

To play or not to play?

That is the dilemma facing Singapore's professional golfers whose careers have hit a standstill.

The irony of it is that the first option is what every pro golfer would ideally want.

But, against the grim reality of losing than making money, many local pros shun mediocre tournaments after getting their mathematics right.

Consider this: The dozen local playing pros compete mostly at the Asian Development Tour events, with prize money ranging from US\$60,000 to US\$100,000 in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

And generally, if you don't finish in the top five of these events, you cannot cover the cost of travel, stay, food, caddie fees and other incidentals for a week.

For Choo Tze Huang, whose biggest winning purse was almost US\$27,000 in a 10-year pro career from the Barclays Singapore Open in 2013, there is the US\$150,000 prize money carrot from the second-tier Japan Tour for which he can play 15 events.

But he can make money only if he finishes in the top 10.

Facing such a predicament with cost of competing in these tournaments amounting to at least \$3,000 per event, local pros

BY GODFREY ROBERT

PROS CHOO AND KOH SECURE SPONSORSHIP

GOLFING BUDDIES AND BUSINESS PARTNERS JAMES AND KELVIN SEE MERIT IN HELPING THE TWO TALENTED GOLFERS



(Clockwise from left) James Koh, Choo Tze Huang, Koh Dengshan and Kelvin Chng enjoy the camaraderie.

always work out the sums even after securing twin sharing with fellow golfers from the region.

For Choo, 33, and fellow pro Koh Dengshan, 32, such burdensome worries have been swept under for at least a year because of two "god-fathers" in businessmen James Koh and Kelvin Chng.

Urged by Marina Bay teaching pro Peter Ang,

who has been coaching Koh and Chng for two years, the business partners have stepped forward to cover the expenses for the two pros.

Koh, 42, co-owner of watch company Chrono95, also a member of Sentosa and Tanah Merah and a 18-handicapper, said: "I was a caddie at Tanah Merah when I was 13 years old so I know the golf scene.

"I spent a few years in banking subsequently, and now that I am running a watch business with Kelvin, we have time to enjoy playing golf and also give something back to the game via sponsorship.

"When Peter explained the gloomy scenario about our local pros, we decided that we should help Choo and Koh who are talented

golfers who need more competition."

Chng, 41, a member of Sentosa, Tanah Merah and SICC and also founder and adviser of Fintech Alliance Global, added: "James and I played a few rounds with the two pros and we agreed that they have ability but need more exposure.

"By helping them we hope to ease their financial burden somewhat and encourage them to play in all the tournaments for which they qualify or get invited."

Choo beamed: "Now I can compete in 25 events in two Tours while Koh has about 20 tournaments for the year. The goodwill gesture by James and Kelvin frees our minds from worries about coughing up money pre-event and during event.

"This generous act will encourage us to do well. It will incentivise and motivate us to play better. We hope to repay their faith in us."

PGA TOUR AGREES TO NEW TV DEAL

The PGA TOUR announced its new nine-year domestic media rights portfolio from 2022 to 2030.

"Following a comprehensive process of studying the market, talking to all interested parties and analysing our various options, we're excited to announce that we have entered into new agreements with our existing partners ViacomCBS and Comcast/NBC Sports Group, while establishing a new long-term relationship with Disney and ESPN+," said PGA TOUR Commissioner Jay Monahan.

"We were extremely pleased with the interest we received from the market - both with incumbents and other media companies - and are excited that our current partners shared our vision for the future, and we are equally excited to be

back in business with Disney and ESPN+.

"These new deals will be a major win for our fans, bringing an elevated commitment from all three partners to help us expand and innovate our content and its delivery."

Financial details were not disclosed, reported the PGA TOUR. CBS and NBC will maintain weekend coverage of most FedExCup tournaments, with CBS averaging 19 events and NBC eight events each season through the life of the agreements.

CABLE PARTNER

NBC Sports Group also will continue as the TOUR's cable partner, with GOLF Channel providing all early-round coverage and early weekend coverage of every FedExCup event each season, along with PGA TOUR Champions and the Korn

Ferry Tour.

Further strengthening the ties, the TOUR and NBC Sports will expand their collaborative content and programming relationship.

Another central component of the new agreements will see the PGA TOUR assume responsibility of the onsite production area and technical infrastructure each week, enabling it to more efficiently aggregate, distribute and develop content for its various platforms worldwide. CBS and NBC will still use their own production and announce teams, led by their producers, directors and production personnel.

For the first time, the TOUR's digital rights were negotiated concurrently with its linear offering and will have a new, exciting, direct-to-consumer home: ESPN+. — WIRE SERVICES

tried & tested

VERSATILE WEDGES

With PXG calling it the "Jack-of-all-trades" of high-lofted wedges, the new 0311 Sugar Daddy CNC milled wedges offer more versatility with a key improvement to its design.

Unlike other brands that incorporate weights within the head design, PXG's proprietary weighting system contributes to overall aesthetics in addition to its functionality.

The new CNC milled wedges feature a high toe design, adding more of their high-density tungsten alloy and lighter titanium weights to the toe that moves CG higher and towards the centre of the face to improve playability on open face chip and pitch shots.

The new 0311 Sugar Daddy is available in two sole options; the 09 Sole which features a traditional design that performs well across different playing conditions, and a narrower 07 Sole which is more suited for executing open face chips in tighter conditions.

Offering similar features and performance, the new 0311 forged wedges are only available with one sole option, yet still forgiving and versatile in various playing conditions.

Unlike the Sugar Daddy, the forged wedges feature a thicker shelf design that achieves the same result of moving the CG higher and towards the centre of the face.

• The new PXG 0311 Sugar Daddy wedges are available in both Chrome and Xtreme Dark finishes while the 0311 Forged wedges are only available in Chrome. Available at MST Golf stores islandwide — JEREMY THESEIRA



photo: courtesy of Choo Tze Huang (top)