



Having just completed his 25th year as a professional golfer, former Singapore longtime No. 1 Mardan Mamat stands at a crossroads to his career.

At 52, he easily qualifies for the Senior Tour, but the lure of the Asian Tour (in which he has played in almost 450 tournaments) and the regional events such as the ADT and co-sanctioned competitions encourages him to remain status quo and take on the “youngsters”.

Still, as he ponders over a tilt at the lucrative Japan Senior Tour where his Thai friends Prayad Marksang, 54, and Thaworn Wiratchant, 53 (both former Singapore Open winners) have been flourishing, he is undecided about making a permanent switch.

A recent four-shot victory at his first shot at the Senior section of the Singapore Professional Golfers' Association (SPGA) tournament at Palm Springs in Batam has convinced him that he would do well in the older section.

But he said: “While the Japan Tour is inviting, the qualifying process is tough and extensive, and I am not sure if I would want to go through the tedium. Still, it remains an option.”

In Batam, early this month, Mardan played a five-under total of 211 (69-73-69) to beat perennial former winner M. Murugiah and 15 other players to win \$1,800 for the three-day outing.

Contrasting this, is his 2019 season in the Asian Tour where he had a sweet-sour outing (his best was his tied-fifth position in the Mercuries Taiwan Masters last October which won him a handsome US\$29,250 (\$40,600).

That showing helped him finish 63rd on last year's Asian Tour's Order of Merit, just three slots from an automatic invitation (for players 60th and below) to all the Tour's tournaments.

MARDAN, 52, CONSIDERS SENIOR OPTION

BUT LURE OF ASIAN TOUR AND JAPAN SENIOR TOUR MAY SEE FORMER S'PORE NO. 1 TACKLE BOTH



Mardan practises chipping at Warren.

'I WAS CONCERNED WHEN I HEARD FROM MARDAN, WHOM I MET LAST MONTH, THAT HE HAD NO COURSE TO PLAY AND PRACTICE. HOW CAN THIS BE?... I FELT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE. SO I BROUGHT THE MATTER UP TO MY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THEY WERE UNANIMOUS THAT WE SHOULD ADOPT MARDAN AND ALLOW HIM THE FACILITIES.'

— JINDER AUJLA, GENERAL MANAGER, WARREN GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB

Said Mardan: “Despite that, there are at least 20 events on the Asian Tour based on my career earnings and a few more on the ADT Tour for me, every season, and that should prove enticing.”

The celebrated golfer, whose biggest win was the European Tour's OSIM Singapore Masters at Laguna National's Masters course in 2007 where he won \$270,000, has won almost \$4 million in career earnings, the bulk of which has come from the Asian Tour.

Once ranked inside the top 200, the current 799th ranked player on the Official World Golf Rankings, believes that there is spring in his step as he looks ahead to his 53rd birthday in October.

ADOPTED BY WGC

“I am hitting the ball well, my overall game is still there, and I have confidence that I can do well on the Asian scene”, added the affable Mardan, who has just been adopted by Warren Golf and Country Club.

Murugiah, who runs a teaching academy and the pro shop at Warren, raved about Mardan, saying: “I am amazed at his play. He still has a good all-round game, and although he is not the longest off the tee among us, he has superb approach play.”

Mardan's next assignment was to be the Maybank Malaysian Open at Kota Permai Golf and Country Club from March 5 to 8. But it has been postponed because of Covid-19.

KUDOS TO WARREN, SENTOSA FOR PRO-ADOPTION

With little national and sponsor support, Singapore's golfing professionals have a tough life.

While some straddle between playing and teaching duties in an attempt to make a living, those who manage to compete in events, such as the Asian Tour and the Asian Development Tour (ADT), have found the competition very tough.

That being the backdrop, it is welcome news that Warren Golf and Country Club and Sentosa Golf Club have stepped forward to adopt two of the leading local players.

Mardan Mamat, at Warren, and Koh Dengshan, at Sentosa, have training and playing privileges and the occasional equipment support from sponsors as they negotiate a difficult career.

And Audi Singapore has been sponsoring Quincy Quek, especially in the loan of a car for tournaments held in Singapore.

In a very challenging 2019, Mardan finished as the top Singaporean in the Asian Tour's Order of Merit with US\$41,346.79 in 63rd position.

Jesse Yap is second best at No. 128 with US\$8,449 and Quincy, at No. 136, with US\$6,661.67.

On the ADT Tour, Mardan won almost US\$14,800 and Quek almost US\$12,700.

And in the Singapore Professional Golfers' Association Order of Merit, Yap leads with \$9,150, followed by Quek (\$7,400) and Koh (\$6,125).

Of course, some of the professionals venture into the China PGA events and other regional tournaments and having been making some money. But this remains a gamble for if they miss the cut or finish low down the leaderboard, they are in for a deficit.

So there is some apprehension among the players for making such trips, unless a sponsor steps in to help with the cost.

Photo: Warren Golf and Country Club

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