

KING OF THE CLASS

Royal Johannesburg & Kensington has set a new standard after a sustained drive towards excellence

It was one of the most talked about golf stories of the year and better yet, a positive one, as the revamp of Royal's East championship course continues to exceed expectations.

It's not surprising that the club hardly ever goes by its full name any more, with 'Royal' and the compliments that follow more than enough to identify one of South Africa's golfing icons.

Discard any thoughts of a grand old course with snooty members, inaccessible to the public and think rather of a progressive, responsive member-driven club that has embraced change in all forms without sacrificing on its standards.

Instead of resting on its established name and place in the market, under the guidance of CEO Chris Bentley and his team, Royal has set a new industry standard in what modern golf entails; from a warm welcome to an excellent layout in pristine condition complemented by recently upgraded facilities.

A part of the club's vision to cement its place among the best for decades to come was the renovation of the East Course; a two-part plan to make it playable for the weekend golfer while not compromising on its ability to host and better yet, test, at championship level.

What Royal achieved in just six months was nothing short of remarkable - new bunkers and resurfaced bent-grass greens, additional water storage, tree pruning and

the implementation of its championship identity - all without losing sight of the finer details.

And while whispers of its world-class makeover made its way around the country, the stamp of approval came at the World Golf Awards where Royal was voted South Africa's Best Golf Course and Africa's Best Golf Course, putting it alongside Abu Dhabi Golf Club's championship layout, Cypress Point Club, Augusta National and The Brabazon at The Belfry as winners.

'Today the course is fully settled and has delivered far beyond our expectations. Winning the best course in South Africa at the World Golf Awards is not only an honour but also a great testimony to this beautiful facility,' said Bentley.

He was also quick to praise his team for their continued efforts as the reality of their dreams became evident. Course manager Shaun Brits played a key role and couldn't hide his delight with the two international awards.

'For the club and the course to receive this award is testimony to all who were involved in bringing the vision to life. It's an honour to serve as the course manager of this prestigious club and I feel proud to be part of this award,' he said.

The famous clubhouse and bell tower create the ultimate setting for a golf experience and there's no surprise that many of the world's leading sporting teams can be spotted on the fairways. Excellence breeds excellence, after all.

As 2019 rolls in, a new year brings new challenges, but for Royal you could argue that the dawn of a new year brings new opportunities to showcase their abundant offering. ☉

Host Ela Clark with Johannesburg & Kensington chairman Alan Field and CEO Christopher Bentley

