

## **SOUTH AFRICAN BLIND GOLF ASSOCIATION (SABGA)**

### **ISPS Handa Vision Cup (International Team Matchplay) – 2019**

Portmarnock Links, outside Dublin, Ireland hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the ISPS HANDA Vision Cup from 17-20 June 2019. The Vision Cup is the IBGA's version of the famous Ryder Cup featuring two 12-person teams representing North America (NA) and the Rest of the World (RoW). The first two days consist of 6 matches each played using the Pinehurst modified foursomes system, with the final day comprising 12 singles matches. The RoW won the 2013 & 2015 editions of the Vision Cup (held in the USA & Italy respectively), with the 2017 edition (held in Canada) being tied. This year's teams were perhaps the strongest to date, with the NA team seeking its first win.

The event generated a lot of publicity in Ireland, with local television and newspapers keeping abreast of what was happening. Irish ministers and Ambassadors of several countries were present at the opening/closing ceremonies. We were also fortunate to have the R&A represented, with R&A captain Chris Hilton acting as starter for the final day's singles matches.



*Chris Hilton (R&A) with the Vision Cup team captains,  
Garrett Slattery & Linda Port*

Linked to the event was a National Children's Art & Essay competition, and the team members also participated in an Inclusion Sports event at the local driving range, aimed at visually impaired / disabled children. These activities were a great success.

## The Course

The Portmarnock Links, a Bernard Langer designed golf links, is situated on the eastern coast of Ireland just north of Dublin. This typical links style course is undulating, with punishing rough, many very deep bunkers and several large rolling greens.

The players were very fortunate with the weather. The week prior to the event Dublin suffered lots of rain and wind, with cold temperatures. For the Vision Cup week there was virtually no rain, and the wind was moderate. This certainly helped to make the course more playable.

## The Teams

The hosting RoW team, captained by SABGA member Garrett Slattery assisted by vice-captains John Eakin and Paul O'Rahilly (admin) comprised:

Zohar Sharon (B1), Israel	Paul McCormack (B2), Ireland
Andrea Calcaterra(B1), Italy	Andy Gilford (B2), England
Chiara Pozzi (B1), Italy	John Eakin (B3), England
Billy McAllister (B1), England	Barry McCluskey (B3), Scotland
Garrett Slattery (B2), South Africa	Jason Heathfield (B3), Wales
Steve Beevers (B2), England	Ally Reid (B3), Scotland

The NA team, captained by Linda Port assisted by vice-captain Darren Douma, comprised:

Chad NeSmith (B1), USA	Darcy Furber (B2), Canada
Gerry Nelson (B1), Canada	Ty Thompson (B2), USA
Mario Tobia (B1), USA	Tom Marks (B3), USA
Joe Furber (B1), Canada	Linda Port (B3), USA
Derek Kibblewhite (B2), Canada	Darren Douma (B3), Canada
Jeremy Poincenot (B2), USA	Kiefer Jones (B3), Canada

Both teams were probably the strongest fielded by each side, so tight competition was anticipated.

Each of the above players was assisted by their own sighted guide. Golf for the visually impaired would not be possible were it not for these dedicated people who are involved every step of the way.

Garrett was particularly grateful that Stellenbosch Golf Club's teaching professional, Erich Kliem, was able to guide for him for the fifth time outside of South Africa. The pair, who know each other well from the Stellenbosch Golf Club, once again gelled very well together.

## The Results

The first day saw the RoW team move into a 4 points to 2 lead. Garrett, partnered by Andrea Calcaterra, won their game against the Furber brothers of Canada 3&2. The other winners in the RoW team were Reid & Gilford, Heathfield & Beevers and Portmarnock member McCormack with McAllister.

The second day saw the RoW team extend their lead by a further point, winning the day by 3½ - 2½. Garrett & Andrea stayed together for a fantastic 7&6 win over Canadians Darcy Furber & Gerry Nelson. Other RoW winners were Eakin & Pozzi and Reid & Gilford, with McCormack & McAllister tying their match.

As the final day commenced the RoW team needed at least 5 of the available 12 points in the singles matches for victory. Garrett's match against the reigning US Open (B2) champion, Ty Thompson, put the first point on the board for RoW with a 5&4 victory. Solid wins for Heathfield and Reid moved RoW closer to the total needed. A great fightback in the top match (between the two single figure handicap golfers) saw Eakin defeat Jones, and shortly thereafter a win for rookie McCluskey pushed RoW over the line. Further wins for the RoW B1 players McAllister, Pozzi and Calcaterra produced a final result of 15½ - 8½ for RoW. This was the largest winning margin in the event's history.



*Garrett & Erich with the ISPS Handa Vision Cup*

Garrett was one of three players who won all three of their matches (Andrea & Ally being the others). Garrett's overall record now stands at 9 points from a possible 12, which is the most points earned by any player over the four editions of the Vision Cup.

Everyone involved agreed that this was an excellent event, and all are looking forward to the next edition in the USA in two years' time.

## Further Thanks

Thanks go to the event's organizing committee, led by Paul McCormack and Paul O'Rahilly. No effort was too much for this dedicated pair.

Thanks also go to the IBGA which, through generous funding from Dr. Handa, was able to provide valuable financial support for the event. As is regularly the case at the large IBGA events it was great to have John White present all the way from Perth, Australia, as Dr. Handa's representative. John's enthusiasm and encouragement to the players was much appreciated.

Garrett and Erich would also like to thank the Stellenbosch Golf Club and its members, who provided valuable support and encouragement to the pair.

Last, but by no means least, thanks also go to TaylorMade for their ongoing support of SABGA and our activities.

A video of the 2019 Vision Cup can be found at:

[https://youtu.be/1W\\_RS466Mjo](https://youtu.be/1W_RS466Mjo)