

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

Ibom Golf Club

Le Meridien Ibom Hotel & Golf Resort, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

www.lemeridienibom.com

Dear Member,

This newsletter gives us all a perfect opportunity to reflect a little on the 2016 season at Ibom and to look forward to a very fast approaching 2017 season.

2016 has certainly been a very positive year for the golf club with a number of our management initiatives bringing about a much better relationship with the membership, and perhaps most critically, a welcome increase in membership numbers beyond the somewhat ambitious target of 125 that I set in late 2015.

The efforts to increase the number of active players in 2016 were certainly helped in no small measure by the introduction of changes to the club's membership categories – notably Country Membership, which has proved to be popular with quite a few members and ex-members. In an effort to build on the 2016 gains in this category, for the 2017 subscription year, it has been decided to further reduce the qualifying distance for this category so that for the first time the residents of Calabar and Port Harcourt will now become eligible for this category of membership. It is anticipated that we will see a strong level of interest from golfers in these two cities who might want to either retain or add the benefits of an Ibom GC membership to their golf playing experience.

The membership has certainly been well served in all areas by its first Honorary Captain, **Usenobong Akpabio**, who has championed the hopes and wishes of the members in a compelling fashion, with the result that this year club related activities have received an unprecedented level of support from the resort despite this being a financially challenging time for them.

Thankfully throughout his year in office our members seem to have appreciated and understood the captain's desire and need to work closely with the golf management team in order to produce some meaningful changes.

I'm sure all of the members will join me in both thanking Usenobong for his efforts and acknowledging what a really good year 2016 has been for the further development of the club's profile.

I wish you all well over the holiday period and I look forward to seeing many of you both during the break and into the 2017 golfing season.



Upcoming Events

**Birthday Kitty (Samuel Thomas) –
Saturday 24th December 2016**

**Members Day Competition – 8th
January 2017**

**SPE Golf Day – 21st January 2017
(TBC)**

**Members' January Birthday Kitty –
Saturday 28th January 2017**

Manager's Comments

I'd like to remind members of the changes to the membership fees for 2017 that will come into effect on January 1st 2017.

Membership Fees 2017	Early Payment - End of January	
	NGN	NGN
Full Membership	110,000	90,000
Country Membership	70,000	65,000
Family Membership	180,000	170,000
Junior Membership	30,000	25,000

It helps the financial planning for the club if by the end of January we can have 95% of our membership fees paid, so in an effort to encourage members, we have decided to significantly reduce the yearly fees for those members that comply. From February 1st the **full fees** will apply to everyone and it is should be expected that by March 1st all those members with unpaid fees will undergo a membership re-classification. So in order to avoid any potential future misunderstandings please be aware that in my eyes:-

- **a member of Ibom GC is only somebody who has paid their annual subscription for the calendar year in which they wish to play**
- **anybody else or those who once might have been a fee paying member are considered either - a Suspended or a Past member – and as such has no rights to any of the current benefits of membership.**



Tournament Review 2016

The LM Open was held over the weekend of the 3rd & 4th December and once again the 36 holes Invitational Event attracted a strong level of support from 70+ golfers all of whom were hoping to compete strongly for the one of the superb prizes on offer.

After the 2016 event it was felt that there needed to be a change to how the overall winner of the event was decided, as since the event's inception this prize was always awarded to the player who returned the lowest gross score (without handicap), and therefore it naturally became a prize that was realistically only ever going to be challenged for by the lowest handicap players. It was felt that the event would be much better served if the overall winner prize, was a prize that all competitors might more realistically win, and the only way to do that was to make it a prize awarded to the player who returned the lowest net score (with handicap). There is no question that this decision was much appreciated by the 2016 competitors and will I'm sure help to develop the reputation of the event more as a Festival of Golf, something I know that the resort hopes it will become better known for over the coming years.

		Sunday Nearest the Pin - L	S.Cole Kotas	Trophy
		Sunday Nearest the Pin -M	N.Udoh	Trophy
		Saturday Nearest the Pin - L	S.Cole Kotas	Trophy
		Saturday Nearest the Pin -M	C.Ajibaye	Trophy
3rd	Veteran	OWUAMA	175	Trophy + W/E 1 night Sheraton Abuja
	Lady	UZOWHUE.H	174	Trophy + W/E 1 night LM Ibom
	Cat C	EKENG	156	Trophy + W/E 1 night 4 Points Lagos
	Cat B	POROMA	150	Trophy + W/E 1 night Sheraton Lagos
	Cat A	STRASSER	153	Trophy + W/E 1 night LM Port Harcourt
2nd	Veteran	BELLO	174	Trophy + W/E 2 night Sheraton Abuja
	Lady	ABUBAKAR	170	Trophy + W/E 2 night LM Ibom
	Cat C	EKANEM. U	151	Trophy + W/E 2 night 4 Points Lagos
	Cat B	UKOMADU	150	Trophy + W/E 2 night Sheraton Lagos
	Cat A	NWUZI	151	Trophy + W/E 2 night LM Port Harcourt
1st	Veteran	CHIEJINA	159	Trophy + Air France Ticket + W/E 1 night Prince De Galles
	Lady	COLE-KOTAS	158	Trophy + Air France Ticket + W/E 1 night BB - Suite LM Ibom
	Cat C	OROK	145	Trophy + Air France Ticket + W/E 1 night BB - Westin Paris
	Cat B	KALANGO	150	Trophy + DELTA Ticket + W/E 2 night BB - Suite Sheraton Atlas
	Cat A	KWASU	145	Trophy + Air France Ticket + W/E 1 night BB - LM Etoile
Best Gross Prize		AKPABIO	163	Trophy + Dana Economy Return Ticket
Sponsors Trophy		GURETEH. W	155	Trophy + Dana Business Return Ticket
Best Nett Overall		OYIBO	144	Trophy + DELTA Ticket + W/E 2N BB - Westin Atlanta

winning total of 144 net (level par). This is the closest finish that I have seen in the 4 major events that I have been involved as the tournament director..

