

2018 PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

LPGA superstar Minjee Lee headlines this year's illustrious list of Australia's top performers around the globe. **By Rohan Clarke**

PLAYER OF THE YEAR & FEMALE PLAYER OF THE YEAR**Minjee Lee**

WITH two wins and being perpetually in contention, it's fair to say Minjee Lee took her game to another level in 2018 when she soared to a career high of No.5 on the Rolex Rankings for women's professional golf.

The season began perfectly on the Bellarine Peninsula where Lee demolished the field at the Oates Vic Open by five strokes. After notching top-six finishes in her opening five tournaments, Lee arrived in America determined to make amends for a winless 2017. She collected her fourth LPGA title at the LPGA Volvik Championship in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with a scrambling birdie at the last hole.

The sheer numbers emphasise Lee's phenomenal LPGA season. She registered 13 top-10 results (2nd on tour), 51 rounds in the 60s (2nd), averaged of 69.75 shots per round (2nd) and sank 414 birdies (2nd). Her all-round game was very well balanced, ranking inside the top-40 for both driving distance and accuracy, third for greens in regulation, ninth in sand saves and 15th in putts per green in regulation.

While Lee's best result in the five Majors was 10th at the Women's British Open, her overall consistency saw her finish second on the LPGA moneylist with earnings of \$US1.55 million. And in a sign of her physical endurance and mental strength, she missed just two cuts in a 30-tournament season.

If there is a criticism it's that Lee didn't convert her many chances into more victories. Under pressure she has a tendency to become wayward with the driver. But if she can maintain form and start to contend regularly at the Majors that carry so many ranking points, the 22-year-old stands a very good chance of one day climbing the summit of women's golf.

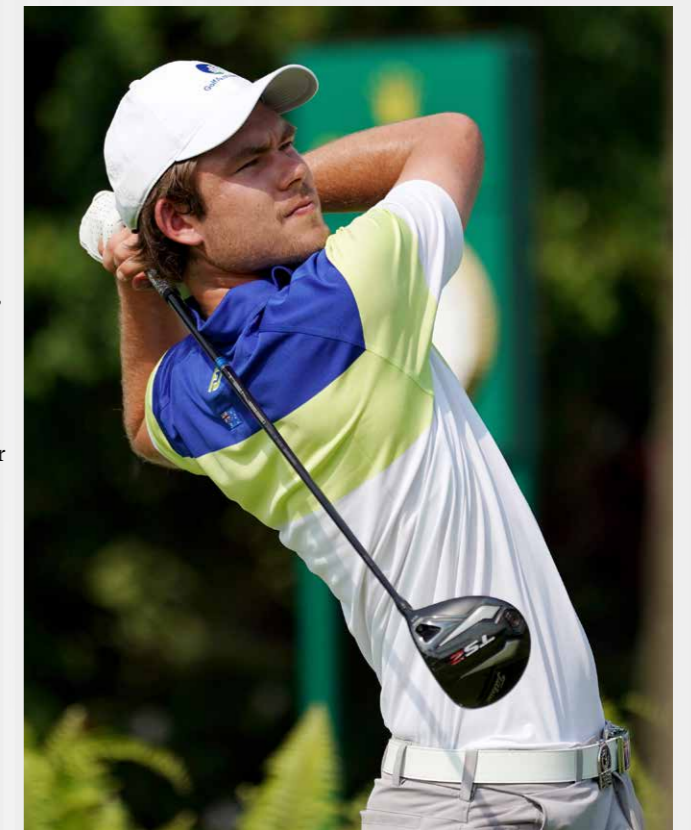
AMATEUR PLAYER OF THE YEAR
David Micheluzzi

A little over a year ago, David Micheluzzi was treading water at No.76 on the men's World Amateur Golf Ranking. Since winning the Victorian Amateur just prior to Christmas 2017, Micheluzzi has produced a purple patch of form that has seen him rise to world No.10 and rewarded with Golf Australia benchmark athlete status.

