



MALTA GOLF ASSOCIATION

1ST BIENNIAL GENERAL MEETING (2006-2008)

Minutes of the 1st Biennial General Meeting
held At the Royal Malta Golf Club on Tuesday, 25th March, 2008 at 18.00 hours

Agenda:

1. **Presentation of all Reports.**
 - a. President's Report
 - b. Treasurer's Report
 - c. 'Tournaments' Report
 - d. Juniors' Academy Report
 - e. Meetings' Report
2. **Appointment of V. Curmi & Associates as Auditors.**
3. **Motions to amend the Constitution.**

Apologies:

Mr. Joseph Cassar, *General Secretary of the Maltese Olympic Committee* and Mr. Vincent Curmi, *partner of V. Curmi & Associates*, could not attend and sent their apologies.

As the statutory quorum of 25 members had not been reached by 18.00 hours, the start of the meeting was postponed by 15 minutes.

The MGA Secretary welcomed the members and requested the observance of a minute's silence in the memory of Alex Mangion, founding member of the Malta Golf Federation and honorary member of the MGA.

1. President's Report

Mr William Beck, *President*, started by addressing the frequently asked questions on the functioning of the MGA. He followed this by highlighting the work done by the MGA according to the relevant paragraphs of the Constitution and to the relations with the pertinent national and international governing bodies. The President concluded by stressing that the MGA's forthcoming work should focus on putting the correct structure in place to be able to entice and embrace a younger generation. [*The President's full report is available as an addendum to these minutes*].

2. Treasurer's Report.

Mr. John Bonello, *Treasurer*, presented and explained the accounts for the financial periods April-December 2006 and January-December 2007.

The accounts were unanimously approved by the members present.

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Aldo Moro Street Marsa MR59064 Malta • Telephone: +356 2122 3704 • Telefax: +356 2122 7020
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3. Tournaments' Report

Mrs. Maureen Borg, *Council Member*, gave a detailed explanation accompanied by a presentation of all the tournaments that the MGA's identified players took part in during 2006 and 2007. Mrs Borg also announced the selected junior to represent Malta in the forthcoming R&A Junior Open.

4. Juniors' Academy Report

Dr David Debono, *Council Member*, reported on the activities of the Juniors' Committee to achieve current and future goals for the development of the game. *[Dr. Debono's full report is available as an addendum to these minutes].*

5. Meetings Report.

Mr Ian Restall, *Secretary*, gave a brief synopsis of the various national and international meetings that the Council Members attended during the past two years.

6. Appointment of Auditors.

Mr. Bonello informed the members that although Mr. Vincent Curmi could not attend the meeting he was willing to act as auditor for the coming two years. The members approved unanimously the appointment of V. Curmi & Associates as the MGA's auditors.

7. Motion to amend Constitution.

Mr. President presented two motions to amend paragraphs 4.5 and 6.1 of the MGA's Constitution. The members present approved both amendments unanimously.

8. Other Matters.

Mrs. Felicity Dix questioned if it was wise of the MGA to become a member of the European Golf Association and if it was possible for the MGA to become a member of the EGA through the English Golf Union.

The President replied that Malta was a country on its own right and therefore representation on the EGA had to be on national level and not through another country. The President explained that Malta had only been a few months affiliated with the EGA and, apart from handicapping matters, the EGA offered opportunities for participation in tournaments and assistance through the respective affiliated golfing countries.

There being no further questions the meeting was called to an end at about 19:30 hours.

*These minutes remain subject to the approval of the members
at the next Biennial General Meeting.*

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**1ST BIENNIAL GENERAL MEETING (2006-2008)
25TH MARCH 2008**

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of my Executive Council, I thank you for attending and welcome you to this - the first - Biennial Meeting of the Malta Golf Association.

As provided for by our constitution, we chose the English language to be the regulating language of this proceeding however any remarks or questions in Maltese will be accepted and where relevant will be freely translated for the benefit of all present. I also wish to explain that, because our statute decrees for an Executive Council to be elected every four years and since all the members of the present Council have showed their willingness to continue in office for the next two years, we have no elections to consider. We can therefore proceed straight away to our business for tonight.

