

PUTTING IT TO YOU

OFFICIAL MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER OF THE RPAGC

Issue 6

26th June 2009

Well, here we are nearly half way through 2009 and wondering where the time has gone. Post “Mad Hatter” is notoriously a quiet time of the year with no major tournaments on the go, fewer hours in the day and cooler weather. Nevertheless, for the scribe, one major incident has taken place, one in which his very old golf cart decided that enough was enough and decided to commit *hara kiri* by way of spontaneous combustion just in front of the 13th green. Although it was almost a unique occurrence, it is a handy reminder to all golf cart owners to ensure that their trusty steeds are adequately insured “just in case”. There is more on that issue later on in this newsletter. Also, there is a synopsis on the latest Mad Hatter's Tournament plus a short article on the work that goes into putting this major event together.

The clearing of bush and replacement of fencing at various points around our perimeter is being performed using a casual labourer (Livingstone) paid by the club and supervised by Cecil Jones-Phillipson. Not only has Cecil spent many hours with Livingstone on the job, but he has also provided transport and food for Livingstone out of his own pocket. Much of this activity is over the weekend when most of us are enjoying our leisure time. Thanks, Cec, for your input on this project, which is much appreciated by all members.

Sally has now left the management scene altogether and I am sure you will all join me in saying a big “THANKYOU” to her for filling the gap between managers so adequately, efficiently and, may I say, glamorously as well.

CAPTAIN'S COMMENTS

After the hustle and bustle of the Mad Hatter, things have certainly quietened down, normal for this time of year as hopefully, we await an influx of visitors over the June/July school holidays. After that, of course, our Royals tournament is held early in August when we expect a large contingent of golfers from Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Harare.

Rain is desperately needed on the course as our fairways are again showing signs of wear and tear with virtually no growth. Well done to green-keeper Graham Oliver and his staff for what they have accomplished during these trying conditions and, of course, to our Chairman of Greens, Cecil Jones - Phillipson.

Congratulations to our Club Champion John Kew who successfully defended his title on Sunday 31st May on a day most of us would prefer to forget. Conditions for golf were shocking with 70 kph gusting winds and the odd rain squall adding to our misery. Half the field did not complete the 36 holes choosing rather to seek shelter in the clubhouse. Well done and thank you to those who hung in there and completed their rounds in what was a true test of character and course management after the benign conditions of recent weeks .

Finally farewell to Gillian Clayton, half of our successful Baxters' Caterers team, who will be leaving us at the end of the month after a year at the club. Thank you, Gilly, for all you have done at the club over the last year, for all your hard work in food preparation and service, for the smiles (and frowns) and the laughter (and moans). I am sure all members join me in wishing you well in the future and I know you will pop in to see us from time to time.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The end of the financial year is upon us and I would like to thank all those members who have already settled their annual subscriptions and other related payments. Thank you and enjoy the discount! The auditors will be arriving in July and we are confident that this year's audit will be much smoother than that for 2007-08. Our ladies in the Admin. Office, Denise and Brenda, have put in a huge effort to have everything ready for them. Thank you ladies.

Our catering contract is being renewed with Bella, but sadly Gillian will be leaving to take up a position at the Links. Good luck, Gillian, and thank you for a job well done. We will no doubt be seeing you from time to time.

The bar stock is now fully computerised. Thanks once again to Denise for all her help in this regard. Regular stock checks are being conducted and we are happy with the results of these surveys. We are still awaiting the installation of our Hansa Draught tap which should be up and running soon.

A lot of effort has been put into planning the future strategy of the Pro-shop and we are confident that we will be able to make an announcement in this respect very soon. Thank you to Stephen Purdon for assisting us on a part time basis during this period.

We are awaiting quotations for our new caddie aprons, which are going to be sponsored, and plan to have them in place by the end of July.

We are introducing a monthly draw at the Club to be held on the last Friday night of each month. Tickets will be on sale in the bar and the pro-shop shortly. The first draw is going to take place on Friday 24th July at 6.30 pm. Guidelines and the rules for the draw will be placed on all notice-boards for your attention.

WILDLIFE MATTERS

All our wildlife appear to be in excellent condition and doing well in spite of the prolonged dry spell. Both young and old animals are holding their condition well.

The springbok rams quickly settled-in and are now an integral part of the herd. We can probably expect to see the first few new members of the "baby bok" team appearing around the end of September, an exciting event that should give us all a lot of pleasure!

