



Special Olympics Golf delegations from 18 different countries and regions are hitting the greens at Caesars Golf Macau

Special Olympics Masters returns with Art at its Heart

As distance is no fence to friendship, neither is an intellectual disability. For Thomas, three times Special Olympics Golf Champion from South Africa – and the many other competitors - Macau is not only about playing golf. It's about actively participating in a unique multicultural experience and sharing a week of joy with friends from all over the world

With more countries and athletes participating than ever before, Macau, as a widely diversified city, offers the perfect platform for hosting the Special Olympics athletes. With its first class facilities, the athletes receive a variety of opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate their courage, experience joy and, importantly, build confidence to succeed in life. Immersed in the context of sport, the Special Olympics Golf Masters believes that in order to encourage the integration and acceptance of these athletes in every aspect of social life, the interaction with culture, art, and music is essential. Sport on the one hand and multicultural interaction on the other is the engine that helps promote the integration of these athletes – both between themselves and the

community at large. As a result, friendship and acceptance are the evolving core values.

When the Special Olympics Macau and the Charity Association for Macau Business Readers got together in 2011 to create a local golf project nobody could have imagined where that would lead to within four short years.

Macau is a place where the difference can make a huge difference....and today Special Olympics golfers from all around the world do experience a real difference. The organisers had three values in mind – Acceptance, integration and the interaction of the mentally challenged in modern society.

As a regular host of various sporting and charity activities in Macau - and with the in-depth experience that



Paulo A. Azevedo, one of the many Guardian Players, with Korean athlete KIM Hyung Hwan



Sheraton Macao Hotel General Manager Josef Dolp presenting the trophy to Team Austria in 2013

Paulo A. Azevedo, as founder and publisher of various media, and Stefan Kuehn, running an international sport agency, bring - the charity association they formed embarked upon a strong partnership with the Special Olympics Macau.

By forming a local golf team and providing the equipment and necessary training facilities in 2011, the stage was set for 2012, when the first regional competition teed off at Caesars Golf Macau, becoming the laboratory for something much bigger.

From 20th to 25th April Macau hosts its 4th Special Olympics Golf Masters with more than 90 athletes and coaches from 18 different countries and regions participating - many returning, whilst others arrive for the first time - forming the biggest event of its kind in the world.

Stefan Kuehn said: "Taking golf as a platform to create an interactive event between different societies is not the usual route but in our case it was the perfect setup. Golf, obviously, is still considered an elite sport in quite a small circle of societies. But to reach the key people that could help us promote and realise the acceptance and integration of mentally challenged individuals today, what could be better than having companies' senior executives meet them face to face and play a round of golf? This way they are the perfect testimonial to our society - if they are enjoying that company and experience firsthand that mentally challenged people are not different and just as normal as everyone else, why should the rest of society not do the same?"

Golf is still a development sport within the Special

The View from Mt. Olympus

And by the way - they're playing golf! Local private entities, senior executives from Macau's gaming corporations and representatives of the financial industry will form various teams at different levels to wield their clubs at the Caesars Golf Club on Cotai. From Wednesday 22nd to Friday 24th April



Troels Højbjerg from Denmark will come to Macau for the first time in April, facing 3-times Special Olympics Champion Thomas Lugg from South Africa

2015 the world's best Special Olympics golfers will traverse the extraordinary rolling greens. Including 3-times Special Olympics Champion Thomas Lugg; the South Africa returns to Macau to repeat his fine round of 71 or even better in a head to head competition with his rival and friend Troels Højbjerg from Denmark.

Thomas and Troels, two of the most outstanding Special Olympians, are back in town again - both ready to carry on their competition in Macau. After staging highly dramatic finishes on venues around the world, both are thrilled to see each other again. Not only to continue their clash on the battlefield but to kindle their friendship throughout the week...

Taipei. 2009. The last tee. The 54th hole. Troels leads by one from Thomas. It was such a tight round with constantly changing leads that the coaches had almost lost track of who was in front. After already scoring 12 birdies between the two, they again hit great final tee shots - Troels was short and settled in the front bunker while Thomas, hitting from 160 metres, put the ball one metre from the pin. After putting out, Thomas asked: "Who won?" Troels, knowing that it hadn't worked out for him this time, embraced Thomas with a big hug and said: "Tom, you did; and I'm so happy for you!"



Talia Kornhauser with Special Olympics athlete Munyaradzi Musariri (left, from Zimbabwe) and Thomas Lugg (right, from South Africa)



The colourful art of Talía Kornhauser is a powerful encouragement for the mentally challenged to interact and communicate with the wider world

Olympics in Asia but in Europe, America and Africa it's quite advanced. With the help of this regular event in Macau the organisers have helped nurture a local team of more than 10 athletes today; with China, Malaysia and India founding their own teams in order to follow the invitations.