Despite our mail shot, in May 2007, which reported on the history leading to the formation of the MGA and the work undertaken during the first twelve months since its foundation and despite the fact that most pertinent explanations are accessible on our website, I am conscious that unfortunately certain members remain unaware as to what the MGA stands for exactly. My introduction ahead of our formal reports will deal with these frequently asked questions.

Golf in Malta is in an almost unique position because of its one club situation. Because of this, the difference, between what the Club does and what the Association's duties are, tend to be confused and misunderstood.

The Club's prime objective is to manage a golf course, hold competitions in line with the rules of golf and provide the ancillary facilities and activities for its members. Relations would mainly be with other Clubs worldwide and with the R&A Rules and Golf Course Committees. The main objective of the Association is to promote and develop the game of golf on the Maltese Islands. The Association is the voice of the sport on national and international level and is the regulating body for the game of golf in Malta, communicating with other local and foreign governing bodies. The Association works on a different yet with a parallel vision to that of the golf club and, that is, to make the game of golf accessible.

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The Executive Council of the Association is currently made up of myself, Ian Restall as Secretary, John Bonello as Treasurer, Maureen Borg and David Debono as Executive members. David also oversees the Junior Committee. The members are elected on the Council during an election process amongst the affiliated members once every four years.

Through your permanent residency in Malta and full membership with the RMGC you are automatically affiliated members of the MGA and as such have a voice on the running of the MGA and can stand for elections. I repeat - any full member of the RMGC holding permanent residency can be elected on the executive council of the MGA. The only proviso is linked to the post of President and Secretary whereby one must be of Maltese nationality and one must have a working knowledge of the Maltese language. This condition is a requirement of the Maltese Olympic Committee on all its affiliated associations and stems from the universal principle that it should be citizens of the country that manage the national governing sports' bodies. Indeed all meetings at a higher level are held in the Maltese language.

The second pet question is whether there is a conflict of interest and/or responsibilities if a member of the MGA Executive Council is also a member of the Board of Management of the golf club. This of course touches the very core of my current responsibilities and, conscious of the need to have proper guidance for myself and for the members of the Executive, I took the question to the R&A. Mr. Keith Hodgkinson Chairman of the R&A Training Panel stated that on the contrary, the R&A looks favourably on such dual involvement because Association Council members thus have a direct rapport with Club administration and both Club and the Association and thus the game itself can benefit tremendously from such a direct link.

The European Golf Association similarly endorses and states that it is only natural that Association council members are also involved in the administration of their home club. Notwithstanding, I wish to remind you that should the members feel unhappy with the performance of any officer of the Council, including my very own, there is a very simple and democratic solution – a vote against in the elections. The Association does not belong to me or to any member of the Executive Council. Rather, the Association belongs to you its affiliated members and it is you who vote us in office in trust that we administer the affairs of the Association in the best interest of the game of golf.

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The third question is whether the MGA is biased in developing the game solely amongst Maltese. The answer is again found in our Constitution. This states that the Association is established to act as the governing body for the sport of golf in the Maltese Islands and to do so irrespective of gender, colour and religion. I do not think that this can be any clearer. Nowhere is this more evident than when one visits the driving range at Royal Malta on a Saturday afternoon. We do have an additional responsibility and, that is, to select and guide the individuals that are capable to represent our country in international tournaments. It is logical and indeed a condition of these competitions that the players must hold citizenship of the country they represent. This eligibility condition and limited resources necessitates that our top coaching must focus on the best Maltese players.

As previously stated the main objective of the Association is to promote and develop the game of golf on the Maltese Islands. Our task is a difficult one – allow me to show you what we had to start with [*humorous video clip*].

The first two years of the Malta Golf Association were primarily focused on addressing the objectives as laid down under paragraphs 2 of the Constitution.

