

South African Blind Golf Association (SABGA)

ISPS Handa SA Open – 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has played havoc with many aspects of our lives this year, not least of which was our golf. The ISPS Handa SA Open event was only the second IBGA-sponsored Open event this year, following the ISPS Handa Australian Open which took place just before lockdown early in the year.

Although we had to postpone the SA Open and World Championships scheduled to have taken place in the Cape this year, we were fortunate that we were able to successfully hold the SA Open at the fantastic Glendower Golf Club, in early December, which also played host to our Open in 2019.



The Glendower Golf Club is an exquisitely designed, highly ranked parkland golf course in Gauteng. Currently ranked #2 in South Africa and #1 in Gauteng. The course boasts lovely kikuyu fairways with 64 bunkers, 27 on the front nine and 37 on the back nine and water hazards on 11 of the 18 holes. Glendower's par 72 layout truly offers a challenge, with accuracy being the key to success.

The large undulating greens were in excellent condition. The exceptionally fast greens made it very challenging. Recent rains in Gauteng also meant that the rough was much more punishing than it was for us last September.

Glendower has hosted many prestigious events in its history, including a handful of South African Open championships over the last decade.

Although not large, the field was very strong. In addition to the 5 South Africans who have Protea Colours, Garrett Slattery (defending gross champion), Ernst Conradie, Morne Els, Leon Strydom and Johan Kotze, we had Charlene Pienaar (our top ranked lady golfer) as well as overseas players in the form of Owen (from England) and teenager Luke Lin (guided by his younger brother, Paul, from the USA).

After the first round Garrett had a 9 stroke lead in the B2 category, but the B3 category was wide open with the two teenagers, Luke Lin and our own Jontey Kotze (who was

the winner of the Development Trophy only a year ago), tied for the lead with Ernst Conradie and Morne Els only a few shots back.

The net competition had virtually been won after the first round, where Owen Robinson had the round of his life coming in with a net 58. Owen went on to comfortably win the net event (135), followed by Charlene (147) and Garrett (150).

The SA Champions were as follows:

- B2: Garrett emerged as the B2 champion (on a score of 192), ahead of Own and Johan.
- B3: Luke held off strong competition to emerge as B3 champion (on a score of 205), ahead of Morne and Ernst.
- Ladies: Charlene was again our best lady golfer (on a score of 217).

Thanks

The SA Blind Golf Association would like to express our sincere thanks to all of those people and organisations who provided financial and other support which made this event possible.

Thanks too to the fantastic team from Glendower, from management, the pro shop, catering, waiters and caddies. We were made to feel extremely welcome throughout the event.

Thanks too to the players and guides who travelled to SA in these difficult times to join us at this year's event.

Last, but by no means least, the players would like to thank the dedicated group of guides and caddies who helped us navigate our way around the course. Special mentions must go to the two teenage guides, Paul Line (who guided Luke) and Arend Muller (who guided Leon Strydom). It was fantastic to see the enthusiasm of youth, which bodes well for the future of the sport.

