

getting more south africans to Birdi

by Rozalia Whitehead

Birdi, a proudly South African company, was born out of the association between the initial members of the Birdi Golf Apparel Close Corporation and Morui Investment Holdings.



Len Lewison, Managing Director, Charlene Lewison, Marketing and Sales Director and Victor Nosi, Chairman

In 2004, black owned and black controlled company Morui Investment Holdings (Morui) concluded a deal with the initial Birdi members to buy 27.5% equity in Birdi. Morui shareholders are seasoned businessmen with extensive corporate experience at senior executive level as well as in the public sector. Its members include Victor Nosi (Chairman), Joe Nalane, Kenny Setzin and Phillip Zondo, who also constitute the Birdi board members.

Other board members comprise Managing Director Len Lewison, his daughter and Marketing and Sales Director Charlene Lewison, Birdi co-founder Alan Altshuler as well as chartered accountant Irwin Sacks, together the board is leading the company into the future.

"Birdi's staff complement comprises mainly females and we are working at improving our internal representation of employment equity," says Victor.

Having acquired black empowered status nearly two years

ago, the company has since continued to build on the great work of more than 12 years in serving the golf fraternity and corporate organisations across the country with golf apparel and corporate clothing for males and females.

Demanding high quality standards, the company only uses superior quality fabrics which include 100% combed cotton and 100% mercerised cotton both single and double, amongst other quality fabrics. Birdi prides itself on its ability to provide today's golfer with the newest styles and designs in golf apparel. This is evident in its product range for ladieswear which includes golf shirts, blouses, bermudas and trousers while the menswear products include golf shirts, lounge shirts, windbreakers and trousers as well as bermudas.

In addition, Birdi also offers general products such as rainwear, headwear, socks and belts as well as enhancing products through an effective and efficient embroidery service for corporate branding on any garment it has produced.

All major suppliers are BEE compliant and 90% of products are sourced from South African companies and local textile mills. Victor points out that the number of black owned suppliers remains at a small scale and these suppliers have not been able to keep up with the growing clothing and textile industry demands.

The company's clientele include a number of South Africa's large corporations – Vodacom, SA Airways, Eskom, JSE, Investment Solutions, Telkom, Incredible Connection, Business Connection, Mycor, Sentech and many more. It is also the official clothing supplier to The South African Professional Golf Association, South African Golf Development, SA Disabled Golf Association and the Women's World Cup of Golf. The ladies range has recently acquired the endorsement of well-known lady professional golfer – Sally Little.

"Our financial involvement in the women's premier golf event – Women's World Cup of Golf – is motivated by the fact that the tournament has raised the awareness of golf among women, particularly previously disadvantaged individuals," says Len. "Golf has grown at such a phenomenal rate in this country that it has become the fastest developing sport played by black women and we believe our commitment to the development of golf will have a far reaching impact on the sport."

The company's nurturing has **expanded** to the **SA Disabled Golf Association** as well as other organisations involved in disabled sport. This includes an **ongoing sponsorship** of the **Special Olympics golf division**, which **focuses** both on the **mentally and physically** challenged.

For a number of years Birdi has targeted its corporate social investment initiatives to enhancing the game as well as uplifting the game of golf in previously disadvantaged communities, especially focusing on the youth and black females.

Birdi is also the clothing sponsor for the young black girls who are trained and coached by the Women's World Cup of Golf organisers Tanya Fourie and Lesley Copeman.

Birdi has further shown its support to the development of professional black golfers by providing previously disadvantaged individuals with clothing on an ongoing basis. "These include players who have shown formidable potential in the game, such as Solly Sepeng, Omar Sandys, Sammy Daniels, Tebogo Sefatsa and Siphwe Siphayi," says Len.

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"I would like to believe that by increasing our commitment financially to the upliftment of golf, we will be able to ensure that more people of colour and limited abilities receive the opportunity of taking part in the wonderful game of golf," concludes Len.

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