

Lee dreams of success at 2010 Africa Open

Rising New Zealand golf sensation Danny Lee says he is looking forward to getting his 2010 season off to a strong start in South Africa.

The 19-year-old, who charged to a dramatic victory and worldwide headlines in the Johnnie Walker Classic last year, will join a stellar line-up of European and Sunshine Tour winners at the €1-million Africa Open, which tees off at East London Golf Club from 7-10 January 2010.

After his stint at cracking the big time in the USA, Lee says he is eager to sample the experience of the European Tour, starting in South Africa.

"I'm really looking forward to teeing it up at the Africa Open," said Lee. "This is my first visit to South Africa and from what I hear we can expect a stiff challenge at the East London Golf Club. I can't think of a better way to start my European Tour season."

Lee enjoyed a prolific amateur career becoming the youngest winner of the US Amateur in 2008 at the age of 18 years and one month, earning the number one spot in the World Amateur Golf Ranking and besting the previous record set by Tiger Woods in 1994.

After beating a field that included Ryder Cup players Lee Westwood, Paul Casey and Anthony Kim and PGA Tour star Camilo Villegas to become the youngest ever winner on the European Tour at the Johnnie Walker, Lee joined the paid ranks after the 2009 Masters but enjoyed mixed results in his first season as a professional.

Although he enjoyed some highly encouraging results alongside the world's best players, he also missed his share of slippery putts as he adjusted to life in the fast lane. Lee says his statistics in North America – 12 events, six cuts made, one top 10 finish and earnings of \$359,846 – doesn't begin to describe the rocky road the adjustment took.

"It's all a bit of a blur; I can't really remember much. The cut and thrust of competition on the PGA Tour took me by surprise. It was harder than I thought it would be. It's not easy. There are just lots of good players out there and that's what makes it most difficult. They're all good players.

"It is a delicate balancing act, to know when to attack the pins and when to play for safety, but that will come with experience. It's much tougher in professional golf than it was in amateur golf and I am doing my best to learn from each and every experience.

"I guess it's an issue of course management; I am still playing aggressive but now I'm trying to play aggressive in smart ways, rather than taking risks."

Although his gung ho approach sometimes delivered scorecards littered with bogeys, his aggression could just pay off at the risk-and-reward layout of the Links at East London Golf Club.

Overall Lee, who was born in South Korea, but moved to New Zealand at the age of eight, is pleased with his progress to date, but feels that there is more to come.

"Who knows, it might start for me here in South Africa," said Lee.

Lee will be joined by 2009 European Tour champions Nick Dougherty, James Kingston and Richard Sterne, former Ryder Cup stars Darren Clarke, Paul McGinley and Thomas Bjorn, a nine-time winner on the European Tour and local favourite James Kamte, winner of the 2009 Asian Tour International.

Tickets are available at the gate and entry for pensioners and children under 18 is free for all tournament days. Adults enter for free on Thursday, 7 and Friday, 8 January and tickets cost R20,00 per day on the weekend.