Obtaining a bushbuck ram has been a great challenge, mainly due to the difficult habitat which is frequented by members of this species. However, I have just been told by one of our members that he saw a female bushbuck with a newly born kid during a round of golf a few Saturdays ago. This is great news and confirms that we do, in fact, have a mature ram within the club confines.

While our guinea-fowl population appears to have had a very poor hatch this year (probably due to the drought), it is nice to see that there are at least a few chicks running around, which adds to the fun of a round of golf.

At lunchtime on Thursday 4th June, a secretary bird swooped in and landed on the right hand side of the 14th fairway. To the best of your scribe's knowledge, secretary birds have not been seen on our course within recent memory. The bird walked across the 16th and 17th fairways, attracting the attention of both the springbok and blesbok herds as it did so. Whilst the springbok tentatively approached the bird, now on the right side of the 18th, all four blesbok charged, forcing it to take flight for fear of its safety. It then landed on the 16th and made its way on foot up the hill towards the reservoir.

LEAGUE FIXTURES AND RESULTS

Unfortunately, due to the fact that many of our first team members were away, we had to cancel a fixture against Port Elizabeth Golf Club. The second team drew 9 – 9 to maintain their position at the top of the league.

In the last matches of the season, the "A" team beat the PE Golf Club 12 – 6, but lost to Uitenhage 11 – 7. They finished 4th in the league this year.

The "B" team had a most successful season beating P E 12 – 6 in the last match, whilst drawing with Walmer 9 – 9. They finished top of the 3rd league with 16 points out of the possible 18. Congratulations to them as they get promoted to the 2nd league in 2010.

Thank you to Charlie Poulton for organising and selecting teams for the league this year and to all those who represented the club. We need players to commit to playing league and all interested should advise Charlie, even if only as a reserve, as we have had difficulty in filling the 2 teams this year. Port Alfred has always had the reputation of being not only a hospitable place to visit, but also a tough nut to crack on our home course and we don't want to let that slip. We need 2 teams for next year and need to advise the EPGU in the second half of the year for the fixture list to be completed so those keen to participate should please make themselves known.

COURSE AND GREENS

Cecil J-P reports: Monotonously and disappointingly, I have to report that the absence of rain still plagues the course and the whole of the Ndlambe region. However, it remains in relatively good shape as indicated by the good scores recorded by our members.

The 14th green has been re-sodded using a sod cutter on loan from the Kowie Bowling Club. The results look promising and we are holding thumbs for a complete recovery in the near future.

The eradication of kikuyu on tee-boxes and fairways is progressing well, although it is not only a time consuming exercise, but also an expensive one. I have my doubts as to whether we will ever totally win the "war on kikuyu". If any member can give learned input as to methodology by which it might be totally eradicated we would greatly appreciate the feedback.

The clearing of bush from our boundary fence is complete and the erection of the new fence will commence soon. Repairs to the fence are being done "in house".

I am keen to plant more indigenous trees on the course. Are there any members who would like to donate trees to the Club?

The bush at the back of the 11th green has been cut back and the undergrowth cleared.

Two large holes were cut in the fence along the 2nd fairway and behind the 6th tee-box. As a result a search for snares was undertaken on the 22nd June. Six much appreciated club members assisted in this exercise, although we were hoping for more volunteers. A number of snares were found but thankfully no bodies or skeletons. Members are requested to keep an eye open when driving adjacent to any bordering fence and report anything questionable to the Manager.

Please may we once again beseech members to repair their divots? This is not always being done and the course is suffering, especially in this time of drought. Everybody's efforts to this end will be appreciated.

Negotiations with Staff concerning salary increases and terms of employment will be complete by the end of June.

I attended the monthly Greenkeepers' meeting held this month at Bushman Sands and hope to attend the next meeting in July at St Francis Links. I was most impressed with the quality of debate and the willingness of Greenkeepers to share knowledge.

The two pumps at the reservoir above the 15th green which pump water to all other areas over the course, have not been functioning efficiently due to rust. They have consequently been removed and serviced in Port Elizabeth.

Graham Oliver will be undergoing surgery for a knee replacement at the end of June. We wish him well during his hospitalisation and a speedy recovery. I should also like to record my appreciation to Graham and his staff for all they have accomplished on our course during these very difficult times.

STOP PRESS: Over 50 mm of much needed rain has fallen during the last 24 hours. Lets hope we see some rapid recovery on our course.

LADIES SECTION

On 23rd May, twelve RPAGC Ladies played in the Grahamstown GBS Open enjoying superb weather for a very pleasant change. Our attendees all had a great time.

