

Top players host golf clinic at 2010 Africa Open

In the true spirit of giving back, South Africans James Kamte and Richard Sterne and Darren Clarke and Nick Dougherty of Britain hosted a golf development clinic today ahead of this week's Africa Open at East London Golf Club.

The four professionals shared their knowledge, skills and love of the game with a group of 44 learners from the SA Golf Development Board (SAGDB) and the South African Junior Golf Foundation (SAJGF) from the Eastern Cape area.

Northern Ireland's Clarke, a multiple tournament winner and Ryder Cup star, talked to the youngsters about important swing principles and demonstrated how he approaches practice sessions.

The learners, who ranged in ages from six to 18, then received one-one-one instruction from the four international tournament winners. They had a chance to question their heroes on how to excel at the game of golf and, of course, collect those all-important signatures.

"I learnt how to aim and how to strike the ball correctly and how to practise properly," said 17-year-old Mzolo Duna, a grade eight scholar at Forbes Grant High School in King Williams Town who spent time with Clarke.

Hudson Park grade eight scholar Demi Flanagan enjoyed working on her swing with Sterne. "He gave me a few tips that really paid off; now I just have to practice, practice, practice."

Professional golfers understand the value of golf development, said Clark.

"Golf is a difficult game but rewarding game and getting the basics right is important. These young golfers all aspire to be champions themselves. Every professional golfer is duty-bound to give back to this game we love so much and we feel privileged to have shared our time with these children.

"This is where we all started; someone spent time with us, too, and inspired us to become the champions we are today."

SAGDB Development Manager Border Millie Zim said that the children interacted well with the professionals.

"The most important thing for the kids was them seeing first hand what a pro does and how he goes about doing it," Zim said. "It was great, and the learners enjoyed it immensely.

"They asked a lot of questions and the golfers also talked to them about things like education, fitness and discipline, so the kids can understand what it entails to become a pro one day. They talked about the commitment and dedication, but most importantly going out and enjoying the game."

The €1-million Africa Open, which tees off from 7-10 January at East London Golf Club, promises to deliver a feast of golf with every one of the 156 competitors determined to reap a rich harvest on Sunday evening.

Only one will ultimately succeed, but the chase will provide wonderful value for the spectators and television fans alike.

Tickets are available at the gate and entry for pensioners and children under 18 is free for all tournament days. Adults enter for free on Thursday, 7 and Friday, 8 January and tickets cost R20,00 per day on the weekend.