Teams from all around the world arrive on 19th April and will be accommodated at the Sheraton Macao Hotel for six nights – the Starwood Hotel group is a regular partner of the Special Olympics worldwide and is one of the event's major partners in Macau.

"Hosting the athletes and coaches in a 5-star hotel has a specific rationale – when we as business people invite our clients we offer them the best hospitality thus we want to treat the Special Olympics athletes in exactly the same

way – setting a benchmark for acceptance and integration. Macau has possibly the best facilities in Asia and we're delighted that we can offer them to guests who will experience special treatment we'd all be happy to receive!" said Kuehn.

In 2012 and 2013, with the event still developing, golf was the main subject but today the sport is one of the side activities. Paulo A. Azevedo (president of the Charity Association of Macau Business Readers) puts it this way: "This is a multicultural, multi-social programme with a strong component of sport, of art and culture that is unique in the world and we're very happy to be able to continue to organise it, bringing together private institutions, the Macau Government and so many volunteers from Macau society."

In 2014, Ms. Talía Kornhauser, a talented Israeli artist,



Special Olympics Macau golf team with Jeffrey Swanson at the Austrian National Games at the Worthersee 2014



Talia Kornhauser with Special Olympics athletes from Chinese Taipei and 'The Biennial of the Lion' sculpture from MGM Macau

volunteered to travel to Macau to help lend the event a more colourful 'façade' – by introducing art. "Art is a wonderful tool to overcome the difficulties of mentally challenged people speaking out aloud their dreams, wishes and even fears. By encouraging them to express themselves via paintings and drawings, even written notes, we simply display their minds in very colourful and exciting art pieces. I've travelled the whole world and been involved in so many different Special Olympics events but Macau was something totally new and gave me even more ideas and also opportunities to help this cause. We're going out there and interacting with all kinds of people, and have had such a great feedback with so much fun and laughter. We simply learn from each other, especially coming back to the simplest things in life –

learning and remembering what true happiness really means."

So this event truly has art at its heart and thus the organisers have put together a big programme of art and culture for this year's edition. Even though the business side of Macau is struggling a little all event partners and sponsors have remained and even raised their stakes in order to bring the world together in our little living room – Macau.

The Special Olympics delegations enjoy the hospitality of Galaxy Macau, Melco Crown Entertainment, MGM Macau, Sheraton Macao Hotel and Wynn Macau whilst using the best golfing facilities in Asia – at the Caesars Golf Club. In addition to the regular Culinary Tour taking in the various food outlets of the event partners, the Macau Tower, The House of Dancing Water Show and the UA Galaxy Cinema are all on the event agenda, too.

MGM Macau continues to build on its reputation as one of the major art display venues in the city. The 'MGM Art Space', developed as a source of inspiration and a medium for engaging, inspiring and entertaining exhibition-goers, occupies more than 8,000 square feet of contemplative space. On Tuesday April 21st the Grande Praça will unveil a special art workshop with international and local artists gathering with the Special Olympics delegations and creating various art pieces in acrylic and oils on canvas. These art pieces will then be contributed to various hospitals, elderly homes and orphanages as well as civil service offices throughout town.

The 'Art Work Shop' provides a platform whereby art takes on varied forms and shapes, a concept that redefines art with an unexpected twist. This special activity of infinite creativity, boundless imagination and unlimited possibilities is just one of the many highlights the Special Olympics Golf Masters has introduced in 2015. ■

Testament to Tenacity

"The Special Olympics Golf Masters in Macau is a very unique event on state of the art golf grounds and with a great programme aside from golf. The level of this event is far above the World Games..." Jeffrey Swanson, Director of Golf for Special Olympics Europe-Eurasia.

This year's event is also seen as a warm up for the golf delegations from the Asia and Asia Pacific Region for the upcoming World Games in Los Angeles in July. For the first time, the Special Olympics Macau golf team will join the official World Games delegation of Macau with a total of 86 athletes. "This is a huge achievement and we're very proud of this achievement, from forming and nurturing a golf programme within four years and sending them off to the United States to experience the biggest Special Olympics World Games in history. I'm sure these 12 days will become a memory for life and I'm proud of being one of the selected assistants for the Special Olympics Macau," said Stefan Kuehn. "I can't wait to take up that role. We had a great time at the National Games in Austria, and I'm looking forward to seeing our team go head to head with the world's best for the first time. This will surely help them improve their skills and establish new friendships!"



Real commitment: The unstinting support of the Macau business community and the government continues to lend this event wings!

It only remains to say that if you're free and want to experience what the Special Olympics is all about all you need do is make your way to the golf course, visit the teams at the Sheraton Macao Hotel or join them at their art workshop at MGM Macau. You'll always feel welcome – and you'll get to meet exciting youngsters who aren't different but are very special indeed.