

ON BECOMING A CADDY

There were nine in my family; two were domestic workers who lived at their employers residence and came back home at weekends. During the week we were only seven people at home, my grandparents, my cousins and myself. In actual fact my mother and aunt were the sole breadwinners, and as domestic servants they earned low wages and had to combine them in order to maintain the whole family. At that time my mother was earning R50 per month, while my aunt got R65 per month. They were only relieved when both my grandparents got their pensions which came every after two months. I should add that during the month they got into kinds of jobs to get some money. My grandmother was doing washing for other people, while my grandfather was chopping wood in order to sell. I used to gather aluminium objects and copper wire to sell at the scrapyards, and this helped me a lot because I could get money to eat at school and also could join my friends when they were going to the cinema.

Golf course as an alternative

Things changed when I entered my higher primary schooling. My mother could not afford buying books and at the same time paying school fees and buying uniforms; and that led me to run away from school because our teacher was unreasonable; he could beat us even though we tried to explain the situation at home. Fortunately some of my friends were caddies and I started going with them to the golf course during the weekends. My mother did not like this idea of going there, she had all sorts of bad stories about the golf course, and always told me to behave myself because caddies were rough boys who have run away from their homes and sleep in the water-pipes or drains.

Once I was a caddy I realised the change in her attitude towards me. She was always worried and asked me how it was in the golf course. I think she thought I would never return home once I became a caddy, because there was that belief that once young boys become caddies

they are exposed to money and start to think that they are men and can control themselves. But the actual reality is that caddies struggle to get money. They go through different processes which are humiliating and this causes them to be demoralised. They become stubborn and would not listen to anyone who tries to give them advice about how to spend their money.

It is true that most caddies did not go back to their homes; and there are reasons for that; like for some the reason was that their places were far from the golf course. I remember, caddies from Tembisa used to go to Kings Cinema on Saturday nights to avoid going back home because they might be late and find long queues at the golf course. (I will talk more about the long queues as the article goes on.) Well to my side it was different because I did go home usually, even though we sometimes slept in the golf course; and especially during the '76 riots because we feared people who were threatening to beat those who were using Putco buses. With the money I got from the golf course I bought books and paid the school fees; and my mother used to say I was showing signs of becoming a good man when I grow up. She was saying this because she could save some cash instead of buying my school books and uniform; but she did not know the actual life I was leading.

She did not know about the bad treatment. Sometimes, when she was at home, she used to tell us how hard she was working for the cruel master who paid her less wages. She complained to the extent that she threatened to leave the job; and everytime she was complaining I could compare her complaints as a domestic worker with mine as a caddy; and I would keep quiet because I knew if she got to know the situation at the golf course, I would not be allowed to go back there again.

As I've said it was through my friends that I knew the golf course. We started carrying at the Wanderers Club; then after the Royal and the Huddle Park golf course which was called 'Betty' by most caddies.

Golf courses are like any other sportsfield in that they must be kept clean; grasses kept in good order and greens cut at normal level. This means workers were needed. In most cases (in the golf courses I had been involved in) 'migrant' labour was recruited from the rural areas. Like any other 'migrants' who are working in the urban areas, they were housed in compounds which are in the golf course and this led many caddies to refer to them as 'Mazumpi' which was a popular name given to black actors in Tarzan's movies. Besides keeping the course in good order; migrants were also involved in carrying duty during the weekends.

Zishangani ekraalini

At the golf course we used to meet boys from different locations like Soweto



'The wall was used as a queuing lane for caddies'

and Tembisa. The system which was used to control us as caddies was the 'kraal system' which worked as follows: The kraal was similar to that of cows; it was four-walled with precast concrete and had a thatched roof. There was only one entrance which served also as exit. This opening was used by the caddies master to keep an eye on the caddies inside the kraal. The wall was also used as a queuing lane for caddies as the only way you could get a job was by queuing. Migrants were given the priority since they had their own queue which was attended first; and this caused the conflict between them and caddies. The intense hatred caddies had towards migrants was exposed by giving them nicknames - for example the name 'Mazumpi'.

