

SOUTH AFRICAN BLIND GOLF ASSOCIATION (SABGA)

International Blind Golf Association (IBGA) World Championships - 2012

July 2012 was a good month for South African golf. Not only did Ernie Els capture his fourth major title in England, but SA Blind Golf flew the flag high in the IBGA World Championships (held at the Truro Golf Club, Nova Scotia, Canada).

South Africa was represented at the IBGA World Championships by Garrett Slattery, a member of the Stellenbosch Golf Club, guided by his son Brendon, a Grade 9 learner at Paul Roos High School. The event was a 36-hole stroke play competition, with a field of over 50 players representing 15 countries.

Golf for the visually impaired is heavily reliant on the player's sighted guide. This person not only watches the golf ball, but assists the player with club selection and, crucially, alignment.



Brendon indicating the line of play to Garrett in the World Championships

The Truro Course

The Truro golf course featured a challenging layout, with many bunkers and trees, as well as water hazards in play on 14 of the 18 holes. Wayward shots normally found a watery grave or ended up in heavy rough. Fortunately the wind was not too strong, but the mosquitoes were out in full force in the hot Canadian summer days.

One of the greatest challenges was the severely undulating greens. Even the most experienced golfers and their guides struggled to find the correct line and pace on the tricky greens.

The World Championships

Good conditions on the first day saw several golfers get round in under their handicap. The best net rounds were in the mid-60's, and saw Garrett in a tie for the lead with a net 64 (gross 87). Other golfers in the hunt for the best net were Pieta le Roux (a former SABGA member now playing for England) playing off a 13, and Takeo Takeda (Japan) playing off a 40.

A solid performance from Garrett in the final round saw him come in with a net 69 (gross 92). Garrett's gross score saw him finish 4th in the B2 gross event ahead of both the B2 and B3 defending champions, Andy Sellars and Simon Cookson (both from England).

While Garrett's total net of 133 would have been good enough to win on most occasions, Pieta le Roux put in another excellent round to complete the event with a total net of 130. Garrett's score was good enough to see him safely into the runner-up slot ahead of Japan's Takeo Takeda who ended on 135.

This result was South Africa's best performance (in overall net) to date in the IBGA World Championships, and saw Garrett move up one notch from his third place finish in the World Championships event two years ago.

Like with Garrett's victory in the 2011 British Blind Open (B2 category), the achievement was made all the more special by having his son, Brendon, present as his guide. This was Brendon's second exposure to guiding in an international event and he again handled the pressure exceptionally well.



*Garrett with the World Championship Runners-up Trophy
and Brendon with his matching trophy for guiding*

The B1 (totally blind) champion was Zohar Sharon (Israel), who produced a 36 hole gross total of 216 (net 146), to retain the world title which he won in 2010.

Results

Overall Net:

Winner	Pieta le Roux (England), 130
Runner-up	Garrett Slattery (South Africa), 133
Third	Takeo Takeda (Japan), 135

The various gross sight category winners were:

B1 (totally blind)	Zohar Sharon (Israel), 216
B2 (< 5% acuity)	Pieta le Roux (England), 156
B3 (< 10% acuity)	Kurt Lirussi (Austria – a former golf pro), 163

(Source:
leaderboard.htm)