

singapore scene

BY TAN JU KUANG

SERAPONG SWINGS INTO GOLF DIGEST'S TOP 100

While the total number of golf courses in Singapore will decrease in the coming years, one championship layout keeps going from strength to strength.

We're talking about the

Serapong Course at Sentosa Golf Club, of course. This year, Singapore's No. 1 golf course has not only made it into the Golf Digest World 100 Greatest Courses rankings at No. 58.

Originally designed by Ronald Fream in 1974, the golf course underwent a major reconstruction in 2007 by Bates Golf Design Group. Andrew Johnston was vice president at Bates that year and worked extensively on the project. He later joined Sentosa Golf Club as Director of Agronomy, and has recently assumed the helm as General Manager.

"It's certainly given me an advantage," the Johnston admitted. "Having been through the design and construction process, and now managing the course, puts me in a better position than the average person. It helps me promote the club better to members and guests, and gives us the advantages to present a better property."

Of course, Sentosa Golf Club doesn't need much promoting. The opening of the Resorts World integrated resort together with Sentosa Development Corporation's efforts at developing the island have boosted the value of the private club. At its peak, a membership at Sentosa Golf Club went for a little over \$300,000.

There is much to be impressed with the Serapong Course. It ticks all the boxes that are important in evaluating a golf course, particularly those used by the panel of over 1,700 members of the Golf Digest international review panel. These reviewers — made up of a global collection of golf experts and professionals — rate courses based on several criteria including shot value (how a course rewards good shots, and punishes bad ones); memorability; aesthetics; difficulty; hole variety; ambience and conditioning. From last year's Golf Digest ratings of Singapore courses — where the course easily took top spot — Serapong excelled in virtually every aspect.

The club's success comes from several reasons. The club has a par-

ent, Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC), that continues to support its development. Its members leave the management alone and trust that their decisions will be to their ultimate benefit. It has a general manager who was not only the chief agronomist, but also its course designer. And it has a continually renewing arsenal of high performance maintenance initiatives to keep its courses at their finest at all times.

"We're one of the top five per cent in the world in our agronomic approach," says Johnston.

"With our sub-air system, we're able to have the course good to go in half an hour after a heavy downpour. And our soil sensors on the green give us feedback so that we can control the irrigation remotely."

Not sitting on its laurels, the club is currently busy reconstructing its other course, Tanjong. "The classic style routing will be completely new, and no hole is the same as the previous ones," reveals Johnston. "It will be hard to compete with Serapong, but we hope it will be a good companion."



A rock formation known as the "Dragons Tooth" (above) jets out to partially obscure the green.



Hole 16, one of the signature holes of the Serapong Course, features an elevated tee that opens up to a view of the twin fairway bunkers. A spectacular creek (left) slices through the fairway.

tried & tested

PERFORMANCE BALLS

Some of the best performance balls from Titleist just got makeovers and they promise to help your game without breaking the bank.

The new Titleist NXT Tour and NXT Tour S have just been launched and possess added performance features to help your game.

A larger centre dual core is now found in the new NXT Tour, producing lower spin and faster ball speeds. The core technology combines with Titleist's soft, proprietary Fusablen cover for good spin control and feel.

The NXT Tour S, the softer-feeling companion to the NXT Tour, has a reformulated softer compression core, and also comes with the Fusablen cover to produce the softest-feeling NXT Tour S yet. Comparing the two, the NXT Tour offers longer distance with a higher flight, while the NXT Tour S gives a significantly softer feel.

Titleist also rolled out a new version of the value-for-money Velocity ball, reengineered with an even larger, faster core for higher initial velocity.

The proprietary LSX core technology offers faster ball speeds on all full swings, and the low-spin construction with improved leading-edge aerodynamics makes for a more optimal trajectory and better carry and roll. The thinner NAZ2 cover offers added feel in the short game.

This season, Titleist has added a new ball to its stable — the DT TruSoft.

The ball follows along the soft compression core and cover track, offering the softest core construction and ionomer cover blend Titleist has ever used.

The new core and cover work together to provide a soft feel and sound on every shot, while delivering very low spin in the long game and reliable short game spin for playability into and around the green.

A 376 tetrahedral dimple design further ensures an aerodynamically consistent flight.



DIAL M FOR MAXIMUM DISTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

You can always trust TaylorMade to follow a successful product with a new and improved version a few months down the line.

After the M1 burst into the scene late last year, the applause had barely died down before they launched the M2 line of drivers, fairways, rescue clubs and irons to complete the M family (below).

With the same proprietary multi-material combination, and the same seven-layer carbon composite crown that proved so successful in the M1, the new clubs push the line further in both distance and forgiveness.

Major winner Y.E. Yang, a TaylorMade ambassador and who's here in Singapore for the SMBC Singapore Open, helped launch the new M2 series at Sentosa Golf Club on Jan 26.

The M2 series will be available in Singapore from the middle of next month.



playit

INDOOR FUN AND GAMES

Indoor simulator golf is not something to be trifled with these days — especially when you consider what an outfit like Micro Range Golf has to offer.

