



BY GODFREY ROBERT

IN TIME WITH

ROLEX

Albert Chiu, 55, the Executive Chairman of Asia Pacific Region of EFG International and Chairman of EFG Young Athlete Foundation, has been a massive supporter of golf. EFG, a Swiss bank based in Geneva, also has offices in Hong Kong and Singapore, two countries it is interested in where promotion of golf is concerned. EFG also sponsors players, among them Tiffany Chan and Stephanie Ho in Hongkong. Chiu has also offered help to Singapore woman professional Koh Sock Hwee.



EFG BOSS CHIU THROWS HIS WEIGHT BEHIND GOLF DEVELOPMENT

THE HONG KONG-BASED BANK CHAIRMAN IS ALSO KEEN IN HELPING JUNIORS IN S'PORE ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

How did you get interested in golf, and when did you start playing? How often do you play?

Albert: I started playing golf with my wife about 18 years ago but we stopped for almost 15 years since our second boy was born as we both wanted to give more time to our family, especially during the weekends. Our boys have now gone overseas for studies since last year, so we are now able to spend more time on the golf courses. My current handicap is best kept a secret, I just want say that it is not as good as I wish.

How long has EFG Bank been involved in golf? Did you get the bank interested in sponsorship of golf? How much is the involvement now?
EFG Bank has been involved

in supporting junior golf for more than 12 years, since 2008. The Hong Kong Golf Association approached us for support of their most talented junior golfers at that time and we agreed to sponsor the EFG Elite Young Golfer Programme for six years and supported the likes of Tiffany Chan and Stephanie Ho. They were only 14 years old then.

We continued to be actively involved in the golf scene in the region since then, like setting up our own charity foundation to provide scholarships for more home-grown and talented young golfers so that they can access better coaching or be able to compete overseas more regularly.

Since five years ago, we have been the title sponsors of the EFG Hong Kong Ladies Open. We have been the sponsor for Tiffany

Chan, 27, since she turned professional in 2017. We are obviously very proud of her achievements so far. She is the first ever Hong Kong golfer to play in the LPGA (now in the third year and counting) as well as in the Olympic Games.

Chloe Chan, a 16-year-old talented teen in Hong Kong, is also our scholarship golfer as well since two years ago. We have also sponsored the Mission Hills Young Golfer Programme since 2018 and through this we have supported hundreds of up-and-coming young golfers in China.

Now that EFG Bank has moved overseas with golf events, how far do you see the bank going? Why did you choose Singapore as a venue for events?

We are very pleased that we can be the title sponsor of

the EFG Singapore Junior Masters. It is not only the first World Amateur Ranking Points earning event in Singapore for junior golfers but, more importantly, the first competitive event for our rising stars in the sports since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020.

As a big part of our corporate social responsibility, we have a strong commitment to play our part in supporting homegrown young sporting talents. The sponsorship is just the first step for EFG Bank to be involved in this direction and we would continue to work closely with partners who share the same vision with EFG to support young and talented athletes in the territory.

EFG Bank is a major international Swiss bank and we have an important and

fast-growing operation in Singapore. Therefore, it is only right for us to contribute back to the Singapore society through various means. Through the introduction of Singapore Golf Association and Singapore Ladies Golf Association, we are aware that there are so many young and hopeful golf talents in Singapore. As one of the major international cities in the Asia Pacific Region, we believe Singapore is the best venue for such a meaningful event.

How did the recent tournament at Laguna National come about? You said you met Lyn (Yeo), if so how did she convince you to take up the event?

I was introduced to Lyn Yeo and Kevin Khoo of Laguna National this summer and

have been so impressed by their passion and commitment to develop the junior golfing talents in Singapore. They were simply amazing. Lyn has been a massive campaigner for junior golf and Kevin and Laguna National have been very supportive of the sport's development. So when Lyn approached me to be the title sponsor of the Singapore Junior Masters, it did not take long for us to agree.

We are very pleased with the organisation of the whole event and simply astonished by the quality of the young players in the tournament. The only unfortunate setback was that we could not invite a few young players from Hong Kong, like Chloe Chan and Arianna Lau, a young golf prodigy at the age of 13, to join as originally planned.

Due to the cancellation of the Travel Bubble between Hong Kong and Singapore, they were not able to participate.

Can you state if you will be involved in the three events that Lyn is planning to stage in



Albert Chiu (centre) walking with spectators at the EFG Hong Kong Ladies Open.

