

Plettenberg Bay

30 June 2020

Dear Members,

What a joy and pleasure on Saturday 13 June 2020 to see the golf course and the car park full once approval had been given by the Minister of Sport for the resumption of golf as a non-contact sport.

The Government Gazette published on Thursday 11/6/2020 did not really indicate that we would be allowed back on our hallowed turf which was extremely disappointing. On Friday morning 12/6/2020, there were some indications from GolfRSA (our governing body) that approval would be given to open the golf course. By lunchtime, most of the risk protocols had been published and, provided all the compliance issues were in place, we were given the green light to tee off on Saturday morning. Gus Bonini highlighted the return to play with the 1st Covid-19 hole-in-one – his 15th !!

A huge vote of thanks must go to Greg Phillips, our Club Manager, and his staff for implementing all the risk mitigation protocols and getting the course and the club house ready in less than 24 hours.

For those members who have not yet been able to visit the club, there are big changes to the checking in procedures, the layout of the club house, etc. - all of these measures designed to minimise the risks of spreading this dreaded Covid-19 virus. Again, we would mention that Greg Phillips is the appointed Compliance Officer for Plett Country Club and he has the responsibility of ensuring that the club facilities are compliant, the staff are compliant and that visitors to the club are also compliant.

In this regard, we would request that everybody visiting the club plays their part to adhere to the recommended risk mitigation protocols in order to ensure that we all remain safe.

Operations of Golf Course and Other Sports Facilities

For those members who have been fortunate enough to play golf, you will agree that our course is in magnificent condition. Again, our thanks go to Greg, Dave Porrill and the limited essential staff team who carried out the essential upkeep and maintenance on a daily basis during the lockdown.

The golf course is open for social golf only – club competitions will only be possible when we solve the problem of handling score cards. We are working on this. We do not know when the bar and restaurant service will resume.

During the first couple of weeks after opening, there has been quite a bit of pressure on available tee times. As part of the approval process for opening golf course, GolfRSA has laid down certain rules, regulations and protocols, and these include a one tee start and a 12 minute interval between each tee time. The committee have been cognisant of this demand for tee times, and in order to accommodate more players, the interval between tee times has been reduced to 10 minutes (which we consider sufficient) and on a limited/trial basis, we are going to allow a two tee start on Wednesdays as from 8 July 2020. Hopefully this will relieve some of the pressure during the popular times.

Tennis has started in a very limited fashion as there still appears to be some confusion as to who is authorised to play.

The Bowls section are in the process of finalising their risk limitation protocols and we expect our members to be on the bowling greens shortly.

With regard to the Bridge section, due to the methodology of playing bridge, it seems that it will be quite a long time before bridge activities are resumed. Most of our members have continued playing online which operates very well.

Club Staff

Due to the limited activities allowed at the club, the number of staff on duty at any one time is also limited.

As we have mentioned previously, we have continued to pay our staff in full. We are hopeful that no retrenchments will be necessary, however, this matter is under constant review. Obviously, if our membership numbers decrease, it follows that the number of rounds will decrease, and we will then have to look at our staffing levels.

The Covid-19 risk mitigation protocols concerning the staff are administered and controlled by our Club Manager in his role as Compliance Officer for the club.

Club Subscription Renewals

The renewal of membership subscriptions takes place annually on 1 July.

The finance committee are very aware that a number of our members have suffered financially as a result of the lockdown and we have endeavoured to take this into account when structuring the subscription renewal packages for 2020/21.

Despite the lockdown, we continued to maintain the machinery, the golf course, the other club facilities and pay the staff – thus during this period, we earned zero income but continued to finance expenses.

We are expecting (and have already received) a number of resignations from club members. As members will know from the financial presentations at the Annual General Meetings, the club runs at a loss for 9 months of the year and then the income generated during the season (mid-December to mid-April) together with the visiting Swallows is sufficient to maintain our cash flow and budgets for the year. At this time, it is very difficult to forecast whether Plett will have visitors over the season and whether the Swallows will be permitted or will want to visit South Africa.

During the budgeting process we have endeavoured to keep subscription increases to a minimum and have offered various options to ease the burden for members.

Finances

We have mentioned in previous newsletters that the period of lockdown and closure of the club for a period of more than 2 months has had a severe impact on our finances. Our Treasurer, John Lloyd, has been very busy working on updated cash flows, budgets, etc. for this financial year (ending 30/06/2020) and also finalising the budgets for the next financial year ending 30 June 2021.

The expected loss of income as a consequence of the pandemic is estimated to be almost R6 million, and after implementing cost and capital expenditure savings of R1.8 million, the members are being subsidised by R4 million out of our limited reserves. Whilst we are budgeting significant losses for next year, we are hopeful that our available cash will hold out. We would again like to thank John Lloyd and Greg most sincerely for their time and efforts finalising these budgets. Our thanks also go to Tilana and the Accounting/Admin staff who continued paying accounts, paying staff and completing the accounting from home and the office.

Caddies

In my previous Newsletters, we have highlighted the plight of the caddies who obviously received zero caddy income whilst the golf course was closed. As a committee, we are overawed and are extremely grateful to all those members who made donations to the Caddy Welfare Fund which is administered by the Finance Committee of the club.

As a result of these appeals for donations, as per 30 June 2020, we have received R124.4k as donations and, after using some of our reserves, we have paid R131.2k to the 34 registered caddies. A full list of the donors has been posted on the club's website. These funds have been distributed to the caddies in the form of cash and also supermarket vouchers.

During the 2.5 weeks that the course has been open, a number of the members have made the effort to use the services of the caddies and spotters. One of the reasons given by the Ministry of Sport to open golf courses was to give employment to the disadvantaged, and thus we would therefore encourage members to take a caddy or spotter. A separate appeal for donations for the Plett Caddies Association (PCA) was made through the Sunday "Beans" golfers and we are advised that R122k of donations have been made of which R96k has been distributed to the caddies.

Due to the limited usage of caddies by golfers, we appreciate the need to continue to assist the caddies during this difficult time and this assistance will be matched with the "Beans" Emergency Lock Down Fund. Nevertheless, it is pleasing to see the caddies taking advantage of their free-of-charge use of the course on Monday's and Friday's.

For those members who would like to continue supporting the Caddy Welfare Fund, donations can be made via EFT to the club's account at FNB Plett account number 53374617085 giving your name and Caddy Welfare as a reference.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking our members for their very generous support of the caddies.

In Conclusion

We have had a very encouraging return to playing by the golfers, social tennis opening on 2nd July is very pleasing and hopefully this will be followed shortly for the bowls section.

This dreaded virus has been spreading like wildfire in our Plett community and therefore we would again stress to our members to adhere strictly to the Covid-19 protocols in place in order to minimise any risk of contamination. We would also request that you follow and do not fight the directions of our staff who are carrying out the orders of the Compliance Officer (Greg Phillips) and enforcing the regulations of the risk mitigation protocols of GolfRSA.

In conclusion, I wish all the members and their families, our staff and their families God speed and health during this very difficult time.

Regards

Howard Garmany

Chairman, PBCC