

Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open Press Release 2/2008

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***Where 70-year-old masters challenge the 50-year-old 'young talent'***

The “Battle of the Generations” is now also raging on the PGA European Seniors Tour: on reaching the age of 50, “new young” seniors are joining the circuit which has been described as a “friendly tour” by the pros. However, the concept of “I came, I saw, I conquered” is not easy to realise here either, as the old timers are putting up a strong resistance. And successfully, as the now 72-year-old leftie Sir Bob Charles demonstrated – the New Zealander made the cut at the beginning of the season on the regular tour! And he will be making every effort to finally celebrate his first Bad Ragaz victory at the event from 8 to 10 August 2008. This is an aim to which Italy's Ryder Cup hero Costantino Rocca also aspires. It won't be easy though, because the defending champion Carl Mason will also be there.

The organisers of the Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open will no doubt again be serving up a number of highlights at this international competition which is being staged for the twelfth time from 8 to 10 August 2008 and is the second most important PGA event in Switzerland. The event will feature a number of top players – among the 72 renowned professional golfers from around the world there are a number who particularly made their mark at last year's tournament: Champion Carl Mason (England – a total of 194 over three rounds set a tournament record), the three runners-up Costantino Rocca (Italy), Horacio Carbonetti (Argentina, also 2003 and 2004 champion) and David J. Russell (England), as well as course record holder Juan Quiros (Spain – shot a 61 in the second round in 2006; also 2006 champion).

**The scene is set for a battle of the giants**

This year, however, we can probably also look forward to a contest between the generations: the 50-year-olds against the 70-year-olds. Because, in addition to the dominant figures already mentioned from last year's tournament, there is another master player who needs to be considered – Sir Robert “Bob” Charles. Now 72 years of age, the New Zealander says: “I start every round with the aim of completing it with a score lower than my age”. On 13 August 2006, in the final round of the Tenth Ragaz PGA Seniors Open, he did just that by shooting an impressive round of 65 (at the age of 70). At the start of the current season, aged 71, he achieved the feat no less than twice in the same tournament – the New Zealand Open. This made him the oldest player of all time to make the cut on the (regular) PGA European Tour. This means that we can look forward to seeing how the ascetic left-hander holds his own in the contest with players of similar age (or at least only just a generation younger) in Bad Ragaz.

Italy's Ryder Cup hero Costantino Rocca (who entered the history books with a "4 and 2" victory over Tiger Woods in Valderrama in 1997) is not yet dreaming about scoring below his age. At just 51 years of age, the northern Italian is still simply too young. However, he is old enough to win the Ragaz tournament. And Switzerland has proved to be a good hunting ground for the sunny boy from bella Italia: at his Ragaz debut he claimed second place, in 1997 he won the European Masters event on the European PGA Tour in Crans-sur-Sierre. There is really no need to mention how he takes the hearts of fans by storm – his constant good mood and willingness to engage in charming chats with spectators, especially after submitting his score card, made him an instant hit with the crowds.

Speaking of crowd favourites: There is of course another Swiss resident who is enjoying home advantage at Bad Ragaz – Maurice Bembridge. The four-time Ryder Cup player for England, who resides in St. Gallen, has been acting as ambassador for the Grand Resort Bad Ragaz on the European PGA Seniors Tour for the last two years. The Ragaz crowd will never forget his ace at the third hole in the final round of 2006. “Do it again, Maurice!”

### **The top stars are coming - and there is more prize money**

The traditionally high calibre of the entry list speaks volumes for the event’s popularity; even the tour “big shots” turn up in Bad Ragaz without receiving appearance money. The players’ loyalty is now being rewarded by the organisers with an even fatter wage packet. In 2008, the prize money is now 50,000 euros more than last year; representing a 24 per cent increase to a total of 260,000 euros (39,000 Euro for the winner). Andy Stubbs, Director of the PGA European Seniors Tour, gratefully acknowledged this monetary improvement when it was announced at the beginning of the year, and promised “A generous gesture by the host. I am confident that this will mean a strong entry list is assured again this year”.

And Stubbs will be proved right. It is not only the defending champion and runners-up from last year who have already registered for the tournament from 8 – 10 August. This year will again see almost complete representation of the top 30 of the current European PGA Seniors Tour Order of Merit (OM). The field is led by the current OM number 3, Australian Stewart Ginn, who shared sixth place at last year’s Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open. By 10 June, organising committee chairman Ralph Polligkeit had already received 25 confirmations out of the top 30 in the current European Seniors Tour money list (the only players missing are those who play on the American Champions Tour but are at the same time members of the European Tour and hence are included in the OM). However, Polligkeit is confident that one or two other top players will still decide to participate. After all, this event is very popular among professional players. Thanks not least to the surroundings: the event has a strong organiser and sponsor in the Grand Hotels Bad Ragaz, with a perfectly prepared golf course and an infrastructure unrivalled on the European Tour. Terry Gale, the 2005 Ragaz champion, confirms this: the Australian has promised “As long as I play in the European Tour I will always return to Bad Ragaz”.

### **Attractive off-course programme**

In addition to first-class golf, spectators are offered a number of attractive side events. In the late afternoon of Saturday, 9 August, an event popular with the crowds and pros alike – the shootout – will take place under the motto “Golf & Casino”. A public marquee will be set up for all three days of the tournament along the 12th fairway – with a view of the 12th green – where spectators can linger, refresh themselves and talk golf. As a result, the 12th Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open promises to be another fascinating golf rendezvous. It’s well worth a (free!) visit.

### **For further information and pictures, please contact:**

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