Bra Joe in authority

Like I've said the kraal was used for control over caddies, the caddiemaster being the only person who controlled migrants and caddies. In actual fact he was also a compound dweller who had been employed by the golf course, and in most cases he was corrupt, cruel and authoritarian. Since his main job was to keep the long queues in order, the only way he could do that was by beating up caddies who were struggling to be first in the queues. The struggle was caused by the fear of not getting jobs that day; and most of the caddies came from remote areas like Soweto and Tembisa.

Beating was the main strategy of power in the kraal; even bigger caddies used to beat smaller ones in order to get money or in actual fact to be feared in the kraal and be able to dominate others by force. Once a caddiemaster noticed that you were feared by your colleagues, he would appoint you to do his dirty job. Appointed caddies were in most cases controlling the queues and they did this by taking bribes from caddies who wanted to be first in getting jobs. In some cases the bribes were shared with the caddiemaster.

The appointing of caddies to control the queues also strengthened the conflict between caddies from different places. Like I've said appointed caddies were corrupt, but their corruption was one-sided; for instance if he was from Soweto, only Soweto caddies would be in front that day. Things got tense when two caddies were appointed from

different places because each would favour those from his location and of course in this case the one with less power would be dominated, and his colleagues would be last in the queue.

The only way we avoided this kind of racketeering was by waking early in the morning, about three to four o'clock. Since we were eight boys in our street each of us would have his weekend to wake up first and go from door to door waking others. If anyone was slow in waking up, we used to leave him behind. We woke up early so that we could catch the first bus which was used by less caddies; and we would be first in the queue.

Prison camp

Beside the long queue the kraal itself was horrible; it was more or less like a prison camp. In most cases fighting among caddies was encouraged and was taken as a test of power. Once you beat a number of caddies during those fights, you would be known and feared.

As far as golfers were concerned, there were those who played morning sessions and others in the afternoon and this had an effect on caddies, because (if) they could get jobs in the morning and of course, through bribes, also in the after-

noon. Those who did not bribe; or were not known by the appointed caddies or the caddiemaster, could spend the whole day without getting jobs. When that happened to us, we used to go to Alex by foot, but there were other alternatives in the course; like we would go and look for lost golf balls and sell them to the pro-shop which was in most cases owned by professional golfers. In the case of Wanderers Club it was Graham Henning and he used to rob us when selling golf balls, but it did not matter as long as we could get money for food and bus fares.

Low Pay - Cruel Master

Getting a job was itself not an escape from the bad conditions and treatment because most golfers were cruel and racist too. They never regarded caddies as humanbeings. Nonetheless to be a caddie required one to have various skills required in golf as sport. A caddie was supposed to know the course very well; must be able to tell the direction of the wind; measure distance to the green and be able to tell the direction of slopes in greens. Good eyesight was also required to see the ball. Without the above-mentioned you were easily harassed by your master; abusive language was used in most cases; and some golfers went to the extent of beating up the caddies.

City golfers beat off caddie 'invasion'

RAND DAILY MAIL

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Multiracial golf day to raise money for black youth

A multiracial golf day will be held at Germiston on March 12 to raise money for the youth centre in the township of Kaitleng. The tournament is being organised by the Kopp East Rand Tidy Golf Course. All proceeds will go towards the conversion of an old brewery, which has been donated by the Kaitleng Community Council, into a youth centre. This centre will provide a variety of activities, from boxing to ballroom dancing. It will also be a venue for educational film shows and lectures. If you wish to take part in the golf day, the entry fee is R10 (closing date is February 28). For more information telephone Mr Churchill Neala at 970-3535.