For the first time the Ladies' 36 hole Championship was played over successive afternoons on 25th & 26th May. It proved to be a successful innovation with all 29 available ladies completing all 36 holes. The winner and new stroke play champion for 2009 is Jeannette Brotherton, a most worthy winner.

The Sanlam Cancer Challenge Individual Stableford Competition was played on 2nd June and a total of R1 595 was raised for CANSA.

The ladies who will represent RPAGC on 23rd August in the Regional Finals at the Uitenhage Golf Club will be A Division: Annie Shelver, B Division: Bettine Hattingh and C Division: Sue Roll.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS & COMPETITIONS

Ladies:

- June 30th Lady Graham Trophy Individual Stableford sponsored by the Highlander
- July 7th LGU and Putting sponsored by Pick n Pay
- July 14th 4 Ball Better Ball sponsored by Rosehill Super Spar
- July 21st 3 Ball Alliance sponsored by The Pepper Tree
- July 25th East Cape & Border 36 hole Strokeplay Championships sponsored by Hemingways
- July 26th EC vs Border 36 hole Foresomes sponsored by Hemingways
- July 28th Presidents Prize Individual Stableford

Gents:

- June 27th 2 Ball Alliance sponsored by S A Breweries
- July 1st Individual Medal sponsored by D & A Build It
- July 4th Better ball Stableford sponsored by Unique Properties
- July 8th Better ball Bonus Bogey sponsored by PSG Consultants
- July 11th Better Ball Medal for St Andrew Cup sponsored by GBS
- July 15th 4-Ball Alliance sponsored by Pick 'n Pay
- July 18th 2 Ball Alliance sponsored by S A Breweries
- July 22nd Better ball Stableford sponsored by Rosehill Spar
- July 25th CLOSED EP/Border
- July 26th CLOSED EP/Border
- July 29th Individual Stableford

ANATOMY OF THE MAD HATTER

The Mad Hatter originated 15 years ago after some club members attended the “Barney Barnato” tournament in Kimberly and put forward the idea that a similarly organised tourney should be held here at the RPAGC. Hence the Mad Hatter concept was conceived and put into place. It consists of 6 days of golf, the first three days being either 4-Ball Alliances or Better-Ball competitions, and the last 3 days as Individual Stableford. An “Order of Merit” system is put in place for the individual competitions, the winner of which becomes the overall champion winning a magnificent trophy and a great prize.

The first meeting for the 2010 Mad Hatter Committee was held on the 22nd June, which just goes to show what a long time it takes to organise this prestigious event. A massive amount of effort is allocated to all facets of this celebration of golf, and it largely falls on the shoulders of a few dedicated 1820 members to put it all together.

Dave Page has been involved for no fewer than 14 years, 10 of them as Tournament Director and the last 4 as Assistant to the Tournament Director. This important portfolio covers the management of marshals, starters, players checking-in, card checking, results and identification of winners, the Order of Merit and other sundry activities. Dennis McElwee has taken over for the past 2 years and will continue for the 2010 event. The late, charismatic Roy Hughes performed these duties in an inspired and diligent manner for the two years directly preceding Dennis.

The most difficult portfolio on the committee is that of securing sponsors, one that Andy Simpson has been performing since beyond anyone can recall. We are all extremely grateful to our “Beggars-in-Chief” for so ably performing this unsavoury task for so long. George Spieker has for many years been responsible for the much read daily Hatter Chatter newsletter, although he will be relinquishing this responsibility for the 2010 tourney.

Con van Hasselt was another committee member who gave much of himself in a variety of tasks over the years and initiated the Mad Hatter Raffle, one of the biggest money spinners of the week (prizes this year were worth more than R70 000).

Probably the hardest worker is Colin Reed, whose portfolio as registrar and recently as raffle administrator is one not made for the weak-hearted. Ernie Allen, Guy Hilton-Barber are others who have in recent times committed themselves to ensuring the smooth-running of the Mad Hatter Tournament.

Let us not forget all the nameless starters who brave the early morning chill on the first and tenth holes, ensuring a smooth and efficient start to each day's play. And all those card-checkers,

marshals, caddies etc. who put in their tuppence worth to ensure a successful tournament. My apologies, please, to anybody I have failed to mention.

Then there are the amusing stories associated with the tourney. Like the lady who saw the top of the flag on marshal Dallas Cowie's cart, which was just out of sight over a hill, and mistook it for the pin on the green. She thus unknowingly aimed at the cart and was startled to see the "pin" suddenly move gently away as Dallas put his foot down on the accelerator. Characters, too, like Noel Heale who is reckoned to consume a "Bar One" for every two holes visited during marshalling.

