



BY GODFREY ROBERT

WHY JEFF CONSIDERS GOLF AN EASY GAME

FOR THE AUDI BOSS, SCORES DON'T MATTER AS MUCH AS DERIVING FUN AND MAKING FRIENDS ON COURSE

He is a bubbly buggymate and a fabulous flightmate for any golfer. For his

conversations are spiced with fascinating tales and interesting anecdotes, many revolving around golf. And he is not serious about his golf, which yoyos between the brilliant (following a 250-metre drive if it's straight) and the blow-up (attempted recoveries from the wrong fairways). Jeff Mannering, managing director of Audi Singapore, always laughs off his game and trudges back from the final green with an infectious wide smile whatever his performance. In an interview here, the 54-year-old boss of the Business Times Corporate Golf Tournament's presenting sponsor, exudes a warmth and frankness with a tinge of humour.

Since you came on board in the BT League, the event has seen an upturn (through interest and excitement), despite local golf being hit with a series of body blows (like course closures). What is the main reason for this, and how does Audi want to pitch itself for future years?

Golf is a great game and a great place to network. Singapore has fantastic golf courses. Round one this year kicked off at the New Tanjong course which is simply outstanding and one of the most beautiful courses in the world. Golf plays an important part of business life in Singapore.

There are many corporate events held all over the island and golf is where a lot of business is conducted. We at Audi love being involved with golf. It's a fantastic opportunity to talk and listen to people from different industries and compare developments in Singapore and the region.

Many of the BT competitors are customers and talking "Audi" with them is always a pleasure. It's also a fantastic opportunity to showcase our products to those who are not yet driving an Audi.

Golf continues to be a popular sport in Singapore. Audi and the League share the same target audience, which are members of the business community in this country.

Audi believes in reaching out to our customers in a relevant way and we will continue to work in this direction: going to where our customers are.

You have recognised that it has been eight years since the event's inception that no one has won a hole-in-one for the competition. You are sponsoring the special \$1,000 Hugo Boss voucher prize for Nearest the Hole at that particular hole. This idea has been well received. If no one wins the HIO again this year, do you plan to enhance the prize?

Well, my advice is everyone needs to lift their

game. I would like to win the Hugo Boss voucher as well. I cannot seem to even get on the green, let alone in the hole. There are a few more rounds to go and you never know what might happen. I don't actually know how you would enhance winning an Audi with one golf shot. Just hit it straight and pick the right club. Golf is such an easy game.

You have been close to the event, even competing when you are not travelling. Have you any idea how you can spice up the event? The implementation of the Seven-Club Challenge has been generally well received. Do you have any idea of what else can be done?

I love the additional challenges. The non-competitive holes in Round Two were great. You could go for it without a blemish on the scorecard. Besides, a little fun is great. Unfortunately I missed the Seven-Club game.

I would only need a driver, two putters and a sand wedge. Now that would be a challenge! Another idea could be the person with the highest number of shots could score points. After all, if you hit a 120 shots opposed to just 75 you are getting more golf. Isn't that the idea?

Audi has been a great presenting sponsor. How do you think the event has raised Audi's profile, and in what particular area especially?

Our partnership with The Business Times is one of the many ways that we are building up the brand in Singapore. The business community is a vital part of any market in the world. We like to support golf in Singapore and BT allows us to achieve this. These sorts of sponsorships always help us to raise our profile. Additionally, the great products we have and the new ones just around the corner build our brand.



Since you first started playing in this event, do you think your game has improved? Your drive has been particularly great, so have you worked on the other areas of your game with a coach?

Absolutely not. Yes I can get off the tee but the short game is terrible. Like I said before, the more shots you hit the better you should get. Perhaps I need to see a golf doctor.

Assuming we invite a celebrity golfer or a leading pro, which one person would you like playing in the event, and why?

I think we should have two. Dustin Johnson could show us how to drive 350 metres. However, he wouldn't qualify for the longest drive. And Jordan Spieth for approach shots into the green and then just on putt. However, we would have to be careful with him because he sometimes has a meltdown and goes into water.

If you are given the choice of playing with one leading golfer as your partner, who would you choose? And why?

Any pro golfer is great to play with. They really can hit a long way and make the game look so easy. However, I would like to play best ball with Rory McIlroy. He seems like a really great guy and not a bad golfer.

What would you like to remember best in your years with playing golf?

I remember my first game in Singapore with Quincy Quek and Lip Ooi. It was at Laguna, at the Masters Course. They made me play off the back markers. Some holes were an extra 200 metres. Quincy advised me to play the white marker first which was about 150 metres ahead. "No way!" was my response and I went for it. Should have listened to the pro.

Photos by Alexcheou Cheng Yi Xiong, courtesy of Audi (below)



AUDI A8 SPECIFICATIONS & FEATURES

Model name: Audi A8 L 3.0 TFSI quattro tiptronic
Engine: 2995cc, V6, TFSI
Power: 340hp
Torque: 500Nm
Top speed: 250km/h
0-100km/h: 5.7s
Consumption: 8.2L/100km

Price: \$437,479 inclusive of COE

Features:

- World Luxury Car 2018
- New mild-hybrid technology with 48-volt electrical system
- quattro all-wheel drive
- MMI touch response