By WILMAR UTTING

MEMBERS of Kennington Golf Club, Johannesburg, have been using clubs, sjamboks and an electrified truncheon to beat back the mob of caddies invading the course at weekends looking for work.

The system covers up. See also the article on Youth Centres.



For caddies who had no knowledge, of the course, it was disaster, especially when they carried the bag of temperamental golfers who could go to the extent of breaking his irons if he did not manage to use them. In such a situation a caddie would always be ready to have the iron club on his head. Golfers would carry out this kind of assault openly because there was nowhere for caddies to report such acts of violence. Other golfers instead of beating up the caddie, would send him back to the kraal and this was embarrassing because caddies would make a joke out of you. Caddie-masters usually threatened such caddies not to come back anymore to the golf course or else you would get beaten up, but fortunately others were labelled special caddies for lady golfers and the reason being that ladies don't require knowledge; all they want is the caddies to pull the cart or carry the bag and nothing else

The risk of the game

Carrying as a job itself was dangerous. Besides bad masters the course itself was dangerous. You could get killed easily by being hit by a golf ball from some other fairway. During rainy days caddies were sometimes victims of lightning. I remember during our days two caddies lost their lives due to lightning. Even though the job was dangerous the pay was low. The way payment for caddies was made up was as follows: when golfers hired caddies from the kraal they bought caddie tickets. There were two tickets; one for food at the

halfway house and one was worth 50c which I did not actually understand what it stood for; but caddies used to believe that it was from the golf club itself and was payment for having come to the club to assist its members in carrying their bags during the game. Besides the two tickets there was payment which came from the golfer himself and was called tips. The tip was set by the golf course and in Wanderers we usually got R1,20 for eighteen holes which took approximately six hours.

The eighteen holes were broken into two parts, and every after nine holes there was a break. A special cafe called the halfway house was built for the golfers. This is where they ate their delicious food while caddies were given a cup of coke and a bun. At the Royal Club they used to give caddies two slices of bread with mince meat and a cup of cold-drink. In all these courses cold-drinks could be given out even if it was cold or raining. There was that tendency for golfers to buy peanut-snacks and most caddies used to feel like they were treated as baboons; because while golfers would be eating different kinds of sweets or snacks, the caddies would be eating peanuts.

Obviously the whole pay was inadequate and the food bad. It is due to this inadequacy that most caddies stole items from their bags or those carried by other caddies. Mostly items like watches, purses, golf balls, irons and umbrellas were stolen and hidden in the course.

Gambling and stabbings

Gambling was also the result of low pay; and this is where stabbings and killings occurred. The gambling also led to robberies. Smaller caddies were victims of bigger caddies who would rob it they have lost; and in order to run away from losers we had to make secret exits so that we would not be seen until we reached the bus stop.

Once you were in the bus the whole fear of uncertainty would come to an end. The fear of being beaten by caddie-masters, kicked by the golfer or robbed by other caddies would come to an end; but that was only for a while, because you would be returning to the horrifying place even tomorrow.

Letters

Izwi,

I write to complain about how you handle the general issues of life. Always when I read your paper I see the articles opposing one thing or another. For example, I did not like to see your article Badla Nombuso whereby you criticise Ds Buti.

I think this is unfair, as this man has done many things to help the people of Alex. Had it not been for him, where would most of us be? I think he deserves to be praised. However I do agree with some of the things you criticise, as when you say the LC pressurised stand-holders to sell their property. But there is nothing Buti could do, because these very stands would have made the redevelopment of Alex impossible. But I sympathise with the stand-holders.

No one can claim to be perfect, so I think we should bear with Buti and his shortcomings. Though there is little he has done to develop Alexandra during his 4 years in office, I still think half a loaf is better than none

L.P.

Izwi,

I would like to make my contribution, which is inspired by the article on Shacks in your December/January issue. I actually want to question the stand the so-called leaders have taken on the shack issue in Orlando East. Since your paper was published there has been a lot of action in Orlando. Many