

Address at the Opening Ceremony of the President's Cup 2003 Fancourt

20 November 2003

Honorary Co-Chairman of the President's Cup,
President George Bush,
President Nelson Mandela,
President FW de Klerk,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Members of the President's Cup Committee,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am truly delighted that the world's premier league of the golfing fraternity has joined us today for this prestigious friendly tournament, the President's Cup 2003. On behalf of the government and people of South Africa, I extend a very warm welcome to all of you.

Today, 20 November, is the birthday of one of South Africa's golfing heroes, Bobby Locke. In 1946, he invited US hero, Sam Snead, for a friendly competition in South Africa and stunned Sam with his victory by 12 matches to two. Perhaps this paved the way for our own new stars to emerge, including our current international team players, Gary Player, Ernie Els, Retief Goosen, Tim Clark and so many others.

It is indeed an immense privilege and honour to welcome as Captain of the US team, a living legend among his peers, among amateur golfers and to millions of golfing fans around the world – the incomparable master, Jack Nicklaus.

The magnificent Links Course at Fancourt is the dream of its architect, Gary Player, whose vision and love of the game, brings us all together in celebration of the sport, which millions around the world enjoy, playing on over 30,000 golf courses.

Golf has certainly come a long way since the game was known to have been played in Scotland in the 15th century, when King James II banned it by decree when he pronounced:

“And that the fute-bal and golfe be utterly cryed down, and not be used.”

Fortunately for all of us today, the great game of golf has travelled across the globe, played by royalty, Presidents, men, women and children from all walks of life.

Since the Royal Cape Club was established in 1885, many golf courses have been built in South Africa. I am proud to say that, for over 40 years, and under difficult circumstances, enthusiastic black golfers have sought out open fields and kept the game alive even in our townships, such Tembisa and Daveyton. In KwaZulu Natal, Papwa Sewgoolam showed courage and outstanding skill against all odds.

Tiger Woods, who has inspired so many new players to the game, says that golf is really:

"...you against yourself. It always comes down to how well you know yourself, your ability, your limitations and the confidence you have in your ability to execute under pressure that is mostly self-created. Ultimately, you must have the heart and head to play a shot and the courage to accept the consequences. Golf is a great mirror, often revealing things about you that even you didn't know. It cannot be misled. Still we try."

I wish the US team and the international team from Australia, Canada, Fiji, South Africa, South Korea, and Zimbabwe, good luck and keen but friendly competition. I am honoured to declare the President's Cup 2003 officially open.

Thank you.