

BY
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SENTOSA GOLF CLUB ON TOP OF THE WORLD

WORLD'S BEST GOLF CLUB AWARD IS A TESTAMENT TO GREAT WORK BY GENERAL MANAGER ANDY JOHNSTON AND HIS TEAM

THE name Sentosa means peace and tranquility in Malay, derived from the Sanskrit term "santosh" transcribed as contentment or satisfaction.

It was a far cry from what the island was once, when named Pulau Blakang Mati, and throwing up lines ringed by the words "dead" and "death".

History, as a prisoner-of-war camp at the then Fort Siloso housing Australian and British inmates of the Japanese in 1942 (World War II), also paints a gloomy picture of the island referring to dead bodies and haunting spirits.

From the ashes of that dark backdrop, Sentosa has risen to become a tourist paradise, attracting millions of locals and foreigners to the seaside resort.

And one of the island's main attractions is Sentosa Golf Club which was named recently as the World's Best Golf Club at the World Golf Awards.

The club's general manager and director of agronomy, Andrew Johnston's immediate reaction to the news was: "It still hasn't sunk in. It's not often you can call yourself No. 1."

"This is a great achievement not just for the club, but also Singapore. We've shown we are able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the best in the world."

And on his return from receiving the award in Abu Dhabi, the affable Johnston said: "As I reflect on the recent achievements of Sentosa Golf Club, the goalposts are definitely getting bigger now."

"Our accomplishments mean we will be judged differently forever, meaning that no matter how good our courses and services are, we will always be compared with being No. 1."



Sentosa Golf Club (above) wins global award and club's general manager Andy Johnston (centre, in picture right) holds the trophy. Beside him is Steve Rider (host) and Ela Clark (host).



"Resting on our laurels will not work, mostly because nobody cares about the awards you won yesterday. You are judged by the service and standards you provide today."

The World's Best Golf Club is a new category introduced at this year's awards, inaugurated in 2014. Factors such as overall quality of the facility on a day-to-day basis, number of world-class tournaments hosted, commitment to environmental sustainability and junior golf are taken into account.

Votes were cast by professionals working within the golf industry and the public (golf tourism customers).

While there was no award for Best Golf Club in previous years, the iconic St Andrews Links in Scotland had won the previous five World Best Golf Course titles. The Championship Course at Carnoustie Golf Links was named best course in 2019.

Said Singapore Golf Association president Ross Tan: "As the national governing body of golf, we are privileged to have the support of Sentosa Golf Club to help us develop and nurture the

talent of local golfers for the future.

"Through a dedicated sponsorship programme, by allowing our junior golfers access to the best practice facilities Asia has to offer, as well as two championship courses in tournament-ready conditions, Sentosa Golf Club is helping us give local golfers the best possible chance to compete on the world stage."

Sentosa Golf Club has two world class courses. Serapong, which hosts the SMBC Singapore Open, was ranked 58th in the biennial Golf Digest's World's 100 Great Course list in 2016. It was 79th last year.

The New Tanjong course, which Johnston redesigned with a \$32-million facelift in 2016 is the venue for the HSBC Women's World Championships.

The club had also hosted the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championships for men and the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Championships over the last 12

months. In all, Sentosa GC had hosted six globally-televised events in the last year.

The club's membership is capped at its current size of about 1,500 members, with 70 per cent of them local."

In sharing the global accolade with the management, staff and members of Sentosa GC, Johnston, said: "It is my honour to represent our world-class club and its members, as well as the men and women who make our achievements possible."

Signing off, he added: "I can't also help but be drawn to the words of the great boxer Muhammad Ali, who once said: 'Champions come and go, but to be legendary you got to have heart, more heart than the next man, more than anyone in the world.'"

BANYAN TREE SCORES BIG AT WORLD GOLF AWARDS

BANYAN Tree celebrated double joy at the recent 6th Annual World Golf Awards in Abu Dhabi last month.

Its 18-hole championship course, Laguna Golf Phuket was named Thailand's Best Course 2019, and the group's flagship, Banyan Tree Phuket claimed the Best Golf Hotel award.

Launched in 2014, World Golf Awards recognise excellence in golf tourism, world-class courses and golf destinations through its annual awards programme.

Votes for a range of categories were cast by golf professionals and the public over a nine-month duration.

Paul Wilson, assistant vice-president/group director of Laguna Golf and Banyan Tree – and spur us to be a forerunner and continually raise the bar to deliver excellent service and exceptional experiences."

Located at Bang Tao Bay, on the northwest coast of Phuket Island, a 20-minute drive from Phuket International Airport,



Laguna Golf Phuket is an 18-hole, par-71 golf course.

With easy access by complimentary shuttle between surrounding hotels in Laguna Phuket, the redesigned golf course has been revitalised to world-class standards. The layout is playable yet a truly challenging golf course for enthusiasts of all abilities.



Top, centre: Banyan's Paul Wilson receives the trophies.

Above and left: Laguna Phuket and Banyan resort.

TAY AND JINDER ENJOY ASIA-PAC AWARD

THE duo are familiar faces at golf clubs and corporate events.

Not surprisingly, for both Desmond Tay and Jinder Aujla have been in the golf industry for two decades and more.

Tay, 45, a corporate finance person at Singapore Island Country Club for long, became general manager in 2016.

Jinder, 56, has worked at four different clubs, namely as an executive at Tanah Merah Country Club, senior executive at Laguna National, head of golf at Orchid Country Club and now as general manager of Warren Golf and Country Club.

And for his highly-rated role as general manager, Tay was award-

ed the winner at the recent Asia-Pacific Golf Awards ceremony at Gurgaon's DLF Golf and Country Club in India.

The hardworking Jinder won the first runner-up honours.

Jinder said: "I am humbled and honoured to have received this award after 31 years in the golf industry. It is also a tribute to Warren Golf and Country Club whose management have been very helpful to me over the past six-plus years."

Aside of working as a club official, Jinder has also been refereeing since 2000. As one of the few pioneer referees, he has officiated at many international events, including the Singapore Open.

