

ALFRED DUNHILL
CHAMPIONSHIP

Leopard Creek Times

ROUND 1

THURSDAY 13 DECEMBER 2018



Photo Credit: Heinrich Helmbold.

Leopard Creek Reborn

Leopard Creek makes its much-anticipated return to the schedule as the home of the prestigious Alfred Dunhill Championship this week, and the improvements to this celebrated golf course have been applauded by the leading professionals.

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"There is such a tremendous field here, and with the changes to the course making it tougher, if you're offering me a win by three, I'll take it." - Brandon Stone



Photo Credit: Heinrich Helmbold.

by Michael Vlismas

"Spectacular. Visually, the set-up is beautiful," said Charl Schwartzel, a four-time winner of the Alfred Dunhill Championship and also four-time runner-up. "The new grass looks beautiful, and combined with the white bunkers it's just so visually appealing." "Phenomenal. It's really looking great," added Branden Grace, the champion here in 2014.

And the general consensus is that the changes will also make for a very tough challenge for the field this week.

"Around the greens and on the greens themselves, it's just so much more demanding," said Louis Oosthuizen. "I don't see low scores around this golf course now." "It's definitely going to play tougher," Grace agreed.

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Photo Credit: Heinrich Helmbold.

"There are a lot more tee boxes further back, and you're going to have to hit it in the right spots on the greens to give yourself chances. I think this course is really going to show its teeth now." Ernie Els, who remembers being with Gary Player when he designed the golf course, also expects a greater challenge to a course where he won this tournament in 2005.

"The greens are firmer and faster so the putting discipline is going to be much tougher on the greens. It's going to give us a much bigger challenge," said the four-time Major winner and former world number one. Brandon Stone returns as the defending champion, but not expecting the six-stroke victory he achieved in 2016. "There is such a tremendous field here, and with the changes to the course making

it tougher, if you're offering me a win by three, I'll take it." But it's a challenge they're happy to accept in a week that is one of the most popular in world golf. "I'm looking forward to it," said England's Matt Wallace, one of the highest-ranked players in the field at 44 in the world. "It's going to be tough, but it's a great course if you're playing well." ■

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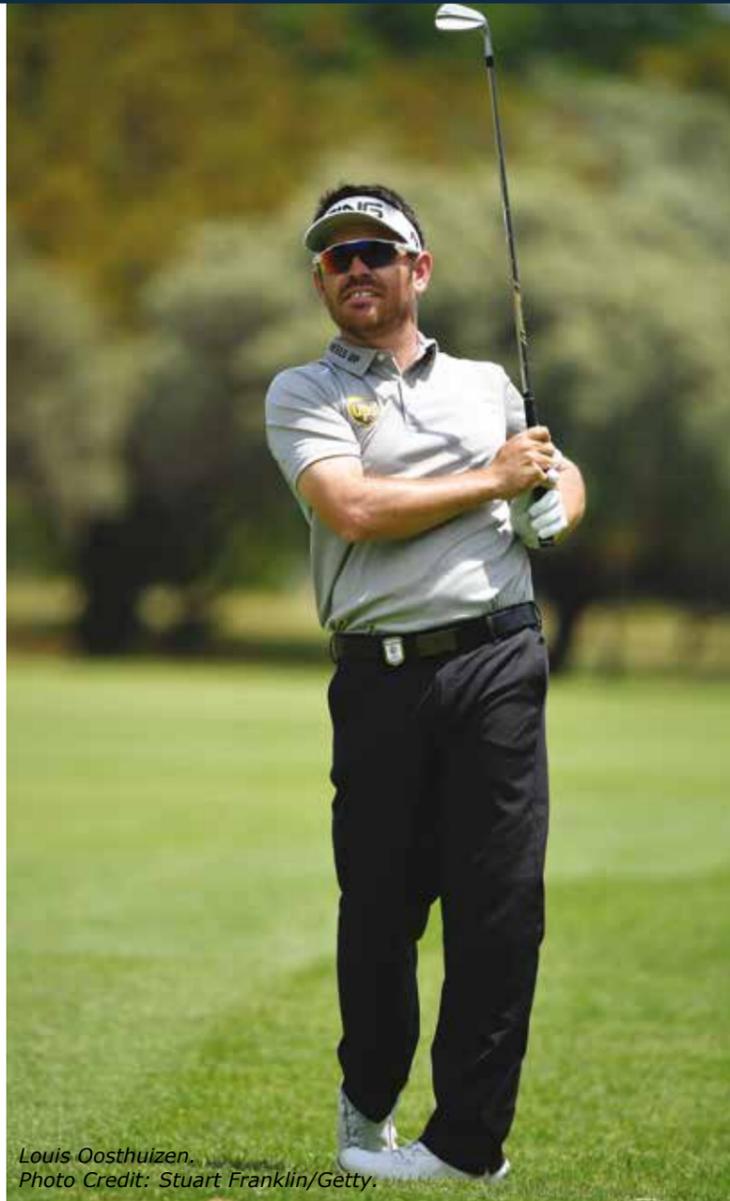
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Louis stalking more success at Leopard Creek

Louis Oosthuizen heads into the the Alfred Dunhill Championship with a desire to 'just keep getting better' following his historic victory in the South African Open hosted by the City of Joburg. With his six-stroke victory at Randpark Golf Club on Sunday, Oosthuizen became only the fourth South African after Bobby Locke, Gary Player and Ernie Els to win both The Open and the South African Open. "I just need to keep on going and get even better," said Oosthuizen, who tees off at Leopard Creek as part of a strong field including fellow Major champions Ernie Els, Charl Schwartzel and Trevor Immelman; Branden Grace, the only golfer to ever win the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship and the Alfred Dunhill Championship; 2016 Alfred Dunhill Championship winner Brandon Stone; and Matt Wallace, a three-time European Tour winner this year.