The links with the R&A were explored on the most significant role of the Association – that of developing the game amongst a younger generation. The R&A acknowledged the Association's embryonic efforts and forwarded a gift of thirty club sets to the Junior Academy. Relationships with St Andrews hit an all time high when our colleagues additionally approved to help the Association with its aspirations to develop the game at root level and build a promising team capable of representing the country on an international level. Mr Duncan Weir, together with his fine team responsible for the golf development programmes at the R&A, was instrumental to identify, through the Professional Golfers' Association of Europe, the professional to take the MGA forward with its development strategy.

Mr Martin Westphal, one of the top ten golf development consultants in the world, arrived on his first exploratory visit in August 2006. This was followed by a further three visits in April, September and December 2007. Martin is currently coaching 7 players with a handicap that varies from –1.5 to 6.0. Our priority is to reduce these handicaps and have a team where the maximum individual handicap does not exceed 4.

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In addition to the local coaching, we understand that experience has to be gained overseas by playing on championship courses. Whilst the Malta Sports Council and a generous contribution from De La Rue helped to cover the expenses of the professional coaching, the Maltese Olympic Committee supported us in our efforts to expose all our players to tournament play abroad. It is perhaps apt to mention that this financial assistance was restricted to the actual cost of the flights. The players covered their own expenses for accommodation and food. Executive Council members travelled four times on business on behalf of the Association and all expenses for these trips including the cost of flights were all borne by them personally.

As we have touched on finances, I think this is the opportune moment for me to pause to allow the Treasurer to present his report on the accounts for the two years ending December 2007 [*Treasurer's report*].

Our second objective is to co-operate with the Regional, European and International Federations. The Mediterranean Golf Federation is unfortunately a dormant entity that has failed to link the common interests shared by the countries whose shores touch the Mediterranean Sea.

The International Golf Federation has, as its mission, the promotion of golf as an Olympic sport and to foster friendship and sportsmanship through the conduct of an Amateur Team Championship every other year. We communicate with and support the IGF on the former matter and have endorsed that golf on an Olympic level should be played by amateurs. Our participation in the Amateur Team Championship remains a dream. These Championships are played in a different continent every two years. Two years ago they took place in South Africa, this year in, Adelaide, Australia. With a total expense tag of about 10,000 Euros this makes this tournament untenable and we will have to wait until it comes to Europe in two years time – unless of course we find a very generous sponsor.

If I may, I will discuss the European Golf Association at the end of my report and will now deal with the national scenario.

Golf was one of the few sports that failed to receive any direct assistance from the Ministry of Sports Assistance/Incentive Schemes. However, an interview with our three younger players some 24 months ago inspired the Malta Sports Council to include these youths into their youth development scheme.

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We sometimes perceive our juniors as lacking responsibility and commitment. I can tell you that with 30 seconds to go to the interview I was regretting the very notion of being there with them. Their seemingly carefree attitude towards the importance of the meeting was really making me feel uneasy. But just as we were going through the door leading to the interview room they transformed and behaved as the sportsmen they are. I have never been so proud of them.

I apologise if I am digressing here but this is another important aspect of our commitment.

We do not want to build just a golf swing. We seek to develop complete sports persons with a set of ethics on and off the golf course. Of course it damn hurts when our elite players fail short to maintain the standards expected of them and it hurts even more when we have to apply disciplinary measures – and unfortunately we did have to – immediately after the conclusion of our first national competition.

One of the most important things in building a complete sportsperson is to instil a sense of courtesy, responsibility and etiquette at the grass roots of the sports – at its juniors. Through various discussions at RMGC Board of Management level it became apparent that the juniors' section needed focused responsibility and attention if the Club's, indeed our own, vision for developing the game was to succeed. Ahead of the start of this season, the RMGC handed over the administration of the Juniors Academy to the Association. David will now present his report on this [*Juniors Academy report*].

Back on a national platform - apart from their financial assistance, the Malta Sports Council gave us another very important identification. That of being Malta's officially recognised governing body for the sport of golf. Understandably, this seemingly simple recognition is a major requirement both on national and international level and without this our affiliation application to the European Golf Association could not proceed.

Communication with Government and other pertinent authorities has also been initiated. Our position paper on golf was published on the 28th June 2007 and presented to the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Chairman of the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association, Chairman of the Malta Sports Council and President of the Maltese Olympic Committee.