In 2018, Micheluzzi was a five-stroke winner at the Master of the Amateurs, closing out the tournament with 65-64 around Royal Melbourne. He reached the final of the Australian Amateur and was a quarter-finalist at the British Amateur. He also played a crucial role in Victoria's successful defence of the Australian Men's Interstate Teams title, going undefeated for the week and winning two decisive encounters on the last day.

Against the pros, Micheluzzi was second at the WA Open, just two shots behind fellow amateur Zach Murray. He tied for fifth in the Australian Open at The Lakes where he was the best local amateur. In further proof his game stacks up, Micheluzzi made the cut comfortably at the Vic Open, Japan Open, Queensland Open and New South Wales Open.

Those very consistent results both nationally and internationally led Golf Australia high-performance director Brad James to say of Micheluzzi: "A very hard worker, a lot of passion for the game, a lot of passion to improve."

**ROOKIE PLAYER OF THE YEAR**
Karis Davidson

Flying under the radar is an understatement with regard to Karis Davidson's first season as a professional. In relative anonymity on the LPGA of Japan Tour, the 20-year-old from the Gold Coast kept her playing card – a remarkable achievement considering the loneliness as the only full-time Anglo player on tour.

In late 2017 while still a teenage amateur who couldn't speak fluent Japanese, Davidson made the brave decision to try to qualify for the world's second richest women's tour. That she did, progressing through all four stages to be ranked 11th in final qualifying.

Davidson announced herself at this year's Oates Vic Open where she was runner-up behind Australia's top female Minjee Lee in a Ladies European Tour event. That boosted her confidence for Japan where Davidson notched four top-10 results and 12 finishes in the top-25, with a T-4 her best performance. She missed only eight cuts in 30 tournaments, amassing ¥27.18 million (\$329,000) to be 39th on the moneylist.

By season's end Davidson had risen to No.120 on the women's world ranking after starting the year at No.721. That's quite an accomplishment for the girl who migrated to Australia from Scotland at the age of 9. "She had a tough time at the start, but she's really embraced the Japanese lifestyle and her language skills are getting really good," says Gareth Jones, head coach of the Japan Golf Association.



JUNIOR PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Karl Vilips

Living at Tampa Bay in Florida, Karl Vilips may be out of sight. But definitely not out of mind for keen observers of Australia's junior talent pool. The 17-year-old has been a fixture on leaderboards at American Junior Golf Association tournaments since his family relocated to the US in 2011.

Vilips is ensconced in the top-50 on the men's World Amateur Golf Ranking. To put that into perspective, Australia's next highest-ranked junior hasn't cracked the top-550 on the open-age listing.

In 2018, Vilips collected two significant junior titles, winning the Wyndham Invitational by six strokes and claiming the individual gold medal at the Youth Olympic Games by two strokes. Vilips was also runner-up at both the Western Junior Championship and Bishops Gate Golf Academy Boys Junior, and came third at the Thunderbird International Junior.

With five podium finishes from 11 appearances in elite junior events that carry senior world-ranking points, Vilips is certainly a player to watch. In regard to his best attribute, Golf Australia's high-performance director Brad James says: "Just the ability to play well under pressure is what I've seen so far. He obviously hits the ball long like a lot of the juniors do. But his ability to perform very well in big situations and on the biggest stage."



TRAINEE OF THE YEAR

Frazer Droop

sporting blond streaks in his hair, designer stubble on his face and bling on his fingers, Frazer Droop's Instagram account gives the impression he is one carefree dude. Looks can be deceiving, as the second-year Yarrowonga apprentice compiled one of the finest seasons by a trainee in recent memory.

Droop finished top-two at four of the six biggest events for apprentices. He won both the Victoria and NSW trainee titles as well as finishing second in the Queensland tournament and second in his defence of the National Futures Championship. Droop's scoring average (-1.64) placed him second on the National Playing ranking. In addition, Droop tied for fourth in the Victorian PGA at RACV Cape Schanck where he shot a course-record 62 in the third round.

