

## North Adelaide Golf Club

### South Australia Public Course Pennant Golf Association

#### The Story So Far.....

Sometime back in the last decade (the 'Teenies'), Barry Smith, the club captain at the time commenced negotiations with the South Australian Public Course Pennant Golf Association (SAPCPGA) with the aim of entering one or more teams into this competition which has been held through the late summer months every year since 1983.

Barry's goal was to enable more players within the NAGC to experience match play against players from other clubs; the metro pennants (in which North Adelaide has a long history) is really only limited to the top dozen players within the club and well out of reach for most of our membership. The standard of play within the SAPCPGA competition covers a much wider number of lower handicappers and also has a handicap-play division which levels the playing field for mid to higher handicappers.

After two or three thwarted attempts, Barry's persistence finally paid off and in 2017 North Adelaide were allowed to enter a team within the handicap match-play division which was open to all players with a Golf Australia handicap of 14.0 or higher. Barry took on the role as non-playing captain and had no problems in fielding teams for all matches. In all, 17 players took the opportunity to represent the club in what turned out to be a very successful season with North Adelaide taking out the final 6 games to 2 against local rivals Regency Park.

Following on from this achievement North Adelaide entered two teams into the competition for the following season (2018). A spot in Division 2 would have been preferred, however there was only space available in Division 1 so North Adelaide took on that challenge together with continuing in the Division 3 handicap match-play competition. Once again, the Division 3 team had a very strong season, making the final, again against Regency Park. The match was exceedingly close going down to the final hole of the last match on the course. Games were 4 each, however, Regency Park had won more holes across the match and took the trophy. It was a different matter in Division 1 where the team found themselves a little outclassed at times with a fair proportion of the team being players with handicaps just below the Div 3 cut-off. Showing fighting spirit, the team managed to pick up a couple of wins and a draw during the season for a mid-table finish.

There was further expansion for North Adelaide in 2019; club captain Alan Potts having taken on the role of Secretary of the SAPCPGA (and with it the temporary presidency due to political fallout on the committee) and NAGC teams being nominated for all three divisions of the competition. This turned out to be a little bit of a stretch for the captains and manager as it was proving tricky to attract many of the club's lower handicappers to join in. The division 1 team struggled throughout the season with only one win to show for their endeavour, although that win was over fellow strugglers North Haven, so the ignominy of finishing last in the division was avoided. It was a similar story in Division 2 despite a bright start to the season with the team ultimately only managing one win and one draw to finish in the bottom half of the table. Division 3 however showed their customary resilience, despite occasionally missing players on call to higher divisions and for the third year in a row made the final, this time against Marion Park. In yet another closely matched final, North Adelaide were just beaten 5 games to 3.

The 2020 season saw several changes within the North Adelaide challenge, not least being several of the lower handicappers (and experienced metro pennant players) within the club getting involved in the competition. This significantly strengthened the Division 1 side allowing several players to drop to Division 2 with a similar strengthening in that division.

The Division 1 side had a very strong season, storming through their first four matches unbeaten to sit top of the table. A narrow loss away to Regency Park was followed by a narrow win over Marion resulting in a top-2 finish and a spot in the final. Regency Park were the opponents and it was even closer on a neutral track with a 4-4 match score and NAGC only going down by holes won. A disappointing outcome for the team, but a huge improvement on the previous season which boded well for future years.

Our Division 2 team also started the season well and were sitting on top of a very tight table after four rounds with two wins and two draws. However, two very disappointing losses in the final two away matches saw the team slip to third place and narrowly miss a chance at the final. It was a similar story with the Division 3 team who, after an excellent away win at Regency Park in the penultimate round only needed to beat Marion Park in the final round to book their trip to the final. It wasn't to be though; Marion Park have proved to be a tough opponent for the NAGC third team on their own track, and this year was no different.

After the 'could have been' 2020 season, there was high hopes for the 2021 season and these hopes were rewarded with all three teams making the finals.

The Division 1 team stormed through the first 5 matches of the season only dropping 8 games and making the finals with a round to spare. The last 'home and away' match was against Sandy Creek at North Adelaide and was a tight affair, ending up in a draw. This was a portent for the final against the same opponents who on a neutral course proved to be the stronger and took the title.

The Division 2 team started the season with two draws, both away from home which was a good sign for the season. The next four rounds saw the team unbeaten and only dropping 7 games to top the table and storm into the final, including a 6-2 victory over Sandy Creek who finished second to also make the final. As expected, the decider was a very close encounter and hung in the balance right to the end. Eventually the final two matches on course both went the way of NAGC who secured a 5-3 victory.

It was an up and down season for the Division 3 side who only had one win to their name after the first four matches and needed to win the last two rounds to make the final. This they did with home victories over Regency Park and Sandy Creek, the latter decided by the final putt on the final green! Sandy Creek were also the opponents in the final, and proved to be stronger on a neutral course taking out a 6-2 victory.

Season 2022 was another building season at North Adelaide; not only did NAGC enter four teams into the competition (with two Division 3 teams), but there were also expectations for finals improvements following some disappointment in 2021.

The Division 1 team produced another strong season and had pretty much wrapped up a place in the final with two rounds to go following wins against Penfield, Mawson Lakes and Regency Park, with a loss in the middle to the very strong Sandy Creek. A win over Playford Lakes sealed the finals appearance so there was nothing on the final match (also against Sandy Creek) for either side. A narrow loss gave some hope for the decider, but it was not North Adelaide's day and Sandy Creek stormed to an emphatic victory.

Division 2 was split into two conferences, North and South, with NAGC assigned to the Northern group. With only the top team qualifying for the finals it was important to make a good start; a tough first round away match against a strong Sandy Creek side realised the worst and an uphill battle for a finals place commenced. Solid wins against Mawson Lakes and Playford Lakes in rounds 2 and 3 meant that a good win at home to Sandy Creek would see the team back in the mix.

Unfortunately, the visitors ground out a draw and the season was all but over. A final loss at Mawson Lakes resulted in a third-place finish for the season.

Division 3 was also split into two conferences with an NAGC team in each. Again, only the conference winners would make the final so a good start was essential. The NAGC A team lost narrowly at Sandy Creek in round 1 but turned it around with a big win against Mawson Lakes in Round 2. An unexpected loss to Playford Lakes was followed by a very good win at home to Sandy Creek and going into Round 5 NAGC were within striking distance of the leaders. A good win in round 5 meant that another win in the final round against bottom placed Mawson Lakes would secure a finals position; unfortunately, the team could only muster a draw and second place finish was not good enough. The NAGC B side started well with a good win over Regency Park, but this was followed by three losses on the trot to slip down the ladder. In a tight conference, the teams' round 5 win over Marion Park left everything wide open for the final round, however a close loss to eventual conference winners North Haven left the team in fourth place.

So – six seasons on from Barry Smith entering North Adelaide into the SAPCPGA competition, the question is whether his goal of increasing interclub match play participation has been achieved? So far 87 club members have been nominated for the competition of which 83 have played at least one match. Perhaps a dozen of these will have previously represented the club in metro pennants, so having over 60 players meeting Barry's aim is undoubtedly a sign of success.

Bring on 2023.