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Original Tee Golf Classic comes to SA

Cathy Dippnall GARDEN ROUTE CORRESPONDENT

THE founder of Original Tee Incorporated and the Original Tee Golf Classic tournament, Wendell J Haskins of New York, says he wants to bring the tournament to South Africa.

Haskins, who started his company nine years ago after spending over a decade in the entertainment industry, was invited to South Africa last week to attend the annual golf summit.

Haskins said though he had never played the game before, he found the transition from entertainment to golf quite easy. He felt he had a unique advantage of marrying golf, fashion and entertainment through a multi-channel approach.

"I've been playing golf for nine years and I am totally passionate about it."

Inspired by African American pioneer Dr George F Grant, the inventor of the golf tee which was patented in 1899, and other African American golfing pioneers, Haskins named his first product the Original Tee-Shirt, depicting Grant's golf tee.

Not long after, Haskins decided to hold the Original Tee Golf Classic, inviting well-known African Americans from the entertainment industry to play and donate a portion of the proceeds of the game to the Bill Dickey Golf Scholarship Association.

The two-day event now draws more than 300 golf enthusiasts and leaders in business, sports and entertainment from across the United States.

Haskins said he planned to bring the Original Tee Golf Classic to South Africa to enable local youth to develop their sporting and social skills.

"Dickey is the godfather of minority junior golf in the United States. Tiger Woods was a recipient of the association and I felt I also wanted to help young people of colour to learn a top quality game and at the same time learn how to become productive human beings," he said.

Haskins was a panellist at the golf summit, discussing what the South African golf industry could do to broaden its base, such as the inclusion of previously disadvantaged communities as golfers or entrepreneurs in the industry. "The youth are the future of golf."



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