



FORCE OF NATURE

It's no exaggeration to suggest that this confident teenager is on the brink of announcing himself to the world

BY CLINTON VAN DER BERG

The story of Andries van der Vyver doesn't begin on the pristine fairways of a professional tour, but on a putting green with plastic sticks and the kind of fierce sibling rivalry that only a house full of boys can foster.

Today, the 18-year-old stands as a record-breaker in global golf, but he still speaks with the affable, grounded warmth of a Paul Roos schoolboy who just happens to have equalled a world record.

To understand Van der Vyver, you have to understand the family household in Somerset West. It is a golfing dynasty built on healthy friction. With two older brothers who played in the United States, one a pro, and a twin brother, Nicolas, who is just as hungry for success, 'competitive' is an understatement.

'Everything we do is competitive, even eating,' Andries laughs. 'It's like the worst and greatest thing. We had club champs recently. We played the first round together and it's just so tense. We're not speaking to one another.'

That tension, however, breeds excellence. In the Strand Golf Club championship, the four brothers finished first, second, third, and fourth. 'It's just weird. We're all very loving, but we hope the other plays better while simultaneously wanting to beat them.'

That grit was on full display in March at East London Golf Club during the Nomads SA Boys U19 Stroke Play Championship. Van der Vyver dismantled the course, carding rounds of 67, 64, 62, and 64 to finish at a staggering 35-under-par. In doing so, he equalled the 72-hole world record set by Japanese icon Hideki Matsuyama.





The moment of truth arrived on the 17th tee during the final round. Van der Vyver knew he was at -33.

'It was like a dream. I just kept telling myself to keep on going,' he recalls. 'I just wanted to beat Daniel Bennett's SA record (a 72-hole total of 34-under-par 254 at the 2023 Nomads SA Boys U-19 Championship).'

After a drop earlier in the round, the pressure was immense to find the last two birdies needed to match the record. 'The last two holes, I just told myself: "Come on, you lost two opportunities. You've gotta bring it back now".'

He did exactly that, exhibiting a level of mental discipline rarely seen in a teenager leading the field by 15 shots.

Maintaining that focus is a skill honed at Paul Roos Gymnasium, a school legendary for producing South African sporting heroes. Balancing international titles in Kenya and Zimbabwe with a matric year is no small feat, especially when your parents insist on a 'Plan B'.

'We're also quite academic. My brother wants to study actuarial science, so we need to keep up the standards,' Van der Vyver explains.

This academic rigour has translated into his golf: 'When you practice, you have to practice with intent. You only have a certain amount of time, so you have to know what you're doing.'

The goal remains the same: excellence without compromise.

While his name now sits on the Nomads Trophy alongside legends like Ernie Els and Trevor Immelman, Van der Vyver is already looking toward the horizon. His game is strikingly 'Tour-ready,' built on a

SHORT PUTTS

Apart from Strand, if you could play one course for the rest of your life, which would you choose and why? 'Augusta. It's the most prestigious. No one can (usually) play there. It would be a dream.'

You're on a long haul flight to Atlanta, or even Zimbabwe or Kenya. What is the one movie or series you're going to watch?

'The Bourne series with Matt Damon. I also enjoy Suits.'

Whose poster was on your wall as a kid, or the golfer you would like to model your game after?

'Tiger Woods. The things he did for golf ... even with his personal stuff, he still got on top.'

Some golfers need a specific coffee or a lucky ball marker. What's the one thing you must do before you tee off in a final round?

'I always say a prayer before I play. I'm a religious person, and I always believe it's not in my hands, but in the Lord's hands.'

If you're not playing or studying, what are you likely up to? 'I have a big family, so I spend a lot of time with family and friends. I also have a girlfriend and spend a lot of time with her.'

You get to pick three people, dead or alive, golfers or celebrities, to play a round at Augusta.

Who do you choose? 'Tiger Woods, Scottie Scheffler and Jack Nicklaus.'



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combination of fairway-finding accuracy and an approach game he considers above standard.

The next chapter of the Van der Vyver saga moves to the United States. In a twist of fate that seems almost too perfect, both Andries and his twin Nicolas have been recruited to play for Augusta University starting this August.

'I can't believe it's Augusta, just a coincidence,' he says with a confident grin. 'We'll be playing the course (Augusta National) once a year. I want to be able to play on the big stages one day, win the Masters like Rory, and compete against the best in the world.'

For now, he will balance his accounting studies with his professional ambitions, but the mission is clear. With a world record already in his pocket and a twin brother by his side to keep him honest, Andries van der Vyver is a force of nature ready to take on the world.

