

JOE THRIVES ON DRIVES

S'PORE'S ONLY OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST JOSEPH SCHOOLING TOOK TO GOLF LIKE DUCK TO WATER

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He is a nine-handicapper, with a 260-metre average drive, the longest being 290 metres. And golf is only a pastime for him as swimming and studies restrict him to enjoy the fairways just once a fortnight.

"And from the get-go I knew he would turn out to be an exceptional talent."

"I have been coaching kids for long. And I must say he was among the better students, easily picking up the pointers because of his tremendous natural ability," said the Australian who has also mentored many age-group golfers, some later earning national ranks, in Singapore.

The grapevine at TMCC says that if Joseph had not focused on swimming, he would certainly have made it as a national golfer.

Obviously, having parents who are social golfers too helps, as Colin and May, at one time regulars at TMCC, had encouraged Joseph to play the game from a very young age.

Joseph, whose favourite golfer is former world No. 1 Jordan Spieth for obvious reasons ("he's a Texan") says: "My strength is that I hit a long ball, but I need to improve on my short game, especially the putting."

"Currently, I play once every two weeks because of studies, but I'm determined to improve."

Joseph has an extra reason to im-

prove his golf as he will be invited back by the Singapore Swimming Association for a charity event at TMCC's Garden course on Nov 22.

Before his return to the US after spending five days in Singapore following his Rio success, Joseph had said: "Since I'm invited back, I have to make sure that I play well. I will certainly put in some practice in the US."

Although his favourite course is Sentosa's Serapong course, he says: "I also used to like the old Garden course at TMCC before it was reduced to a par-70 from par-72."

And he is looking forward to games at the redeveloped Tampines (work begins next year), which he believes "will be a new, great experience".

The four courses at the SICC are also familiar territory for him as he had played on them quite often during his schooling days at the Anglo-Chinese School Junior and ACS (Independent).

Dad Colin, a 12-handicap index player, and his businessman friend Jimmy Teo (HI 18) have played many rounds with Joseph.

Says Colin: "Yes, I introduced Joe



Joseph with his dad Colin.

cited a game at Sentosa last year when he and Joseph lost a small wager to a good buddy and his son.

Joseph took away two lessons from that game: "Never have a wager against someone whom you don't know or never played with before" and "golf is not about driving long but more so about arriving consistently".

Teo, who had invited his son Zhen Ren, the SEA Games 1,500 metres swimming champion in 2011 who is studying at Santa Monica in California, a few times to play with Joseph, said: "Joe has a great swing. I remember a game at the SICC New course, and it was a joy to watch him whack the ball."

"I don't know how long he hits, as his drives are so far away from mine that it is difficult to assess the difference. But I believe that he drove 290 metres a few times that day."

"And I remember his fabulous birdie putt on the last hole which saw the oldies (Colin and me) losing a lunch wager."

Did Joseph say his putting was a weak point? Driving, no doubt, remains his forte.



(Left) Joseph (also right) with his US college buddies, brothers Walker (far left) and Grant Hill, in Jacksonville in the US.

No Ordinary Joe this, but a world-beater at swimming and an above-average university undergraduate.

He is Joseph Schooling, Singapore's only Olympic gold medallist who did the country proud by winning the 100 metres butterfly event in Rio, Brazil, last month.

Schooling, 21, is a Texas University student majoring in economics, with plans to a post-grad in accountancy.

And he is an exceptional golfer, taking to the sport like duck to water since he was introduced to it by his golfing dad, Colin.

Exceptional because he earned his proficiency certificate (PC) at the age of six just after the local golfing rules were changed from being mandatory to those above 12 years to one strictly based on game ability.

So from playing restrictively at the two Tanah Merah Country Club (TMCC) courses with a PC, mostly over nine holes, he graduated to obtaining his handicap within a couple of years, another rare feat in Singapore.

That graduation made the TMCC, Singapore Island Country Club and

Sentosa Golf Club courses easily accessible to him. And over 18 holes for sure.

When the subject matter is Joseph, never be surprised. For he believes in making the impossible possible, the ambitions attainable, the dreams achievable.

"I have never seen a more talented golfer," was how his first coach at TMCC, Kim Baldwin, opened a discussion about Joseph recently. "I was close to his parents, Colin and May, and when they approached me to take Joe under my wing, I agreed."



The greatest golfers of all time including Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy, are living examples of how a toned body and a terrific golf game go hand-in-hand. Anyone, from PGA pros to weekend hackers, can tee off better throughout their game, on one condition – to get fit.

In order to do so, you need to master greater flexibility, mobility, stability, and core strength while staying adequately hydrated. If you are lacking in any of these aspects, it will limit your ability to execute the golf swing well. Whether it is a game of nine holes or eighteen, these tips can help you stay fitter for your golf rounds.

ENHANCED STABILITY & CORE STRENGTH
Maintaining a fixed spine angle, is the key to performing the perfect golf swing. This can be perfected through certain postural positions; but before you even think of trying out the positions, you have to achieve optimum stability or strength, particularly in the core region – the major muscles in the area of your belly and the mid and lower back.

One way to improve your stability is to incorporate short work-out exercises including front and side planks, bent knees, back holds and saws. Such exercises can include movements in Pilates and even Yoga. To further enhance your endurance, have healthy cold drinks like coconut water during your workouts. According to studies done by the Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition, this can help to lower your body temperature for an endurance boost.

GREATER FLEXIBILITY & MOBILITY
As the golf swing is a repetitive movement, fatigue and tightness can come quick, affecting your flexibility to perform. Thus, it is essential to do proper and timely cool-downs of stretching after each round such as ankle and kneeling hip flexor presses, side-to-side, straight leg and torso back swings, wall slides, shoulder and stork turns, windshield wipers and piriformis stretches. At the same time, hydrate your body between the cool-down exercises.

BETTER HYDRATION
Adopting a holistic approach will give you a competitive

edge both on and off the course and this include optimal hydration. Both the timing and type of fluids you consume is important to improve your stamina mentally and physically. The day before your golf game, drink about 2 bottles of fluids four hours before you sleep.

During your golf rounds, consume about 40% - 50% of your total daily intake of fluids. Be mindful to also get a balance of electrolytes, such as potassium, magnesium, phosphorus, sodium and calcium, with beverages that are free from fat and cholesterol like natural coconut water.

Made of 100% natural and tastefully selected fresh coconuts with no additives or preservatives, UFC Refresh Coconut Water is one of the most convenient choices of coconut water. Moreover, having coconut water before, during and after exercise will ensure productive workouts.

Whichever way you prefer to organise your personal fitness program, stick to it while keeping these tips in mind and you will be on your way to tee off well every round.



The Natural Hydration for You

Photos courtesy of Colin Schooling/Jimmy Teo