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Of course we thoroughly support Royal Malta's dire need for an extension to the golf course here at Marsa as well as making the case for at least one other golf course and proper academy facilities. Unfortunately, the mishandling of previous golf developments applications has given our sport a bad name in the local media and the authorities have consequently been very slow to react even more so ahead of an electoral campaign. The government is very much aware of our plight but we fear that it might take something extraordinary to shift the current negative perception on our game - a perception that is far removed than that of other countries. The Scottish government, for example, has committed to create the opportunity for every nine-year old to experience golf.

Our relations with the Maltese Olympic Committee have gone from good to very good to excellent. Apart from being instrumental in financing the airfares, the MOC has been a source of advice in helping us achieve our goals in youth development. The MOC's financial contribution has increased over these three years and we consider this extremely generous given that their current contribution from Government has actually declined. I am confident that the MOC's recognition is due to the competent way we conduct ourselves. Our relationship with the MOC was stamped when during the MOC Council Meeting of the 27th November of last year, despite that golf is still not an Olympic sport and with an overwhelming majority vote in favour, the MGA received full voting rights with the MOC. With this vote the MGA now has an active voice on the MOC Council meetings. Ahead of this vote, our Association was invited, for the first time, to join an MOC sports friendship tournament that was held in Sicily.

As Maureen will explain in a few minutes, our boys did very well. I am very happy to report that golf has again been approved to be part of the next Mediterranean Games that will be held in Italy in 2009. For the first time, we shall be participating in these games as a team. Maureen will now give you an insight into the competitions that our players participated in during these last months [*Tournaments' report*].

To continue briefly on the competition theme, in September of last year we held our first national competition under the kind auspices of Emirates Airlines.

This event could not have been realised without the full support of the RMGC and we look forward to the second Emirates competition this coming autumn. These competitions are being of valuable experience in our efforts to organise the first Malta Open in the foreseeable future.

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But perhaps, another exciting occurrence will take place even before the Club's facilities can allow us to hold the Open. We have initiated discussions with our colleagues at the Cypriot and Israeli Golf Federations to hold an annual golf tournament amongst the small golf nations of Europe.

Small is being identified as countries that have less than 4000 affiliated golfers. We are focusing on realizing the administration consensus by the end of this year so that the first competition can be held in 2009 either in Cyprus or here. Our responsibility towards a championship remains the Annual Malta Open and we are compelled to meet this need in the short term. However, I am sure that we all agree that before we invite guests to our house, our house needs to be put in order. The upgrading of the RMGC Clubhouse, especially the toilets and showers, should be a paramount requirement before we can hold such a tournament.

The final objective in our Constitution is an anti doping policy. Sterling work has been done on this, both on the Olympic level and aptly more so for golf by the R&A and the International Golf Federation. We have adopted this policy and we have a working document that can be used should the case ever arise.

Of course, all this work is a product of a number of meetings both at Council level as well as with National and International Associations. Ian facilitated these and his will be the final report tonight before I make my concluding remarks [*Secretary's report*].

Our affiliation's acceptance by the delegates of the European Golf Association meant that our country became the 38th European nation to join the EGA in its 70 years of history. We are sure that we will gain a lot of support from the EGA as we develop the game in Malta. As Ian mentioned, already, we were well received at the EGA with a number of delegates expressing a willingness to assist.

Amongst other responsibilities, the EGA strives towards a common golf handicapping system that would span its affiliated European countries making it possible for golfers playing on a different course than their own, to translate their home club handicap according to the ease or difficulty of the golf course being visited.

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The handicapping system being used in Malta is based on CONGU – a system used by the golfing unions of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. We are totally conscious that the Club has invested an amount of knowledge and time in this system and our direction towards a unified handicapping system is being made easier as CONGU and the EGA are getting closer and closer to a common approach towards a system that is embraced by the European countries in their totality.