So all in all, there is a great deal of work, time and effort made by just a hand full of 1820 members that pave the way for an enjoyable and successful tourney for the rest of our members and a significant number of visitors from around the country and beyond.

SYNOPSIS MAD HATTER 2009

The 14th Mad Hatter was held from the 27th April this year to 2nd May. Its major objectives were not only to bring in much needed funds to the club by making a handsome profit, but also to market and promote the RPAGC to golfers and others throughout South Africa and beyond. This was to be achieved by ensuring a great golfing time for all participants, efficient organisation, good entertainment, fun, food and fellowship so as both spread the word for future tourneys and make it a permanent date on the calendar every year for those attending.

The net profit for the 2009 Mad Hatter was circa R150 000, so that part of the objective has been adequately accomplished. Feedback would suggest that all those who attended this year had a great time, many suggesting that it was the best ever. Certainly the clubhouse was far better attended after hours than in recent times. It was great to see the bar area full and buzzing from 6 pm till the wee hours of the morning. Feedback from our main sponsors Pam Golding Properties, Rosehill Super Spar and daily sponsors Goodyear, MTN, Chubb, Trellidor and S A Breweries was also positive and they have indicated that they would like to sponsor again next year. Entertainment by Centre Stage was world class and it would be great to see them back in 2010.

GOLF CART INSURANCE

Do you own a golf cart which is garaged at the club? My recent experience of "burn-out" in front of the 13th green has prompted more than one owner to examine the insurance policies covering their carts, or lack of them. My cart was not covered and policies held by the RPAGC do not cover privately owned carts.

Kevin Harpur has found out that the club's insurers, Alexander Forbes Risk Service (PTY) Ltd. will cover carts up to the amount of R25 000 for R41.00 per month and those above R25 000 for R55.00 per month. This will at least cover fire and theft, but we are not sure of what other contingencies would be covered.

For more information, contact Celestine Blouw at 046 392 8502 or email blouwc@forbes.co.za

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF GOLF

Stand proud you noble swingers of clubs and losers of balls:

A recent study found the average golfer walks about 900 miles (1 440 km) a year.

Another study found golfers drink, on average, 22 gallons (123 litres) of beer a year.

That means, on average, golfers get about 41 miles to the gallon or 11.7 km per litre (8.5 litres per 100 km).

Kind of makes you proud. Almost feel like a hybrid.

A golfer was losing badly in his club championships when he hit his ball into the rough. Bending down to retrieve it, he came face to face with a leprechaun. "Would you like some help with your game?" it asked.

"Yes, please," replied the man excitedly.

"Okay," said the leprechaun. "There's just one condition. Every time you call on me for assistance, you will lose one year of your sex life."

The player agreed and won the championship by two strokes. Getting into his car to go home, the man found the leprechaun sitting on the dashboard with a notebook and pencil.

"I assisted you 10 times during the game," the leprechaun reminded him. "You know the rules. Now, what's your name?"

"Father O'Flanagan," replied the golfer.

This heart-warming story should put an end to the canard that golfers are not good husbands.

A husband and wife are on the 9th green when she suddenly collapses from a heart attack.

"Help me, dear", she groaned to her husband.

He quickly called 911 on his cell phone and, after a brief conversation, picked up his putter and lined up his stroke. His wife picked up her head from the green and stared at him. "I'm dying here and you're putting?"

"Don't worry dear", said the husband calmly. "They've found a doctor on the 2nd hole and he's coming to help you."

"Well, how long will he take to get here?", she asked him feebly.

"No time at all", replied the husband. "Everybody has agreed to let him play through".

George and Fred were playing a friendly 2-ball. Playing their tee shots on the 6th, George hooked his ball over some bushes to the left and Fred sliced his over others to his right.

After a short search, George found his ball in a patch of BUTTERCUPS. Making a couple of practice swings, he tested the strength of the BUTTERCUPS, strewing them around as he did so, and then made a great recovery shot, slicing away yet another sweep of ruined BUTTERCUPS.

At that moment, a fairy appeared in a flash of light, declaring herself to be Mother Nature and demanding to know what George thought he was doing with her BUTTERCUPS.

"Just hitting my golf ball", explained George.

"You can't go round destroying BUTTERCUPS just like that", she said. "As a punishment, you will never be allowed to eat BUTTER again. And with that she disappeared.

Quite shaken, George called out to Fred, asking him whether he had found his ball. "I'm looking for it here in a patch of PUSSYWILLOW".

"DECLARE IT LOST IMMEDIATELY AND PLAY 3 OFF THE TEE", screamed back George.