Singapore next year? If so, how much is the involvement?

Arts and Sports are in the DNA of our Asia's Community Programme and EFG Bank has always been committed to nurturing our next generation.

Our intention is to be a long term and strong supporter of junior golf in Singapore and play our part to help develop home-grown young talents.

Therefore we are actively evaluating our options and we will obviously view the Singapore Junior Masters very positively as we are very impressed by every aspect of the 2020 tournament so far.

Do you see golf as an important sport for business and networking. What are the benefits of playing golf?

Golf is a leisure sport and one of the more popular outdoor activities. As a low-risk injury game it suits people of all ages. In the pandemic era, playing golf in the open and under the sun provides us many health benefits like relaxing the body and reducing stress.

Known as a gentleman's game, golf is a socially enjoyable sport and a great way to meet friends and

business associates. The interaction with fellow golfers helps foster relationships. I'm glad that my love for golf also provides quality business networking and connection time with clients. It's one stone two birds for me and EFG Bank. The sport keeps me healthy and supports business development at the same time.

If you have to choose a dream flight with three other players who would be on the list?

Tiger Woods is first choice. It would be a great privilege to play alongside a true legend and, in my view, the best player of all time.

Then I would choose Annika Sorenstam, the "Lady Tiger", and in my reckoning the greatest woman player. The Swede had lifted the standard of women's golf and has supported global golf with her imposing presence on and off the course.

Tiffany Chan would complete the list as she is the first LPGA player from Hong Kong whom I have known since she was 14.

SHANNON SHINES, HEALY TAKES HONOURS

Singapore's Shannon Tan showed the benefits of her stint in Australia when she raced to a 13-stroke victory in the inaugural EFG Singapore Junior Masters at Laguna National Golf and Country Club recently.

The 16-year-old shot steady rounds of three-under 69, 69 and a cool 72 for a six-under 210 total to finish way ahead of her Singapore counterpart Inez Ng in the Girls' Open competition at the Masters course.

Shannon, the overwhelming champion said: "I've been practising every day, even when I couldn't compete because of the Covid-19 pandemic. So I was prepared physically and mentally for tournament play. I just want to focus on my game and let the rest work itself out."

In an exciting finish to the boy's event, James Jay Gould Healy bounced back from a three-shot deficit to claim the honours with a four-under 68 for an even-par 216 total from Indian national Jayaditya Saluja.

While Healy started slowly with a par and bogey, two birdies at holes 4 and 5 kept him on pace with Jayaditya, whose opening birdie kept him ahead for the front nine.

Two local hopefuls, 18-year-old Brandon Han and 15-year-old Darryl Low, were thick in the race as well. Brandon began the day at three-over and Low at two-over, but the former fired two birdies in a steady front nine to turn around at plus-1, and just one stroke behind Jayaditya.

Darryl traded bogeys with



EFG's Albert Chiu (left) and Lyn Yeo (right) with the podium finishers.

birdies to remain the same. On the back nine, things started to get heated up with, firstly, Jayaditya dropping shots with a double-bogey at the 10th and another bogey at the 12th to be three-over. His three rivals made a birdie each during that same span of three holes and were well poised, Brandon at even-par, Darryl (one over) and Healy (two over).

The Laguna National-based Jayaditya birdied the

13th to provide some reprieve, but subsequent bogeys at 14 and 16 made it a difficult task mentally for the two-day leader to turn around.

His frustration was felt on the par-four 14th hole when a mishit approach from the left side rough drew a frustrated groan from the +1.1 handicapper who had erstwhile been a bastion of calm.

Meanwhile Healy's two birdies on 14 and 15 gave him

the lead at even par. By the time the group stood at the 18th tee-box, it was Healy (+1), Brandon (+2), Darryl (+3) and Jayaditya (+4), still with the treacherous par-four finishing hole to play.

Healy hit his drive safely in the fairway as well and stiffed his approach four feet from the pin, securing a good chance for birdie and certainly, for par at least. The plus-0.4 handicapper converted the clutch putt to win by a stroke with a 68 and 216 total.

He was followed closely by Brandon (217) and Darryl, who tied for third with Jayaditya (at 220).

Other winners of the day were Irvyn Tan (Junior Boys' Division) with a combined score of 229, and Jillian Kuk (Junior Girls' Division) with a combined score of 232.

PHOTOS: EFG

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