



BY
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ROOKIE PRO QUINTET FINDING LIFE TOUGH

BUT FOO, HADI AND MATES ARE WILLING TO FACE THE MAMMOTH CHALLENGES AHEAD

hey have had stellar amateur careers in golf, winning local events by a mile and faring well in regional tournaments. In fact, Gregory Foo and Marc Ong have also been on South-east Asia Games gold medal-winning teams.

But the trio, along with Abdul Hadi and Jesse Yap, have been finding life on the professional scene a different kettle of fish.

Since the quintet turned professional last October, they have been playing on the Asian Tour, Asian Development Tour (ADT), China Tour PGA Series, with Foo and Ong even appearing on the European Challenge Tour.

But at best, the five who are on Singapore Golf Association's Rookie Professional Programme have been making cuts and winning only small change. But deflated they are not, each of them knowing and fully acknowledging that life on the professional arena is no bed of roses.

So there is no let-up in practice and training, and whenever they are on home soil, they play with each other, enjoying the generosity of the Laguna National Golf and Country Club which has given them free use of its premises, both on course and use of facilities.

THANKFUL

Foo, 24, said: "We are thankful to Laguna National for all the help it has been giving us. Also to the Singapore Golf Association which helps us with part of the expenses (mainly travel and boarding).

"This financial help goes a long way in helping us map out our annual itinerary."

Foo started his professional career with a bang by making the cut at the Asian Tour event in Pakistan and finishing tied-30th last October.

But since then he has finished tied-21st at an ADT event in the Philippines last November and just made cuts at a couple of other tournaments.

He is slated to attend the European Tour Qualifying School (First Stage) in Portugal in October, and if he makes the Second and Final

stages, he could gain a European Tour card.

"It is a mammoth challenge, what with the tough competition. But if we do not try and aim for big breakthroughs, we will only remain stagnant," said Foo.

He added that these events provide us with much big-competition experience, and unless we venture out we will be just ordinary professionals.

Meanwhile Hadi has been making some impression on the regional scene, and his biggest achievement so far since turning pro is winning a China Tour PGA Qualifying School event.

The 23-year-old came through a 27-hole day last February to earn the reward of a full card and eligibility for all 14 PGA Tour Series-China events this year.

At the series' first global qualifying event, an even-par 70 in the final round was enough for a two-stroke win over American Max McGreevy at the Foison Golf Club's Dye course in Guangzhou.

He totalled 272 (65-69-68-70) to top a 120-player field from 14 countries across Asia, Oceania, Europe and North America.

Over the weekend he finished tied-49th for a prize of almost \$1,000 in a China Tour PGA event, the Guangzhou Open at Nansha Golf Club. And he is playing in another event in Dongguan this week with countrymen Ong and Quincy Quek.



Abdul Hadi (left) is playing in China, while Gregory Foo (below) will be heading for Portugal.



THAI DENWIT REIGNS, S'POREANS IMPRESS

Only three of the 97 players recorded under-par totals at the 72nd Singapore Open Amateur Championship at the Laguna National Golf & Country Club's Classic course last week.

And among them were two Singaporeans who, however, played second fiddle to winner Denwit David Boriboonsub of Thailand on the newly-renovated Classic course.

Denwit recorded a five-under total of 283 with rounds of 68, 74, 70 and 71 to emerge the champion from Singapore's Low Wee Jin, who finished three

strokes behind.

Low shot 69, 74, 72 and 71 for a 286 total.

Taking third spot was Singaporean Nicklaus Chiam on 287 (69-72-72-74) while former SEA Games team gold medallist Joshua Ho bounced back with a final-day four-under 68 to finish fourth on 288 (70-73-77-68).

Four other Singapore youngsters showed the benefits of the SGA Youth Development programme, notably Hiroshi Tai (10th on 291), Donovan Lee (21st on 295), Lucius Toh (23rd on 296) and Sean Lee

(30th on 299), against the big challenge from players from a host of countries from the region.

The golfers were in full praise of the renovated Classic course while Laguna National strategic adviser to the chairman Patrick Bowers added: "From the outset, our goal for the renovation was to maintain a stern and unique test of golf, while addressing playability and accessibility challenges to improve the layout. We believe we achieved this balance while maintaining the uniqueness of the Classic course." — Godfrey Robert