The course at Ibom is long established as a championship course in the minds of many Nigerian golfers, but in describing it as such it is certainly possible to miss the opportunity to appreciate the fact that The Le Meridien Ibom Hotel & Golf Resort is also a relaxing golfing venue that is suitable for players of all abilities and standards.

Below is the full list of prizewinners and the prizes that were available during the event – without doubt the LM Open managed to once again deliver some exceptional prizes for the lucky winners.

This year's event was keenly contested with some good scoring after Day 1 which left Ibom member Uko Orok leading the field with an impressive net 70. With a further 6 players within 6 shots of the leader going into the 2nd round, it was certainly going to be an interesting day for many of the players.

The 2nd round did not disappoint in terms of scoring as **Emuobor Oyibe** surged through the field with a tremendous score of net 69 to beat Uko Orok by a single shot. It was also during the second round that **Kenneth Kwazu** recorded a gross 69 which fell one shot short of the

The LM Open offers the resort the perfect opportunity to highlight this to the golfers of Nigeria and as you look at the presentation of prizes order for the event you will quickly see how through the generosity of our sponsors we were able to deliver prizes of the very highest quality to players of all handicaps.

The Golf Course – A Review

There can be no doubt that the golf course at Ibom is a well-designed and challenging layout that offers the opportunity for golfers of all levels to experience precisely the test that they seek on any given day. However generally when golfers start to assess their overall level of enjoyment of a course they will only factor part of this into their deliberations, basing a greater or equal part of their assessment on the overall presentation levels of the course.

It has been my experience that most golfers assess any course that they play in the following order of importance; - so I thought this might be a good way of me adding my professional comments on the course at Ibom during the 2016 season after each of these headings:

1. **Greens** – the greens have unfortunately been below par for much of the year – a major program of work is needed for 2017
2. **Tees** – the tees would benefit greatly from an ongoing 2017 rebuilding program & improved levels of maintenance
3. **Bunkers/Hazards** – the bunkers would benefit from a 2017 reconstruction program & improved levels of maintenance
4. **Fairways** – the bunkers would benefit from a 2017 over seeding and feeding program
5. **All other parts of the course** – generally kept tidy, but a review of the areas being included in the cutting program would be beneficial



Bunkers to be proud of

In my view the course has sadly not significantly improved in my time at Ibom in the way that I would have expected despite my best efforts to advise and suggest areas for improvement.

There is no doubt that there exists real challenges for our course contractor in the completion of their daily work and the severity of that challenge was perhaps best highlighted to us all during the month of August, when we sadly saw the contractors stop working for a period of 9 days because of contractual challenges.

This period certainly proved to be an eye opener for many members, as the growth experienced at Ibom during this time period, saw the course become easily unplayable after only a matter of two or three days. It proved to be a worrying experience for everyone associated with golf at Ibom as it highlighted to us all just how quickly a world class golf course built at some considerable cost to the State, would return itself to natural habitation in probably only a matter of weeks.

There is no escaping the fact that all golf course maintenance programs are going to attract significant costs, and yet within such programs there needs to be a provision for the funding of specific programs of improvement that will target the weaker areas of a course – ie; greens, bunkers, tees etc.

I'm not sure that such an arrangement is in place at the moment between the State and Jardin but I would hope that in 2017 we would be able to work more closely with both the State government and Jardin to provide the help and assistance that would allow the course to be more quickly re-established as the best course in Nigeria – something that I'm sure is in the members, and all stake-holder's best interests.

Growing the game of golf in Ibom – our legacy?

One of our principle objectives in 2017 will be to try to grow the game of golf within Akwa Ibom State so that more people can experience the enjoyment that the game can bring to so many. The real benefits of playing golf are rarely talked about as people will tend to focus more on the business or social networking opportunities that might arise from any new golfer mixing with those high worth and decision making individuals who already play the game. Whilst that may be true to some degree I really believe that golf can offer so many different things to people from all manner of diverse backgrounds.

Key benefits include

- A five-year increase in life expectancy and improved quality of life, as well as physical and mental health benefits.
- Golf is expected to decrease the risk of more than 40 major chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart attacks, colon and breast cancer.
- Current research shows that golf has positive impacts on cholesterol, body composition, metabolism, and longevity.
- In a round of golf a player will take up to 17,000 steps, walk up to eight miles and burn up to 1200 calories. Regular golf can also help reduce anxiety, improve confidence and boost self-esteem, all of which contribute to improved mental wellbeing.



Some of our esteemed guests during 2016

I have already have a plan drafted for golf development in the state that would see regular organized coaching being made available at school level to some 500 students, after which there would be a clear pathway to being able to play golf at Ibom, as either a junior player or as a recipient of an Ibom Golf Academy Scholarship. A key component of any such scheme would be to train more golf professionals from the state to allow for a larger coaching team to be operational in the future – we have already identified two or three interested people who are serious about following this pathway



Junior Golf Clinic in action



Caddies Program in action

