

South African Blind Golf Association (SABGA)

SA Open – 2013

Slattery retains SA title with Strydom taking stableford competition

December 2013 saw SA's top visually-impaired golfers gathering at the Modderfontein Golf Club to compete for the SA title over 36 holes of stroke play.

The field included the three SA golfers who have Protea Colours, namely Garrett Slattery (the defending gross champion), Johan Kotze (the defending stableford champion) and Leon Strydom (the 2011 stableford winner). Ernst Conradie (who won SADGA's visually-impaired stableford title in 2011, and who did well in this year's British Blind Open) was back after not playing last year. Up and coming Manie Blom was present for his second SA Blind Open, hoping to improve on his 3rd place finish in last year's stableford competition.

The Modderfontein golf course proved to be a stern, but fair, challenge for the golfers. Water was in play on 14 of the 18 holes, in particular on the more recently designed back 9, which meant that careful course management was required.

The conditions seemed to favour the more experienced golfers, with Johan taking a slender 1 point lead into the second round over Leon and Garrett. Garrett managed to build up a healthy lead in the gross championship on the first day.

The final day saw almost all of the field improving their scores. Despite some trouble with out-of-bounds and water Garrett managed to extend his lead in the gross event, ending up with an 18-stroke victory.



Garrett (centre) and guide Brendon (right) receiving SA trophy

The stableford event, however, went down to the wire. With the leading 3-ball standing on the last tee Johan & Leon were tied on points. The 18th hole requires a well-placed drive over a river which needs to be long enough to give the golfers the opportunity of playing over a lake to the green. A front pin placement meant there was little room for error. Johan laid up short of the lake for 2 and hit a good third onto the par 4 green. Leon hit a fantastic drive and great second to hit the green in regulation. Tricky downhill putts remained for both players. Leon put his third stone dead next to the hole, which left Johan needing to hole a difficult 5 metre downhiller to tie. Johan hit a good putt but narrowly missed, resulting in Leon winning back the stableford title which he last held in 2011.



Leon (right) receiving stableford trophy

The final results were as follows:

Gross Champion: Garrett Slattery – 197

Runner-up: Johan Kotze – 215

Stableford Winner: Leon Strydom – 68

Runner-up: Johan Kotze – 67

Several of the players had their regular guides with them, which is always of great benefit. Garrett was guided by his son, Brendon, making this a hat-trick of wins in the SA Blind Open for the father and son pair.

The members of SABGA would like to express our sincere thanks to the Modderfontein Golf Club and staff for making us feel so welcome. We would also like to thank Lily Reich and the Board of SADGA for their support in this event, and special thanks to Nashua Communications, Old Mutual, Infoyu Air Products and the Helderkruijn Lions Club for their generous sponsorship of the event. Without this type of support none of this would have been possible.

Next up (provided sufficient funds can be raised in time) is the biennial International Blind Golf Association's World Championships which will be staged near Sydney, Australia, in May 2014. SABGA is hoping to have three or four participants in this flag-ship event.