SMU student is man behind inaugural inter-tertiary event

HE’S GOT THE DRIVE

By Shree Ann Mathavan

T HINK golfing is only for silver-haired retirees of the rich and famous?

Think again. That’s a notion Mark Lin, 23, student president of the Singapore Management University, would like to slowly but surely dispel.

For him, being cool and golf can go hand in hand.

And he makes for a convincing case in person, clad in trendy golf attire, when The New Paper met him at the Keppel Club at Bukit Chermin.

Raising the profile of the sport among those in his age group is why this third-year business student decided to organise an inter-tertiary golf tournament.

His initiative took the past six months to materialise, with the help of the university’s golf club, which has five committee members and about 50 members.

So far, about 70 students from various local universities and polytechnics have signed up.

And, come Friday, they are set to tee off at the Keppel Club.

The tournament format will be strokeplay, taking four out of the five best scores from each team.

Students in the face-off include those from SMU, National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, UniSIM, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic and Temasek Polytechnic.

Lin said the lack of golf competition at the tertiary level was what first pushed him to come up with the idea.

The undergraduate, who was introduced to the game by his father when he was 17, also saw it as a golden opportunity to show his peers that golf wasn’t just for the older crowd.

Tanya Koh, 20, a biomedical science student from Republic Poly, is a case in point.

The national golfer could easily be the poster girl for young golfers, having competed in international competitions since the age of 15.

Koh, who picked up the sport at 12, will compete in this event.

Lin believed golf also helped in contact building.

This, he said, would give graduates like himself a leg up in the corporate world upon graduation.

Over the years, he’s amassed close to 400 name cards through golf.

He also said that he nabbed an internship two years ago in a well-known international bank through a game with a banker.

Yu Ken Min, 23, an SMU accountancy student and golf club vice-president, agreed with the sentiment.

He said he has met several lawyers and ambassadors, thanks to the sport.

Heartened by the “positive response” to the event, Lin hopes to attract even more – about 100 participants.

But organising a golf tournament is no walk in the park, as Lin found out.

One of the main concerns for his committee was getting the funding for the $13,000 competition.

This was largely resolved by charging each contestant a fee of $80, plus receiving a grant of about $5,000 from SMU.

They also managed to nab sponsors like golf magazine GolfAsia for event coverage, Pan-West for apparel and prizes, and Ashworth for the goody bags.

Although Lin currently juggles classes, 28-hour golf practices each week and daily meetings in the lead-up to the event, he wouldn’t trade the tough schedule for the world.

“I’m very passionate about golf and really want this to take off and become an annual event,” he said. “If future batches of university students can have an outlet to play golf, I would be very happy.”

Tertiary students with official handicap, who are keen on playing in the tournament, can contact him at golfclub@sac.smu.edu.sg