



Golf legend Gary Player tries his hand at Zulu dancing at a function marking the start of construction of the Gary Player Signature Golf Course at the Zimbali Lakes Resort development on the North Coast.

PICTURE: PURI DEVJEE

Player to open golf academy

SUREN NAIDOO

GOLFING icon Gary Player is set to open his first fully-fledged golf academy in South Africa as part of the new R150-million Gary Player Signature Golf Course at the Zimbali Lakes Resort development on the North Coast.

He revealed the plan at the sod-turning ceremony marking the start of construction on the new course yesterday.

The landmark project is Player's first championship golf course development in KwaZulu-Natal. It is being developed by IFA Hotels and Resorts as part of the greater R7-billion Zimbali Lakes Resort, a joint venture with Tongaat-

Hulett Developments.

"I am glad to be here in KZN doing this project. It is of special significance to me because my family originally comes from KZN and I won my first SA Open title here at the Durban Country Club in 1956," he said.

"This project at Zimbali Lakes is not another golf estate; it will have a golf academy that will give talented underprivileged youngsters the opportunity to learn the skills and qualities needed to excel in golf," he said.

"Golf is arguably the most supported sport by business globally and golfers are among the most recognisable figures in the world. Imagine if we

could one day produce a black golfer like Tiger Woods. This academy must become a breeding ground of such talent," said Player.

"People who complain about golf courses and its impact on the environment need to think again. Golf courses provide green belts to overdevelopment and effluent that goes into the sea can be used on them," he said.

Wessel Witthuhn, of IFA Hotels and Resorts, said construction of the course, club house and other facilities would take 18 months to complete and would cost about R150m. The resort would boast villas, hotels and a mixed-use retail and leisure component.