"He certainly applied himself this year with staying on top of his academic requirements as well as pursuing additional playing opportunities, which is no easy task to do," says Stephanie Jamieson, PGA of Australia training manager.

"They have to work 38 hours a week on average as well as complete a full study load, which is probably about 20 hours a week of assessment tasks. And then fitting in practice and competition requirements as well makes it pretty robust."



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SENIOR PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Sue Wooster

Not much went wrong for Sue Wooster in the past 12 months. She won four senior titles in four different countries and went within a whisker of claiming a quadruple of national senior championships.

The 56-year-old began the year by taking out the New Zealand Women's Senior Championship, beating fellow Victorian Helen Pascoe 2 up in the matchplay final at Bay of Islands Kerikeri.

In the northern summer, she became the eighth golfer to defend the Canadian Women's Senior Championship. Wooster then claimed the Senior Women's North & South Amateur at Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina. But she fell at the final hurdle in the US Senior Women's Amateur at Orchid Island in Florida, losing 3&2 to American Lara Tennant.

Back on home soil Wooster capped a phenomenal year by defending the Australian Women's Senior Amateur Championship when she held off Tammy Hall 2&1 in the matchplay final at Sandy Creek in the Barossa Valley.



COACH OF THE YEAR

Gareth Jones

Japanese golf was in disarray when Gareth Jones took over as head coach three years ago. The golf-mad country had performed terribly at the 2014 World Amateur Teams Championship on home soil when the women tied for eighth and the men shared 29th.

The humiliation sparked an international search for a coaching director and Jones emerged as the saviour with a licence to transform the high-performance system. The Japan Golf Association opted for an Australian coach so that players had to start speaking English and have a mindset of playing professionally in America and Europe.

Jones introduced a holistic sports science approach to player development. Using two Japanese interpreters and a few Australian service providers (coach Craig Bishop, biomechanist Ryan Lumsden and physio Greg Rosenbauer), his methods have been embraced by the likes of Keita Nakajima and Takumi Kanaya, two rising stars who know how to win.

"You give them something concrete and tangible that they can understand and the language isn't a barrier there," says Jones who works with them for 120 days a year apart from his role as director of coaching at Adelaide's Glenelg Golf Club.

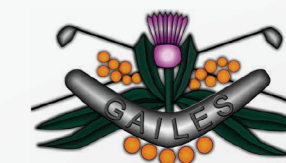
In the past 12 months, Japanese amateurs have plundered three of Australia's four biggest titles (men's and women's Australian Amateur plus Women's Master of the Amateurs); achieved its first-ever podium finish at the women's World Amateur Team Championship; produced the winner and runner-up at the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship; and collected gold medals at the Asian Games in men's team and individual events.

The biggest change was to switch the emphasis towards the short game. Explains Jones: "It's quite technical over there. It's a lot of swing coaching at driving ranges and short-game facilities are hard to come by. So I've changed that. We practise 65 per cent short game, 35 per cent long game... it was probably 85 percent long game and a few putts."



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Gailes Golf Club



Gailes Golf Club located in the Western Suburbs of Brisbane offers a gently undulating course with mature tree lined fairways and strategic bunkering to provide a great test for all golfers and is only one of three Queensland courses to have hosted the Australian Open.

An attractive, long course, with interesting bunkers, and minimal water. It has excellent drainage and is arguably the best wet weather course in Brisbane.

Membership

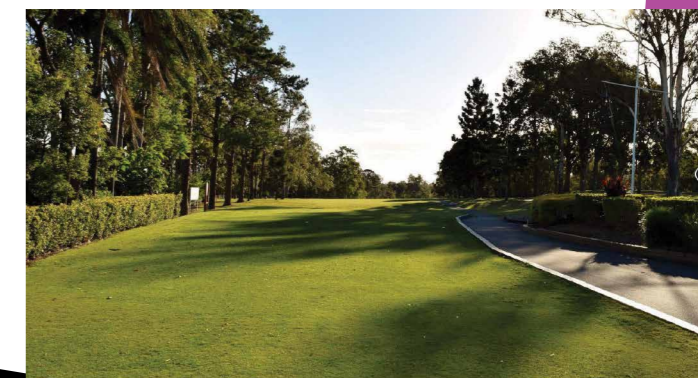
GGC offers great membership packages to suit your needs and better yet NO NOMINATION FEE. Our membership entitles you to full access of our 18 hole golf course, Club house facilities, Golf specials, Competition and Special Event days and much more.