Both CONGU and the EGA systems make it a requirement for the course at the RMGC to be slope rated within 5 years of affiliation. In a few days time, we will be attending a slope rating conference where we shall meet representatives from the Cypriot Golf Federation in an effort to do this slope rating exercise in summer. The United States Golf Association, which holds the slope rating patent, has already given us the green light to proceed when it is convenient for the RMGC and the MGA to do so. We will obviously keep the members informed on this development as it happens.

National and international relationships, organisation of national championships, development of a national team, participation in overseas tournaments, slope rating and handicapping guidance are all very fine things but they will all fail in the long term if we do not invest in the main core of our activities – that of developing the game amongst a younger generation.

We are quite excited with what the Maltese Olympic Committee is doing with regard to Club Mark and Long Term Player Development. Club Mark seeks to approve a Club that has all the necessary structures in place to embrace juniors, including for example child protection and codes of conduct not only for the children themselves but also for their parents, coaches and volunteers.

Long-term player development programmes relate with ways to support young players throughout a clearly defined pathway from starting to play, staying in and succeeding in the game.

As part and parcel of this entire programme, the MOC launched a Centre of Excellence that will support the identified athletes with financial, coaching and medical assistance to help them maximise their potential.

Out of all the junior athletes in Malta, the MOC chose 12 youths to join this programme – one each from squash, judo, shooting, cycling, tennis and wrestling and two each from athletics, sailing and golf. We are very happy and feel

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honoured that the MOC has bestowed such confidence not just in our work but also on the achievements of our golfing youths. The most important message in all this, indeed in everything that we have come in contact with, not just with the MOC or the Malta Sports Council but also with the IGF, EGA and the R&A is the focus and energy that we must put in developing the game.

In taking the game to a young generation we need a bigger vision. Our efforts in persuading the government to release the necessary funds to develop the game of golf must be accompanied by a different approach to that of previous years. We need to demonstrate to the authorities that golf is more than a game.

*We need to demonstrate that we are ready to impact the lives of young people by providing learning facilities that promote character development and life-enhancing values through the game of golf. Young people do not automatically act with integrity or demonstrate sportsmanship. The acquisition of values is a by-product of a series of complex processes that evolve from the individual's experiences.**

In concluding, I suggest that our forthcoming work should focus on putting the correct structure in place to be able to entice and embrace a younger generation; to show them that through sports there is a better life; there is a healthier life. *The game of golf has powerful significance with the life values of responsibility, perseverance, integrity, honesty, confidence, sportsmanship, respect, judgement and courtesy not just on the golf course but throughout life in general. These life skills will allow them to face challenges; they will allow them to find their inner confidence, manage emotions and conduct themselves with integrity on the golf course, at home, at school and in the community.** But these youths cannot grow without a strong club. The game itself cannot grow without a strong club. The Club should also be strong in its vision to take the game to the next generation. And the membership should be strong to take this vision forward.

Our Association is relatively new on the local scene, and I realise that in our newness we cannot be perfect. I can promise you that we will polish up our functioning with the work and dedication in what we do. Please help us to achieve our targets and make the game of golf stronger in Malta.

William Beck

** The First Tee programme – source acknowledged with much appreciation.*

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JUNIOR ACADEMY REPORT

The running of the junior academy was entrusted to the MGA in mid September 2007, and within 2 weeks a junior committee was set up. The Junior Committee comprises of myself, Matthias Fauser, and Henning Schultz Doering. So far the committee has had four formal meetings and we have met on numerous other occasions as the need arose. The Junior Academy presently boasts 51 members and they range in age from 5 to 16 years. Of these 59% are Maltese. Good news for the Ladies' Section is that 36% are girls.

Training takes place on Saturday afternoons (12.15-1.00 for the beginners, 1.00-2.00 and 2.00-3.00 pm for the other two groups). The sessions are conducted by Henning Schultz Doering and Johan Markus. In either one's absence I stand in as replacement. For those juniors already possessing, or close to obtaining a club handicap, sessions are held on Tuesdays and Sundays with Henning. So far, besides the numerous training sessions, one skills and rules and etiquette test, and three of the ten scheduled, sponsored competitions have successfully taken place. The attendance for the competitions has been very encouraging.

