

# HOT PROPERTY

This former GolfRSA prodigy turned DP World Tour two-time winner is showing why he's always been earmarked for big things

BY MICHAEL VLISMAS

The rain that fell at Royal Johannesburg on the Sunday after the final round of the 2025 Alfred Dunhill Championship couldn't hide the tears streaming down the face of Ryan Schaper. As he and his wife watched their son, Jayden, lift the magnificent leopard trophy for his first DP World Tour title, years of dreaming, hard work and unyielding support came pouring out of Ryan.

'You know, everybody asks me when did this all start. It started as soon as Jayden could walk. And it's never stopped since,' said Ryan.

This last season, the DP World Tour leader went from walking to a flat-out sprint. The quiet young golfer, who was a star of GolfRSA, displayed every bit of the potential everybody knew he has when he won with back-to-back titles on the Sunshine Tour and DP World Tour in both the Alfred Dunhill Championship and AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open. He has now backed that up with by starting 2026 with a top-five finished in the Hero Dubai Desert Classic and 20th at the Dubai Invitational.

His two victories to end 2025 were both won in playoffs – both with eagles against opponents with multiple tournament victories worldwide. He also won bucketloads of respect from his opponents. In Johannesburg, the shot he hit into the 18th in the playoff with Shaun Norris was so good that Norris lifted his hands in the air and applauded as he walked down the other side of the fairway. In Mauritius, Schaper went all out with a chip-in for eagle against PGA Tour winner Ryan Gerard, who turned around and was at first stunned and then just shook his head in amazement.

Those are the shots you're dreaming about on the practice green when you're a youngster. To pull them off in tournaments and in

## IN SCHAPER'S BAG

**Driver:** TaylorMade, Qi4D LS (9 deg)

**3-wood:** TaylorMade, Qi35 (15 deg)

**Hybrid:** TaylorMade, Qi35 (19 deg)

**Irons:** TaylorMade, P-7MC (4-6 iron), TaylorMade, P-7MB (7-9)

**Wedges:** TaylorMade P-7MB (P), TaylorMade Milled Grind 5 (50, 56 & 60 deg)

**Putter:** TaylorMade Spider Tour Z

**Ball:** TaylorMade TP5x (2024)



playoffs is amazing. It's insane,' says Schaper. It put him in the territory of Sir Nick Faldo as the only players to win back-to-back DP World Tour titles in playoffs.

What's equally 'insane' is that the 24-year-old is now South Africa's highest ranked golfer on the Official World Golf Ranking and after the two Dubai results, is now in the top 50 – and set up to start realising those big dreams he has had for himself.

'Those were the best weeks of my life, and hopefully there are a lot more to come. Coming off my second place at the Nedbank Golf Challenge and then go on to win the next two was unreal.'

The runner-up finish at Sun City was indeed a watershed moment for Schaper, who was once a kid walking a practice round with Trevor Immelman at 'Africa's Major'. He remembers his dad getting sunscreen in his eyes and 'me having a bit of a moment' when Immelman pulled him under the ropes, asked him to hit a shot and gave him a few tips. Years later he was challenging for that title on a Sunday afternoon.

It was in the genesis of that moment – a tournament he'd grown up watching as a kid and idolising the winners, and the power of almost realising his own glory there – that Schaper hit the next two weeks, with the purpose and the vision to win.







It's one thing dreaming it. It's another being able to see it. In the playoff for the Alfred Dunhill Championship, Schaper walked up to play his second and immediately saw it. 'I could see the shot. I felt comfortable before I even hit it. I knew it was going to be good,' he says.

There was no doubt Schaper was headed towards the kind of defining December he had last year.

As a star for GolfRSA he won everything he put his mind to in the amateur ranks. While still an amateur he almost won the 2020 South African Open and finished sixth overall. In his first year as a professional that year he finished runner-up to Christiaan Bezuidenhout in the Alfred Dunhill Championship.

That was a particularly hard blow because it came on the back of his entry into the pro ranks slap bang in the middle of a global pandemic. It was a frustrating period in the sense that, as Schaper described it, 'I couldn't go out and do what I've prepared for my whole life'. So when the 2020 Alfred Dunhill Championship arrived and he came so close to winning amidst that frustration, it was a defining mental moment for him.

'He was still so young then. But he learnt from it,' says Ryan.

In his own methodical way, Schaper started turning top-10s in co-sanctioned events in South African into top 10s on the HotelPlanner Tour and then DP World Tour. Then he stepped it up further and last year recorded five top-five finishes on the DP World Tour before those defining three weeks in December.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

Schaper is the only golfer to record the 'Grand Slam' of South African Junior National titles – the Nomads SA Boys U13, U15, U17 and U19 – as well as the SA U19 double at the age of 16. He played at two Presidents Cups and secured the biggest win of his unpaid career, the 2019 Junior Players Championship at TPC Sawgrass.



'You know, it was my third season out there. I felt a bit more comfortable. I knew a few of the golf courses better so you have a gameplan set up. I think last season I had just a little bit more confidence in myself and felt more comfortable out there. It's about belief,' he says.

He waited five years for his first professional victory, and then took just two weeks to announce to the golf world that he was done waiting.

In 2020, in his first year as a professional, Schaper paid tribute to GolfRSA and the elite amateur environment he benefitted from as preparing him for touring life. 'I feel like I belong out here,' he said in that first year.

In 2025, he proved it.