Functions

Gailes Golf Club provides the perfect backdrop for your special occasion. We can cater for all types of functions.

- Birthdays
- Weddings
- Community Events
- Wakes
- Private Functions
- Seminars and Conferences
- Christmas Drinks

Our function staff are trained to ensure that you and your guests are treated attentively and professionally. Our Function Coordinator is there to help you co-ordinate every aspect of your event.



Our main function room, The Coogan Room, can cater for up to 150 guests in style, offering a range of menu options to suit your specific requirements.

Weddings

With the tranquil backdrop of the Golf Course, our friendly and experienced staff, and delicious menu options, Gailes Golf Club is the ideal venue to host your wedding ceremony and reception.

All of our packages include:

- Manicured course to hold your outdoor wedding ceremony and utilise for memorable photography
- Spacious function room that can be configured to suit intimate or more elaborate gatherings
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Corporate Golf Days

At Gailes Golf Club, we understand and value the importance of a successful Corporate Golf Day - not only for your guests but also for your company or charity. The experienced team at Gailes will take the pressure off you as we manage the logistics of your golf day.

Gailes Golf Club enjoys a reputation as one of the leading clubs in Queensland, with an outstanding championship course that has been graced by some of the game's all-time greats.

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SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

Mark O'Sullivan

Superintendent of the Decade might be a more fitting acknowledgement for the work Mark O'Sullivan has carried out at Roseville Golf Club. The 34-year veteran super has been instrumental behind major improvements at the 18-hole private course on Sydney's upper north shore.

After the severe drought in NSW from 2001-2003, Roseville embarked on a program to increase its water supply to be self-sufficient in the future. Adopting a course masterplan by architect James Wilcher, the club pursued stormwater harvesting from Moore's Creek as the most viable option.

O'Sullivan oversaw the daily operations for the construction of a 26 megalitre water storage dam and subsequent installation of a computerised irrigation system as well as a massive course renovation. That included everything from preparing paperwork for the development approval to organising traffic management plans and noise mitigation strategies.

Seven new greens, nine tees, four fairways plus more than two kilometres of concrete pathways have been built. O'Sullivan also co-ordinated the volunteer labour responsible for adding more than 10,000 plants. Through it all, O'Sullivan's team kept 18 holes open for play without the use of any temporary greens.

More than 470 megalitres of water have been harvested since, saving \$950,000 in fees over eight years. Once maligned for its blind par 3s, Roseville (4,913 metres, par 66) has morphed into a much more enjoyable course that is recognised for its superb conditioning.



SERVICES TO GOLF

Jarrold Lyle

In the 14 short years that Jarrod Lyle was involved in professional golf, he left an indelible impression upon those he came across. An outpouring of emotion followed his passing in August after a seemingly lifelong battle with acute myeloid leukaemia.

Rarely has a golfer touched so many others with his courageous fight against an insidious disease. That Jarrod could put a smile on his face, when others struggled to find words of solace, is testament to his selflessness.

That Jarrod could pursue a career in professional golf, let alone make it to the US PGA Tour, is testament to his determination. And that Jarrod could raise a family when the odds were stacked against him is testament to his dignity.

Jarrold Lyle inspired others to live in the moment and not get too far ahead of themselves. He was – he is – much loved because he radiated goodness from every part of his soul. **G**

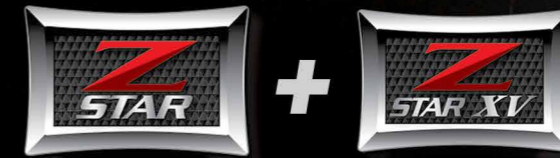


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