

## Norris tames the wind to win Africa Open

While the rest of the field battled the powerful easterly for the second place, a composed Shaun Norris cruised home to a regal victory and his debut win on the Sunshine Tour at the inaugural Africa Open.

The powerful Pretoria pro had the tournament sewn up at the turn and posted the low round of the day, a four-under-par 68, to take his maiden title on 13-under-par 275 and finish a dozen shots better than Nic Henning in second.

Henning carded a 69 to sneak past the field and finish two better than Zimbabwe's Marc Cayeux, Jean Hugo and a hugely disappointed Grant Muller. Warren Abery, Hennie Otto, Jake Roos and England's Jeremy Kavanagh were next best on 283.

"I set myself a goal at the beginning of the week to stay calm and collected and to stick to a well-laid gameplan," said Norris, who credits dad Patrick for teaching him how to play wind-cheating golf.

As the easterly steamed across the exposed expanses of this picturesque coastal layout, Norris showed patience and maturity well beyond his years that truly made him stand out from the rest. With the windspeed reached up 95km per hour, Norris picked his lines to perfection and executed his shots with the precision of a brain surgeon.

"I only adapted my game plan once, due to the fierceness of the wind," said Norris, who opted for a driver at the 14th instead of the 3-wood that he used in earlier rounds. "The wind was really pumping on that stretch and I thought, with such a lead, I could go for it, even if I came away with a bogey. But I pulled the shot off and walked away with a birdie. "One of the biggest plus-factors out there today was the near-perfect pace on the greens and the fact that they roll so true. That's always helpful in the wind," added Norris, who won most of his amateur titles at the coast.

To truly understand the effect the wind was having on the field, consider the 473m par-five second, a downwind dream that yielded nine eagles and 41 birdies on Sunday, while the 391m par-four 13th only delivered three miserly birdies and punished the 72-strong field with 28 bogeys or worse.

Norris started the final round with a one-shot lead and wasted no time, rattling in a birdie at the first and eagle-3 at the second. While he dropped shots at the fourth and sixth, he erased the deficit with a birdie at the seventh before the turn.

"I really felt the pressure the most on the 10th tee, a hole I have the greatest respect for," said Norris. "It was one of the toughest holes this week, especially so today in these conditions.

"So I took a four-iron off the tee, knowing I wouldn't reach the green in to - playing straight into the wind like that. I told myself to relax, not to think ahead. I wanted to play the hole smart, take a bogey and get out of there, because if you take that hole on, you will pay the penalty. Luckily, I hit a really good third shot just a foot from the flag and made par."

Norris took on the 18th with a seven shot cushion, but his tiger-line drive at the 337m dogleg par-4 closing hole found the thick undergrowth. Norris had to take a drop behind the bushes, but pitched his third perfectly on the green and nearly holed the putt to save par. Norris took home a cheque worth R190 200, a single payday, which eclipsed his best season's earnings on the entire Sunshine Tour for any on the six seasons he has campaigned on the South African circuit.