



OK Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open
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Two generations of heroes tee-off at the 12th Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open: Sir Robert Charles and Costantino Rocca

The 12th Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open boasts top stars and even higher prize money. 260,000 Euro await the winners in the Grand Resort Bad Ragaz from 8 - 10 August. The thought of this has again attracted the biggest names on the PGA European Seniors Tour to Switzerland: defending champion Carl Mason and Italy's Ryder Cup hero Costantino Rocca have confirmed their attendance as has Sir Robert Charles; at the start of the season, the 72-year-old left-hander even made the cut on the regular tour in his home country of New Zealand!

For Ralph Polligkeit, the Chairman of the Organising Committee, welcoming the creme de la creme of the PGA European Seniors Tour on the first tee of the Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open is becoming almost a routine occurrence. This will not be different at the twelfth holding of the second-biggest PGA-Tour event in Switzerland. The 72-strong field will be headed by former Bad-Ragaz winners, Ryder Cup heroes and a man whose declared aim is "to beat my age" on every round of golf.

Prize money increased by 24 per cent

The European Tour of senior professional golfers, founded in 1991 for over-50 players would not be the same without the Bad Ragaz Open. Right from the start, the tournament was a huge hit with the pros. Thanks not least to the surroundings: with the Grand Hotels Bad Ragaz, the event has a strong organiser and sponsor, with a perfectly prepared golf course and an infrastructure which is unrivalled on the European Tour. The pros enjoy the informal atmosphere not only when passing the Public Tent at the 12th hole.

The traditionally high calibre of the entry list speaks volumes for the event's popularity; even the tour «big shots» appear in Bad Ragaz without appearance money. The players' loyalty is now being rewarded by the organisers with an even fatter pay packet. In 2008, the prize money is up by 50,000 Euro compared to the previous year; this represents a 24 per cent increase to 260,000 Euro from now on (39,000 Euro for the winner). Andy Stubbs, Director of the PGA European Seniors Tour, expresses his appreciation for this monetary improvement and promises: «A generous gesture on the part of the organisers. I am confident that this will mean a strong entry list is assured once again this year».

The scene is set for a battle of the giants

«For as long as I play on the European Tour, I will always come back to Bad Ragaz» was the promise made by Terry Gale (Australia), 2005 Ragaz winner. He is not the only one with ambitions of repeating his success on the Bad Ragaz PGA Championship Course in August. Acceptances have also been received from defending champion Carl Mason (England; Winner Order of Merit 2007), Juan Quiros (Spain, Winner 2006, course record with 61 strokes), Horacio Carbonetti (Argentina, Winner 2003 + 2004, Runner-up 2007) and David J. Russell (England, Runner-up 2007).

They are not the only ones standing in the way of Mason's successful title defence and seeking to wrest the tournament record from him – currently 194 strokes in three rounds on the par-70 course. Another of last year's runners-up is out for revenge: Costantino Rocca. Italy's Ryder Cup hero who wrote a page in the annals of golf history with a «4 on 2» victory over Tiger Woods in Valderama in 1997 took the hearts of the Ragaz spectators by storm last year. This time, he aims to get his hands on the trophy. Anyone who would like to find out for themselves how far the ball has to be struck and about the inch-perfect positional accuracy called for on fairways and greens to beat the number one in the world rankings at matchplay will be well-advised to look in at Bad Ragaz from 8-10 August this year and stick to Costantino Rocca's heels. After handing in his scorecard, this congenial player from Northern Italy usually takes time out for a chat with the fans.

Among the numerous former Ryder Cup players participating once again this year in Bad Ragaz, one in particular should be mentioned by way of example: «our» Maurice Bembridge. The St. Gallen-based Englishman, for two years now ambassador of the Grand Resort Bad Ragaz on the PGA European Seniors Tour, took part in the Ryder Cup four times. At Muirfield (Scotland) in 1973, partnered by Brian Huggett in the four ball, he handed out a «3 on 1» defeat to the US legends Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer. In Ragaz, the pipe-smoker is among the undisputed darlings of the public: a “home win” would be immensely popular.

This year however, we can probably look forward to a contest between players from two different generations: the 50-year-olds against the 70-year-olds. Since there is someone in particular to be reckoned with: 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 lower score than my age». On 13 August 2006 in the final round of the 10th Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open he did just that with an impressive 65 strokes (and 70 years of age). At the start of the current season, at the age of 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 similarly-aged players (or at least ones barely a generation younger) in Bad Ragaz.



Carl Mason with the winner's cup: the Englishman returns to Bad Ragaz in August to defend his title.



72 years of age and in enviable form: you can never discount Sir Bob Charles.



The darling of the public: Costantino Rocca captured the hearts of the Bad Ragaz fans – this year he aims to pick up the winner's trophy.



A Ragaz specialist from Spain: Juan Quiros won in 2006 and still holds the course record with 61 strokes.

Further information is available from:

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