



**S A G D B**

south african golf development board

GROWING THE GAME · BUILDING THE NATION

For more than 15 years the South African Golf Development Board (SAGDB) has been working to broaden the reach of golf in South Africa by coaching and mentoring young players from disadvantaged communities. In the process it has established itself as one of the premier sports development programmes in the country.

The Board works in partnership with the South African Golf Association and all its affiliated unions, meaning that South Africa's golf community itself plays a key role in both funding the Board's programmes and making facilities available to young players.

The backbone of the SAGDB's funding however comes through the Alfred Dunhill Links Foundation, which ensures that it not only remains sustainable but has been able to expand into all parts of the country.

Grant Hepburn, Managing Director of the SAGDB, said: "The support that we receive from the Alfred Dunhill Links Foundation is very generous and has become an essential part of the funding we need to carry on our work. You cannot overestimate the good that this is doing in South Africa.

"It says much for the caring and giving nature of golf and golfers that a major international event taking place in St Andrews can also do so much good to support disadvantaged young boys and girls starting their careers or even just trying their hand at the game 6,000 miles away.

"Thanks to the funding, we have been able to produce over 200 provincial golfers, and players that have represented South Africa, as well as a number of players that have made the professional ranks. Without this funding and the SAGDB programme, these players would never have been able to afford to play this wonderful game. But the funds we receive also do untold good at the grassroots level where we can take golf into all parts of the country and change young people's lives."

In total, the SAGDB has coached more than 45,000 juniors across all nine of the country's provinces. Most of these players would never have picked up a golf club without the SAGDB's involvement, yet close to 500 of them have attained provincial colours at age group level, and over 50 have gone on to play under-23 and senior provincial golf.

More than 50 players from the SAGDB's ranks have also been accepted into high performance programmes such as the Gary Player School of Excellence, the Ernie Els & Fancourt Foundation and the High Performance Centre at the University of Pretoria. Twelve SAGDB players have gone on to play professionally on the Sunshine Tour.

This ability to take players from complete beginners to the point where they are competing at the highest levels makes the SAGDB unique. No other sporting code in South Africa runs a development initiative with such scope. While the SAGDB strives to unearth and nurture exceptional talent, it also recognises that not every child that comes into its programmes will become a top golfer.

It therefore focuses not only on teaching these children how to swing a club, but uses the sport as a tool for social upliftment. The ethics and values that are integral to the game make golf a perfect vehicle for this. Every learner in the SAGDB programme benefits from the lessons that golf teaches, such as discipline, fairness, honesty and respect for others.

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Association Incorporated under Section 21 - # Reg 1999/007362/08 •

Non-Profit Organisation - #Reg 046-597-NPO.Public Benefit Organisation - #Ref No 930005996

President: J. P. Rupert, Chairperson: S. M. Nathan,  
Directors: G. I. Hepburn\* Managing, D. P. Bruyns,  
D. M. Egdes, I. Ficalbi, J.S. Loftie-Eaton,  
C. Logie\*, G. Conradie, A. E. Rupert  
\*Executive Directors

Through giving the best players in its programmes the opportunity to compete across South Africa and even internationally, the SAGDB also creates role models in communities that are badly in need of them. When children see others from their schools and their towns achieving at levels never before imagined, they come to understand that this is possible for them too. The SAGDB has seen how this creates a cycle of positivity – where success breeds more success.

The SAGDB has now established a nationwide infrastructure supported by staff members with many years experience. It runs coaching programmes in partnership with every provincial golf union in South Africa and is seen as the development arm of the South African Golf Association. The coaches are all drawn from the local communities, which not only creates employment but also ensures that the players benefit from being taught in their home language by men and women who understand their circumstances. In total the SAGDB runs 44 such programmes in 14 different regions and employs 48 coaches.

The SAGDB's work begins at the basic, grass roots level where the aim is to create mass participation. The Board's coaches visit primary schools where learners between the ages of seven and ten are introduced to the game. These introductory sessions are conducted on school fields or community sports grounds, and for most of the children are the first encounter they ever have with the sport. Initially the emphasis is on the fun and enjoyment of the game and everyone is given a chance to participate.

From these sessions, the SAGDB will invite the most enthusiastic learners to join its official programme. These children will become part of one of the SAGDB's coaching chapters, which are situated close to driving ranges or golf courses that support golf development.

Those learners who reach the required level of proficiency will progress to playing on the golf course. This is not just a question of having them play the game, but bringing them into the culture of the sport and its clubs. For most of the children in the SAGDB, this is a significant experience.

The players that show the greatest aptitude in each of the SAGDB's regions graduate to premier squads, usually made up of the 12 most promising players across the area. These players are provided with their own equipment and receive advanced coaching from the region's head coach. They are also entered into official junior golf tournaments where they are able to compete on a level-footing with their more fortunate peers. Many SAGDB players excel in these events, breaking down barriers and ensuring that golf is increasingly more representative at junior level.

SAGDB players who achieve success in junior national tournaments also put themselves in line to gain selection to age-group provincial teams. Since 2010, at least one player from the SAGDB has competed at every national inter-provincial tournament played in South Africa.

For every golfer the ultimate achievement is to gain professional status, and many youngsters in the SAGDB programme share this ambition. To date, 12 SAGDB graduates have earned their cards to play on the Sunshine Tour, and with ongoing support from the Tour, the SAGDB believes that more players will reach this level.



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### **International Triangular Match**

Since 2010, the Alfred Dunhill Links Foundation has directly funded an innovative International Triangular match between a SAGDB team and teams from the South African Golf Association Juniors and the Scottish Golf Union. This year the match took place at Wanderers Golf Club in Johannesburg in February.

While the SAGDB team finished third, it was their best ever performance in the competition, finishing with seven points. The SAGA Juniors won 15.5 points to claim their third successive victory in the contest, while Scotland finished a close second with 13.5 points.

SAGDB Managing Director Grant Hepburn said: "This tournament is a wonderful concept and provides the perfect stage for our young players to take part in a significant competition and gain invaluable experience for the future. The SAGDB boys lost at Wanderers, but believe me they were celebrating their performance at the end. We aim for the gap to continue to narrow as it has every year."

### **SAGDB players visit Open Championship**

For two 17-year-old SAGDB boys – Craig Baba from Western Province and Banele Mavuso from Mpumalanga – the 2015 Open Championship is one that they will never forget. Not just because their hero Louis Oosthuizen came so close to claiming his second Open title, but because just five days earlier they were with him at St Andrews experiencing the build up to the event.

Baba and Mavuso were invited to Scotland by the Scottish Golf Union, which has developed close ties with the SAGDB over the last six years.

At St Andrews they met SAGDB President Johann Rupert, Chairman Selwyn Nathan and a legion of their golfing heroes - Nick Price, Ernie Els, Louis Oosthuizen, Charl Schwartzel, Branden Grace and George Coetzee. They also met Tiger Woods and Martin Kaymer.

To cap off their experience at St Andrews, they received an invitation from Gary Player to join him for a braai for dinner at his house together with many of the players and other notable guests. The chance to spend time in this company was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn from some of the best.

The two-week trip also saw the players compete two tournaments, experience a round at Muirfield and play in the Pro-Am of the Scottish Open with players who just a week later would be in the field at St Andrews.

Baba said: "It was really a great experience for me as a junior to compete in an event like that. My round with Justin Rose was the highlight of the trip. I had to bring my 'A' game."

For more information contact Grant Hepburn, Managing Director, SAGDB at [gh@grantheburn.com](mailto:gh@grantheburn.com)

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