



Ras Al Khaimah CHALLENGE TOUR GRAND FINAL



HIGH STAKES AS LOCAL GOLFERS COMPETE FOR RAS AL KHAIMAH CHALLENGE TOUR GRAND FINAL PRO-AM SPOT IN GOLDEN BALL SERIES

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Ras Al Khaimah, UAE: The hotly anticipated 2018 Golden Ball Series is underway, and this time, for the UAE's amateur golfers, the stakes are even higher as they compete for a place alongside the stars of the European Challenge Tour in Ras Al Khaimah.

After two successful editions in 2016 and 2017, the Challenge Tour event in Ras Al Khaimah has this year been promoted and is now the climax to the season, the Ras Al Khaimah Challenge Tour Grand Final, taking place at the stunning **Peter Harradine** designed Al Hamra Golf Club from Wednesday October 31 – Saturday November 03, where the top 45 players on the Road to Ras Al Khaimah Rankings will cross swords. At the conclusion of the event, the top 15 players on the Rankings will be gain a life-changing promotion to play on the European Tour next season.

Golfers in the UAE are being given the chance to get their hands on a coveted 'Golden Ball' which will gain them entry into the Pro-Am taking place on Monday October 29 where they will rub shoulders with golf's next generation of superstars.

Among those to have come through the European Challenge Tour ranks are three-time Major champion Brooks Koepka, reigning Race to Dubai champion Tommy Fleetwood as well as Ryder Cup and Major winning stars Justin Rose, Henrik Stenson and Martin Kaymer to name just a few. More recently, Jordan Smith won the inaugural 2016 Challenge Tour event in Ras Al Khaimah to confirm his status as that season's Challenge Tour No.1, setting the Englishman on a pathway to success which saw him claim his maiden European Tour title at last season's Porsche European Open.

Haitham Mattar, Chief Executive Officer of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, said:

“As professional players compete to end the season at the top of the Road to Ras Al Khaimah Rankings and gain promotion to the European Tour, the Grand Final of the Challenge Tour’s Road to Ras Al Khaimah is a prestigious event for the UAE.

Sports and adventure tourism are key to Ras Al Khaimah’s tourism development strategy and this tournament is an important addition to our events calendar that will inspire more golf enthusiasts to play where the professionals play.

“The Golden Ball Series is a wonderful example of this. Local golfers in the UAE compete for a once in a lifetime opportunity of rubbing shoulders with the next generation of professional golf stars on the European Challenge Tour. The amateurs who make it through the Golden Ball qualifying series and win a spot in the 2018 Ras Al Khaimah Golf Challenge Grand Final Pro-Am will enjoy an unforgettable experience playing alongside some of the best players in the game in a fun yet competitive environment.

“The championship course managed by Troon and located in the idyllic lifestyle village of Al Hamra will take them around natural lagoons in a stunning setting – allowing them to get a feel for the natural beauty of Ras Al Khaimah. We wish all of the competitors the best of luck and look forward to welcoming them to what is sure to be a fantastic tournament in October.”

All 21 clubs in the country have been invited to stage a qualifying event for the 2018 Golden Ball series, sanctioned by the Emirates Golf Federation, which will see players battling it out to win a much sought-after spot in the Grand Final set to take place at Al Hamra Golf Club in Ras Al Khaimah on Saturday October 13, 2017.

The first qualifier took place at the weekend at Arabian Ranches Golf Club with 48 participants all vying for a place in October’s Grand Final. Wouter Verwaal sealed his spot after carding an impressive score of net 68 in the Men’s qualifier for a one-stroke triumph over Jonathan Underhill. In the Ladies event, Elli Oschmann emphatically booked her place in the Grand Final after shooting net 72 which included a memorable hole-in-one on the 17th.

The top three finishers from the Grand Final will be treated to a truly unique, ‘inside the ropes’ golfing experience when they tee it up alongside the best players on the Challenge Tour ahead of the biggest event of the season.

Picture Caption: Wouter Verwaal and Elli Oschmann celebrate becoming the first two qualifiers through to the Golden Ball Grand Final.