The new enterprise offers state-of-the-art launch monitor technology through the Foresight Sports GC2-K from the USA that gives you more data on your golf shots than you can handle. Owned and operated by The Learning Tee, a leading golf launch monitor and simulator distributor in Southeast Asia, Micro Range Golf is a perfect place to hone your swing, calibrate and compare performance of your clubs, and have a great time with your friends playing the many courses (actual, exclusive ones from the US) found on the simulator.

And if you like a little bit of actual play, there is a chipping and putting green behind the building for you to practise on.

Micro Range Golf also offers lessons, using data and video of your swing through the Foresight monitor, as well as golf club fitting services. Taking it a step further, you can even incorporate a yoga programme specifically designed for golf, which includes functional movement screening.

Furthermore, it's also an ideal location for corporate events, golf clinics, fundraisers, product launches and parties.

Its location next to restaurants in Turf City makes it a perfect place to hang out, have a drink while you hit balls rain or shine.

LIVING HEROES

Golf and charity go in hand, and there's nothing like teeing it up for a greater good.

Little Heroes' Dreams (LHD), a non-profit organisation that seeks to empower underprivileged kids for a sustainable future will hold their annual charity golf event, Swing For The Kids, on 12 and 13 March, which also includes a few twists.

This year, there will be a family nine-hole event as well as a Fun Olympics held the day before the golf tournament. Last year, LHD raised over \$30,000 from the Swing For The Kids tournament, a bar they hope to raise to \$100,000 in 2016.

Funds raised will go to helping over 400 children in need and youths at risk to live a more independent life and be less reliant on external funds.

It will also go to supporting other local beneficiaries including WELL Centre for children from low-income homes, iC2 Prephouse for children with impaired vision, and Society of Father & Sons, a centre for youths at risk.

The charity event will be held at Palm Springs Golf & Beach Resort in Batam, and the price per player is \$169 for Singapore residents.

Those planning to stay the weekend can consider Montigo Resorts, Nongsa, which is offering rooms for two adults and two children at \$699 per night, inclusive of the free family day programme on March 12.

Visit www.sftk2016.golfgenius.com for more information and registration.

Happy New Year!

Want to win a \$50 dining voucher at TungLok?

Answer this simple question: The SMBC Singapore Open 2016 is being played at Sentosa's Serapong Course. True or False?

E-mail the answer with your full name, the last four digits and the alphabet of your IC number (eg. 1234A) and contact details to spports@sph.com.sg by 9pm on Feb 5.

Winners will be picked at random and informed to collect their prizes.