In an introductory meeting that was held on Saturday 6th October we had introduced ourselves and explained to the prospective members and their parents our short term plans meaning for this current season. The emphasis for the first term was to be on acquiring / honing the basic golf skills, besides building up an elementary knowledge of the basic rules and etiquette. At the end of the first term the more promising and dedicated juniors would be identified by means of a skills, and rules and etiquette tests. Those identified would be offered more regular exposure to the course besides the regular Saturday training sessions and the monthly sponsored competitions. This, the Committee hoped, would pave the way for some of them to obtain a junior golf academy handicap by the end of the season. This, however, would in no way detract from the attention to the less competitive or social junior golfers. Indeed the door is always open to any of these social golfers should they develop a more dedicated and competitive approach. We must not push kids unnecessarily, but neither should we hold others back. I am proud to announce that we have a nice mix of social golfers together with other more ambitious ones who are well on the way to achieving their first golf academy handicap.

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In order to achieve this and other future goals, it was of the utmost importance to set up certain basic requirements in order to be able to move forwards in an effective and orderly manner. The following measures were immediately implemented and have made the Junior Academy more efficient:

- Closure of the Range during training sessions so as to reduce distractions and the possibility of injury to both the kids and passers by.
- Basic discipline in the form of punctuality and good behaviour for training sessions and competitions.
- Keeping an attendance register.
- Pre-registration for competitions and assessments to ensure a smoother running.
- Better communication channels were established in the form of a regularly updated junior section of the website www.maltagolf.org/juniors, press releases in the Times and MSC magazine and a Juniors' notice board.
- Standard procedures in case of stormy weather were set up.

On the side of human resources, Johan Markus was recruited to help Henning conduct the training sessions, and this has helped in no small way. Volunteers Anne Thompson and Freddie Zammit help out regularly with on course sessions and competitions. Some parents (Matthias Fauser, Joanne Cassar, Kenneth Micallef, Joanne Darmanin, Michael Abele) act as markers during competitions. We are also lucky to have available to us the expertise of Mr Martin Westphal. (Golf Development Consultant)

The financial side is managed by the RMGC. A subscription of Euros 58 (Euros 117 for those with a club handicap), income from the annual Playmobil competition, and a percentage from the Men's competition fees contribute only partly towards the academy expenses, which for the greater part are professional fees.

Our list of sponsors for the competitions includes Millers Distributors (The Agenda Bookshop), The Driving Range, The Eden Leisure Group, Strand Palace Agencies (Titleist/Cobra), Exotique, Safari, Go Mobile and The Royal Malta Golf Shop (Srixon). Our thanks to all these and to Playmobil who have always supported junior golf in Malta particularly through their very popular annual fundraising competition, and by sponsoring the logoed Junior Academy caps which were presented to the Academy members.

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Our Long term plans:

- Improvement of the training facilities. Namely a good practice green at the Range, better safety, and storage/shelter at the Driving Range. (The RMGC Chairman Paul Stoner has undertaken to see this project through as soon as possible).
- Training and certification of our personnel in First Aid and Child Protection. (This has already been taken up with the MOC and courses will be organised in the coming months).
- Recruitment of new members by taking the game to selected primary schools with suitable equipment like SNAG or Tri Golf. (The MGA is in the process of trying to obtain the required equipment).
- The introduction of a golf passport system whereby the individual's progress in specific golf skills and rules & etiquette is tested and certified. (This is for those who are not yet ready for a golf academy handicap).
- Establishment of an academy handicap system in order for the kids to monitor their progress, and to help them make a smooth transition to an official CONGU handicap. The system chosen is the one recommended by the English Golf Union. (This proposal has already been accepted by the Men's section following a meeting with handicap secretary Mr Ian MacPherson, and we are awaiting approval from the Ladies section).
- Establishing a LTAD (Long Term Athlete Development) scheme in collaboration with the Malta Olympic Committee to help our most talented juniors to fulfil their true potential and do us proud internationally.

To close off, I must state that although running a Junior Golf Academy involves a lot of time and effort for us, witnessing at first hand the enthusiasm and the rapid rate of improvement of these kids makes it all worthwhile.

David Debono

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