

2010 Africa Open joins European Tour

The Africa Open will reach another milestone in January 2010 when it officially becomes the fourth co-sanctioned tournament between the European Tour and the Sunshine Tour on South African soil.

From its origins in the Eastern Cape in 2008, the Africa Open has fast risen to international status and will offer a major incentive to South African players to make an impact on the 2010 Race to Dubai rankings at East London Golf Club from 7-10 January 2010.

While showcasing the city of East London and bringing international golf to the Eastern Cape, the €1-million Africa Open will provide members of the Sunshine Tour with another opportunity to earn membership of the European Tour.

“As the fourth co-sanctioned tournament in South Africa, the Africa Open emphasises the spirit of cooperation and collaboration between the two Tours,” said Sunshine Tour commissioner, Gareth Tindall.

“We extend our warmest welcome to the members and officials of the European Tour, and our gratitude to Buffalo City Municipality and all the sponsors of the Africa Open for their support of this prestigious event, and in growing golf in this region.”

George O’Grady, Chief Executive of the European Tour, said: “Golf at the highest level is now a truly global game, and this is a further step in our joint alliance to grow the game internationally. The Africa Open is also in keeping with our aim of providing our members with as many playing opportunities as possible, while underlining our strong relationship with the Sunshine Tour.”

The 2010 Africa Open will also be a key event in the European Tour professionals’ quest for Ryder Cup points.

Darren Clarke and Nick Dougherty both have designs on making European Ryder Cup captain Colin Montgomerie’s 2010 team, and will spearhead the Africa Open challenge against South Africa’s stars.

South Africans James Kingston, Charl Schwartzel and James Kamte will bring their international experience to East London, while Louis Oosthuizen and Thomas Aiken will look to add to their multiple Sunshine Tour victories with a European Tour title.

The Africa Open has also attracted a prestigious list of sponsors such as Buffalo City Municipality, Amathole District Municipality, MTN, Basil Read Construction, Eastern Cape Tourism, Brandhouse, the Kempston Group and Premier Hotels and Resorts.

“We want everyone in the city to feel that the Africa Open belongs to them,” said Buffalo City mayor Clr Zukisa Faku.

“The tournament will showcase the city and its people to sports lovers throughout the world. We hope that what they see is a dynamic, multi-cultural community and a sophisticated destination that is ideal for events such as this.”

Tournament Director, Mbali Ngqula, added: “We are delighted to confirm the staging of the first European Tour co-sanctioned Africa Open. We have always felt that East London deserves a world-class professional tournament, and we were determined to see that it gets one.

“The event is the culmination of an incredible year’s work and the location, time slot and prize money is certain to attract some of the most successful professional golfers of the present era.”