GOLF DIGEST'S WORLD 100 GREATEST GOLF COURSES

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|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>1 Royal County Down G.C. (Championship) — Newcastle, Northern Ireland</p> <p>2 Augusta National G.C. — Georgia, USA</p> <p>3 Pine Valley G.C. — New Jersey, USA</p> <p>4 Cypress Point Club — Pebble Beach, USA</p> <p>5 Royal Dornoch G.C. (Championship) — Scotland</p> <p>6 Royal Melbourne G.C. (West) — Black Rock, Australia</p> <p>7 Shinnecock Hills G.C. — Southampton, NY, USA</p> <p>8 St. Andrews Links (Old) — Scotland</p> <p>9 Muirfield — Gullane, Scotland</p> <p>10 Merion G.C. (East) — Ardmore, Pennsylvania, USA</p> <p>11 Oakmont C.C. — Pennsylvania, USA</p> <p>12 Pebble Beach G. Links — USA</p> <p>13 National G. Links of America — Southampton, New York, USA</p> <p>14 Winged Foot G.C. (West) — Mamaroneck, New York, USA</p> | <p>15 Fishers Island (N.Y.) Club — New York, USA</p> <p>16 Cape Kidnappers — Hawke's Bay, New Zealand</p> <p>17 Sand Hills G.C. — Mullen, Nebraska, USA</p> <p>18 Kingstons Heath G.C. — Heatherton, Australia</p> <p>19 Cabot Cliffs — Inverness, Canada</p> <p>20 Golf de Morfontaine — Morfontaine, France</p> <p>21 Hirono G.C. — Hyogo, Japan</p> <p>22 Trump Turnberry (Ailsa) — Scotland</p> <p>23 Sunningdale G.C. (Old) — England</p> <p>24 Cape Wickham Links — King Island, Australia</p> <p>25 Portmarnock G.C. (Championship) — Dublin, Ireland</p> <p>26 Carnoustie G. Links (Championship) — Scotland</p> <p>27 Royal Portrush G.C. (Dunluce) — Northern Ireland</p> <p>28 Seminole G.C. — Juno Beach, Florida, USA</p> | <p>29 Ellerston G. Cse. — Hunter Valley, Australia</p> <p>30 New South Wales G.C. — La Perouse, Australia</p> <p>31 Crystal Downs C.C. — Frankfort, Michigan, USA</p> <p>32 Chicago G.C. — Wheaton, Illinois, USA</p> <p>33 Barnbougle Dunes — Bridport, Australia</p> <p>34 Muirfield Village G.C. — Dublin, Ohio, USA</p> <p>35 Royal Birkdale G.C. — Southport, England</p> <p>36 Oak Hill C.C. (East) — Rochester, New York, USA</p> <p>37 Shanqin Bay G.C. — Hainan Island, China</p> <p>38 Oakland Hills C.C. (South) — Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, USA</p> <p>39 Bandon Dunes G. Resort (Pacific Dunes) — Oregon, USA</p> <p>40 Barnbougle Lost Farm — Bridport, Australia</p> <p>41 St. George's G. and C.C. — Etobicoke, Canada</p> <p>42 The Country Club (Clyde/Squirrel) — Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, USA</p> <p>43 Fancourt (Links) — George, South Africa</p> | <p>44 Kiawah Island G. Resort (Ocean) — South Carolina, USA</p> <p>45 Royal St. George's G.C. — Sandwich, England</p> <p>46 Yas Links — Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates</p> <p>47 Royal Porthcawl G.C. — Wales</p> <p>48 Wade Hampton G.C. — Cashiers, North Carolina, USA</p> <p>49 Kauri Cliffs — Northland, New Zealand</p> <p>50 North Berwick G.C. — Scotland</p> <p>51 Whistling Straits (Straits) — Haven, Wisconsin, USA</p> <p>52 Diamante G.C. (Dunes) — Cabo San Lucas, Mexico</p> <p>53 Friar's Head — Baiting Hollow, New York, USA</p> <p>54 Trump International G. Links — Aberdeen, Scotland</p> <p>55 Royal Melbourne G.C. (East) — Black Rock, Australia</p> <p>56 Casa de Campo (Teeth of the Dog) — La Romana, Dominican Republic</p> | <p>57 Riviera C.C. — Pacific Palisades, California, USA</p> <p>58 Sentosa G.C. (Serapong) — Singapore</p> <p>59 Prairie Dunes C.C. — Hutchinson, Kansas, USA</p> <p>60 Los Angeles C.C. (North) — USA</p> <p>61 Swinley Forest G.C. — Ascot, England</p> <p>62 The Alotian Club — Roland, Arkansas, USA</p> <p>63 Pinehurst Resort (No. 2) — North Carolina, USA</p> <p>64 Kawana Hotel G. Cse. (Fuji) — Shizuoka, Japan</p> <p>65 Lahinch G.C. (Old) — Ireland</p> <p>66 National G.C. of Canada — Woodbridge, Canada</p> <p>67 Southern Hills C.C. — Tulsa, USA</p> <p>68 Gozzer Ranch G. & Lake C. — Harrison, Idaho, USA</p> <p>69 Kingsbarns G. Links — St. Andrews, Scotland</p> <p>70 Cabo del Sol (Ocean) — Los Cabos, Mexico</p> <p>71 Valderrama G.C. — Sotogrande, Spain</p> | <p>72 The Honors Course — Ooltewah, Tennessee, USA</p> <p>73 Shadow Creek — North Las Vegas, Nevada, USA</p> <p>74 The Bluffs — Ho Tram Strip Ho Tram, Vietnam</p> <p>75 Spring City G. & Lake Resort (Lake) — Kunming, China</p> <p>76 Punta Espada G.C. — Cap Cana, Dominican Republic</p> <p>77 Olympic Club (Lake) — San Francisco, USA</p> <p>78 Club de Golf Memphrémagog — Magog, Canada</p> <p>79 The Club at Nine Bridges — Jeju Island, South Korea</p> <p>80 Peachtree G.C. — Atlanta, USA</p> <p>81 San Francisco G.C. — USA</p> <p>82 Royal Lytham & St. Annes G.C. — England</p> <p>83 The Els Club — Teluk Datai Kedah, Malaysia</p> <p>84 Nirwana Bali G.C. — Tabanan, Indonesia</p> <p>85 Tokyo G.C. — Sayama City, Japan</p> <p>86 Sheshan International G.C. — Shanghai, China</p> | <p>87 The National G.C. (Old) — Cape Schanck, Australia</p> <p>88 Leopard Creek C.C. — Malelane, South Africa</p> <p>89 The Golf Club — New Albany, Ohio, USA</p> <p>90 Bandon Dunes G. & Lake Resort (Bandon Dunes) — Oregon, USA</p> <p>91 Machrinis G.C. — Campbeltown, Scotland</p> <p>92 Sunningdale G.C. (New) — England</p> <p>93 Cabot Links — Inverness, Canada</p> <p>94 Sebonack G.C. — Southampton, New York, USA</p> <p>95 Emirates G.C. (Majlis) — Dubai, United Arab Emirates</p> <p>96 Naruo G.C. — Hyogo, Japan</p> <p>97 Jumeirah G. Estates (Earth) — Dubai, United Arab Emirates</p> <p>98 Querencia G.C. — Los Cabos, Mexico</p> <p>99 Gary Player C.C. — Sun City, South Africa</p> <p>100 G.C. Olgiata — Rome, Italy</p> |
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photos by Tan Ju Kuang, Sentosa Golf Club

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