Louis Oosthuizen.
Photo Credit: Stuart Franklin/Getty.



Branden Grace.
Photo Credit: Stuart Franklin/Getty.



Brandon Stone.
Photo Credit: Stuart Franklin/Getty.

"For the last six or seven months I've been focusing on where I can really do better – not just going to the range and hitting balls and not really knowing what you're working towards. There are a lot of things we changed practice wise, you know," said Oosthuizen. "I'm back with my fitness trainer and we've worked on getting my body in better positions and to make it easier on my back so I'm able to play more golf. That's the big thing for me.

I've also got a new coach in Justin Parsons. We've been looking more at the stats and where my weaknesses are. "I've been working on my shorter irons, especially my wedges. I've worked hard on my putting. If you know you're putting well it takes massive pressure off you. If you're not putting well you start lagging the putts and hoping they go in. I have all the confidence to hit my putts, even if I hit them two or three-feet past

because I'm comfortable with that distance. "And I've worked on my driving. I've always been a good driver but I've worked on improving that so I can hit more drives. It's great to see the results of this work in a shortish period of time." Oosthuizen will be hoping it all comes together again at Leopard Creek this week in a tournament where he has twice finished second in 2005 and 2014. ■

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SA Amateurs Shine in 2018



Jovan Rebula.
Photo Credit: Shaun Roy/Gallo.



Yurav Premllall.
Photo Credit: Shaun Roy/Gallo.



Wilco Nienaber. Photo Credit: Stuart Franklin/Getty.

The depth in South African amateur golf and the work done by GolfRSA to develop this was nowhere better illustrated than in December's South African Open hosted by the City of Joburg. The formation of the GolfRSA National Squad with the generous support of Johann Rupert has allowed the country's top amateurs to be exposed to international competition on a consistent basis. And the effect of this was seen in the incredible results achieved this year. A total of seven amateurs qualified for December's South African Open, and four of them – the highest number in 20 years – made the halfway cut. Jovan Rebula (left) capped his magnificent year with victory in the Freddie Tait Cup on his way to finishing tied 24th overall, and Yurav Premllall was at the age of 15 the youngest amateur to ever qualify and make the cut in the history of the SA Open. It

reflected a year of incredible success for South Africa's top amateurs. The year began with Kajal Mistry achieving a finish of tied sixth in the Annika Invitational in the United States in January. That same month, seven amateurs qualified for the South African Open at Glendower Golf Club, and three went on to make the halfway cut as Kyle McClatchie eventually secured the Freddie Tait Cup with his overall finish of tied 15th. March brought with it victories for the SA Boys and SA Girls in the All-Africa Junior Golf Challenge in Morocco, including Deon Germishuys and Kajal Mistry taking first in the respective Boys and Girls Individual competitions. In April, Otto van Buynder claimed the World Amateur Golf Championship in Reunion, while the South African team won a 22nd title in the Africa Region V Tournament in Zimbabwe. The heart of the international

season saw tremendous success by South African golfers. Wilco Nienaber finished second in the Brabazon Trophy in England, while Christo Lamprecht won the East of Ireland Amateur Championship and also finished tied eighth in the St Andrews Links Trophy in Scotland. The crowning glory though was Rebula's victory in the 123rd Amateur Championship in Scotland. Over in the United States, Germishuys won the Grandover Junior Amateur on the Tarheel Tour and also finished tied fourth in the Junior North and South Championship at Pinehurst. Back in Scotland, Martin Vorster claimed the Junior Open. In September, Zethu Myeki impressed with her second-place finish in the Individual Competition of the All-Africa Challenge Trophy, and South Africa finished second in the Reply Italian International Under-16 Championship in Italy. ■



Pedro Figueiredo (left) and Hennie Otto after their victories in the Par 3 Competition.
Photo Credit: Stuart Franklin/Getty

Figueiredo, Otto are Par 3 Champions

Portugal's Pedro Figueiredo and South Africa's Hennie Otto were both victorious in two days of thrilling Par 3 action during the traditional Par 3 Competition on the Tribute Course ahead of the Alfred Dunhill Championship. Figueiredo won the Tuesday Par 3 Competition by three strokes with a round of 6-under-par 21, and Otto took the honours in the Wednesday Par 3 Competition by one stroke with his round of 5-under-par 22.

The nine-hole course includes holes capturing the spirit of some of the most famous par-threes in the world. "I saw so many holes that I've watched on TV. It was fantastic to play here," said a delighted Figueiredo. Otto was equally pleased with his performance. "This is such a beautiful facility and it's a privilege to play here." Each professional earned R140 000 for their victories. ■





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