, however, once the game is over and the formalities begin

they all dress in similar formal jackets and ties to signify a single identity and commitment to a common purpose.

In line with this common purpose and a commitment to the aims and objectives of our club, the Andrew Mentis Endowment Fund was created to channel the funds generated for distribution to charitable causes and assist people, regardless of race, color or creed, in a less fortunate position than ourselves.

The raising of these funds was given formal structure in 1967. Each member Club forms an Andrew Mentis Endowment Fund sub-committee which is chaired by the Vice-Captain of the local club and is specifically tasked to coordinate activities aimed at raising funds.

Monies raised are donated to a pre-selected beneficiary that operates within each club's own geographical area, in the form of a tangible asset upon which the Nomads emblem is displayed. It is important to note that no cash is ever handed over.

The culmination of activities where the handover to the beneficiary takes place is the annual Andrew Mentis Endowment Fund Golf Day which is open to the public by invitation. This gives invited guests, including women and juniors, an opportunity to experience the Nomadic camaraderie and purpose at its finest.

The Andrew Mentis Endowment Fund has since its inception raised and donated in excess of R31 million to various charities. Getting involved in the annual Andrew Mentis drive for funds is considered a basic Nomad responsibility and this includes not only time through sitting on the local NAMEF committee, but also participation in the various charity draws at the monthly games, donating prizes, and sponsoring holes at the annual Andrew Mentis Endowment Fund Day.

The Nomads involvement in the furtherance of golf is split into two distinct areas:

Firstly funds are raised at the local Nomads clubs themselves, the distribution of which is focused within their own local areas. These funds are raised at their monthly club meetings as well as through partnerships with two of our National Sponsors. These funds are then used specifically for the benefit of junior golf as a collective in our regions, as well as for improvements to golf clubs, donations to centenary celebrations, sponsorship of provincial opens, and so on.

Secondly, funds as a result of the provision of services to the professional golf circuit through our GOLFORAMA activities. Nomads provide professional scoring services to the SA Tour and you can see its GOLFORAMA members manning scoreboards and following players at all the summer and winter tour events. Most recently the Ladies European Tour also used Nomads GOLFORAMA services at the newly re-instituted SA Woman's Open.

Simply put, the SA Tour pays Nomads for their scoring services and our individual members provide their time, without charge, to ensure that the funds raised, less minimal expenses, are retained for distribution to the furtherance of golf in Southern Africa.

In the past few years Nomads has revisited its involvement in the furtherance of golf and focused its financial support in the following areas, annually: the SA Boys U19, U17, U15 and U13 Strokeplay tournaments, the new Hexagon events for juniors with participation of 11 provinces, the SA Girls U18 Strokeplay and Girls Rose Bowl tournaments, the South African Disabled Golf Association First Swing Camps and through the South African Golf Development Boards junior golf development.

Nomads involvement as a title sponsor at these events has not only made our contribution more effective but also served to help raise our profile in the media coverage surrounding them.

It is worth noting that, currently, upwards of a R2 million a year is distributed for the furtherance of golf through the financial support of junior, ladies, development and disabled golf, and, similarly for the assistance of those within each club's areas who are less fortunate than ourselves.

The maximization of funds available for redistribution would not have been possible over the years if it were not for the continuous involvement of generous and committed sponsors.

The sponsors are both corporate and local and each one is highly valued within the Nomads family. Nomads highly commendable aims and objectives and our established pedigree within the South African golfing world has enabled us to maintain strong synergy with many like-minded organisations. Currently we are sponsored nationally by the South African Breweries, Imperial Auto & Motor Finance Corporation, Tempest Car Rental, Ashworth-Taylor-made-Adams-Addidas and YES putters, Hollard Insurance, Glenbrynth Whisky and UTI.

This article barely scratches the surface of just how involved Nomads as a Club is within the golfing world and more importantly can never do justice to what the true meaning of being a Nomad is.

It means a deep commitment to golf, to the community at large and to your fellow man. Membership of Nomads is by invitation only and so if reading this article has sparked a deep feeling of synergy within you, then Nomads invites you to approach a member of Nomads at your home club and learn more about what Nomads involvement would mean for you.

Put simply though, being a Nomad means contribution, contribution to the world at large of that most valued and sought-after commodity, yourself. ■

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