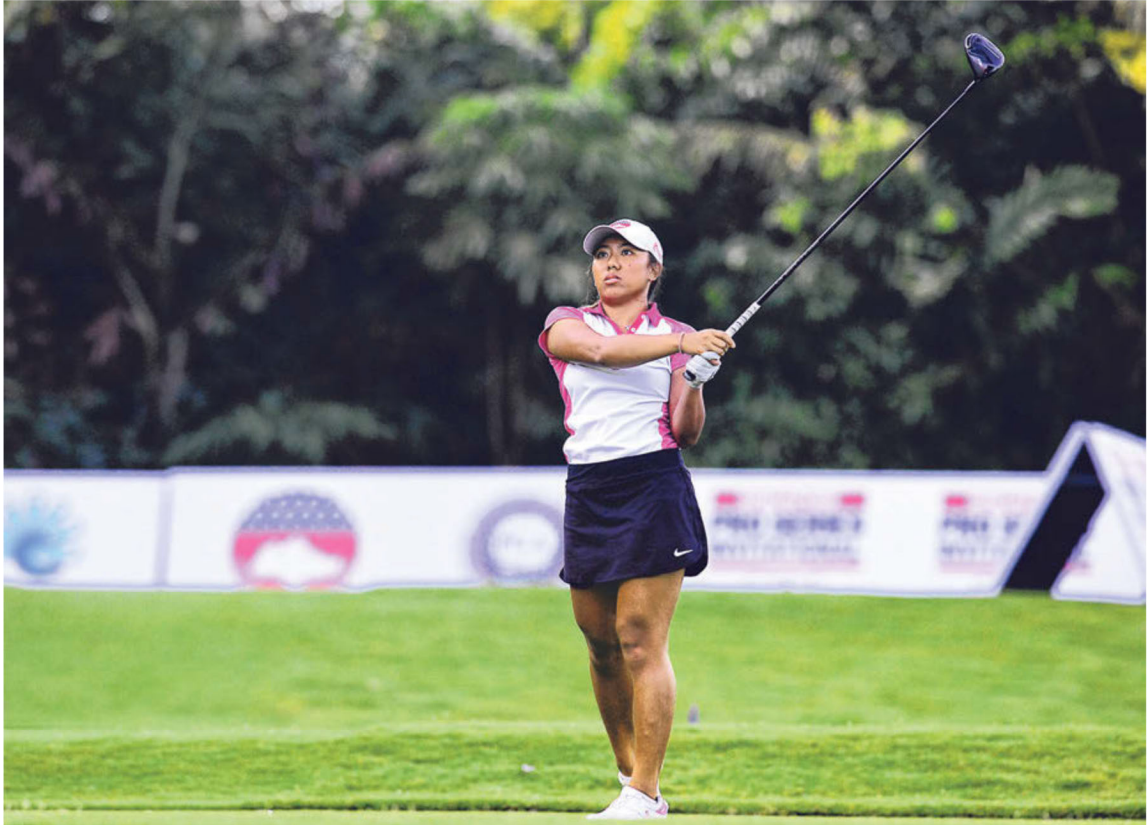


Aloysa Atienza is one of 45 golfers to be selected for the high-performance programme as she aims to move from the Singapore Golf Association's development squad to the national team.
PHOTO: SINGAPORE GOLF ASSOCIATION



Getting young golfers up to par in competition

Godfrey Robert

At a recent local game, a golfer lifted his ball on the fairway to identify it. He did not mark the spot of the ball and cleaned it. Worse, he did not replace it on its original spot.

His marker, rightly, penalised him a stroke, leading to an argument, and an abrupt end to the game.

The marker applied Rule 14.2, which states: "If the player lifts his or her ball when not reasonably necessary to identify it (except on the putting green), fails to mark the spot of the ball before lifting it or cleans it when not allowed, the player gets a one penalty stroke."

Such an incident can be avoided if golfers familiarise themselves with the countless golf rules.

Knowing the rules is an important item in the high performance and junior development programmes set out by national coach Matt Ballard and high performance manager Joshua Ho for this month.

The duo have been working together for two years; Ballard is focused on training and implementation while Ho's role is strategic and performance related. He is also responsible for selection and disci-

plinary policies.

Ballard will also apply systematic methodologies to identify and address individual athlete's performance, areas of strength and weaknesses and facilitate weekly skills testing.

These areas are familiar to Ballard, a Queenslander who played on numerous Tours before switching to coaching.

He is also recognised for having tutored former world No. 1 Adam Scott's short game and calls himself "a problem-solver first, a mentor and educator".

Said Ho: "We have been adapting our training plans during the pandemic to create a competitive environment which will keep our top golfers motivated."

"In addition, we are also diving deeper into important off-the-course areas like strength and conditioning, mental training, and recovery and nutrition."

Forty five players aged 12 to 25 years across three squads – junior, development and national – have been selected for the high-performance programme which will include intensive playing and training sessions, and lessons on the rules of golf.

Aloysa Atienza, 22, is animated at being selected for the programme. The National University of Singapore civil engineering un-

dergraduate excitedly said: "My first goal is to improve my game and move from the development squad into the national squad."

"Then I want to get into the SEA Games (in November in Vietnam) team and also play in many other overseas competitions."

However, the plus-1 handicap index golfer is aware that she has to find a balance between studies and golf.

"So far, I am coping, thanks to my teachers who give me time off for golf and allow me to attend make-up classes."

The former Presbyterian High School and Anderson Junior College student picked up the game when she was 10 and trained under the popular Phua Thin Kiay at the Executive course in Mandai.

And the 1.59m talented youngster, who revels in her average-230m drives, is hoping to improve her short game through the programme and also master the rules of golf.

Seven of the 45 players – Hailey Loh, Yoko Tai, Ashley Menne, Wong Qi Wen, Zachary Ong, James Leow and Nicklaus Chiam – are studying in the United States and will be in constant contact with the two coaches.

The SEA Games trials will be held over the next two months and will involve National Ranking

LOFTY AMBITION

My first goal is to improve my game and move from the development squad into the national squad.



ALOYSA ATIENZA, Singaporean golfer.

CURATING STRATEGIES

We have been adapting our training plans during the pandemic to create a competitive environment which will keep our top golfers motivated.



JOSHUA HO, national team high performance manager.

Games and the Singapore Open Amateur Championship.

The intensive programme will focus on competitive daily training at Sembawang Country Club with nine-hole matchplay ladder every Monday.

Aloysa is looking forward to the competition where squad players are pitted against one another in a pressure environment.

She said: "I miss this aspect of the game now with the pandemic putting paid to scheduled golf tournaments."

In conjunction, Ballard and Ho will conduct a Singapore Golf Association Futures Junior Development Programme for 55 children between the ages of six and 11.

Many competition platforms, such as Golf Series, Junior Golf Challenge, Internal Ranking Series and an Order of Merit system, have been scheduled for them, through which the promising kids would be selected for overseas competitions.

Workshop sessions include an educational forum for parents on how to manage student-athletes in the hope of addressing the problem of attrition as some promising youngsters have fallen through the cracks because of wrong advice and poor time management.

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