



Derek and Sheena James have spent 17 years as a team at Southbroom GC on the KZN South Coast.

DEREK AND SHEENA EXCEED EXPECTATIONS

SOUTHBROOM CLUB PRO WINS TWO TOP PGA AWARDS

WHEN SOUTHBROOM GOLF Club professional Derek James won two of the PGA of South Africa's top awards – an unprecedented simultaneous achievement – he was quick to deflect the attention to his wife Sheena in his usual modest way. “Half this award must go to Sheena, in fact maybe three quarters. To be honest, I was surprised to win both as there was some tough competition,” he said.

The 53-year-old James had won both these awards before, Club Professional of the Year in 2001 and Teaching Pro of the Year in 2007, but never both in the same year. The husband and wife team have been at Southbroom for 17 years and seen the town and club grow along with their two children, Courtney, 18, and Connor, 16.

Many felt James cut his

Sunshine Tour days short, but when Courtney was born it was an easy decision for him to settle into the life of a club pro. Southbroom benefited as Arnold Mentz had left the position to become the tour commissioner, and James was the perfect fit. But no one knew what a “Superwoman” Sheena would prove to be.

If holing five-footers to win tournaments had been stressful for Derek, life in the sleepy town of Southbroom was not to be a time for him to wind down. Derek and Sheena work long hours, yet always find a way to make golfers feel as if they are the most important person in the club at that moment.

Holidays are exceptionally busy, with golfers on the course from dawn to dusk.

Sheena keeps things run-

ning smoothly in the shop, which is talked about countrywide as one of the best stocked on-course pro shops. It's not your average pro shop though, and doubles as the post office, tourism centre, ATM, and psychiatrist's couch for those who have had a rough round. Sheena has been ably assisted by recently retired Lynn Sheridan, Helen Proctor and the two Beauties, Beauty Shusha and Beauty Ngcungama.

Derek's reputation as a world class teacher specialising in the short game has steadily grown over the years, with golfers coming from around the world for lessons, conveyed in his unique teaching style, and also holiday in Southbroom. Fellow PGA professionals also travel to the South Coast to benefit from his tune-ups.

James is still playing a more-than-decent game of golf, when he has the time, and put his skills to the test in the Telkom PGA Championship at Country Club Johannesburg, with son Connor on the bag.

“I could tell Jaco (van Zyl) and the boys were really nervous that I was in the field,” quipped Derek, who had a practice round with Margate pro Andrew Curlew. Midway through the second round (James would miss the cut with 79-78), the novelty had worn off for Connor. “If you hit into another bunker you can rake it yourself Dad,” he chirped.

Derek and Sheena like to exceed expectations, with the two awards certainly proof of that, and they'll be reapplying that mindset as they embrace the future.

—David Rush

PGA OF SOUTH AFRICA AWARDS



SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

WOODHILL CC'S FRIKKIE POTGIETER

The 38-year-old has spent 10 years at the Pretoria-East estate, which climbed eight places on Golf Digest's Top 100 Course Rankings, and is among the 10 best conditioned courses in Gauteng (page 68).

Potgieter, from Hermanus, was assistant manager at nearby Kleinmond GC, and took over the 9-holer's greenkeeping duties. After receiving a turfgrass management diploma at Pretoria Tech, his big break came upon returning to Kleinmond in 1999. He met Chris Kennedy, Golf Courses Manager at Wentworth, who offered him an assistant greenkeeping position on the club's Edinburgh course.

Potgieter was there two years before returning to SA. He was at Zwartkop before Woodhill. “We've worked hard on the manicuring at Woodhill the last few years, despite struggling with poor soil,” says Potgieter, who oversees a staff of 28. “We began a top-dressing exercise on all closely-mown areas, which has improved the grass covering.”



APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

STEVEN VENTER

This former tour professional, 50, began his PGA apprenticeship in 2011 under Craig Matthews at Giloolys Driving Range in Gauteng after being retrenched from ABSA. Venter now teaches at The World of Golf.

A promising golfer growing up in Germiston, he spent a year at Midland College (West Texas) on a golf scholarship. He worked at the United Building Society (now ABSA) for six years before turning pro in 1992. After three years he returned to the bank.

“Teaching is challenging, but rewarding when your students show improvement,” says Venter. “I try to make my methods as simple as possible, but there are no short cuts in this game.” Venter still plays, and hopes to attend the European Tour Senior Qualifying School in January, 2015.

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