



**For immediate release**

**Tuesday February 7, 2017**

## **Willett looks to kick-start season in Malaysia**

**Tournament:** Maybank Championship

**Venue:** Saujana Golf & Country Club

**Prize fund:** \$3,000,000

**Hashtag:** #MaybankChampionship

### **Tournament Preview**

Danny Willett is hoping to kick-start his 2017 European Tour season at this week's Maybank Championship in Malaysia, where his fellow green jacket holder Charl Schwartzel is making his first appearance of the year.

The reigning Masters Champion began the season with a top ten finish at the UBS Hong Kong Open at the end of last year, but has not quite continued that form into 2017.

The Englishman will play his first competitive round at Saujana Golf & Country Club, and he is sure to be feeling confident having performed strongly in Malaysia in the past.

Schwartzel, meanwhile, is making his first start of the year having recovered from a knee injury and the 11-time European Tour winner is feeling fresh having claimed a top five in his last appearance, at the Alfred Dunhill Championship in December.

### **Player quotes**

**Danny Willett:** "I know the course pretty well. I first came here eight years ago, my first event on tour which I was first reserve for and then didn't get in. I've been back here for a couple of corporate days in between so I know the course well."

"It's a lovely little track, I know they've re-laid the greens since I was here last November and the course is in really good shape considering all the work that they've had to do to get it up to standard. I think the guys should be in for a treat."

"I've only played three tournaments, ten competitive rounds of golf and some of it has been good, some of it bad. I'm going through some changes with a few bits so just trying to bed them in now – I thought I had it pretty good last week but it didn't quite filter through for all four days on the golf course."

"I played the Pro-Am this morning and I'm going to do a little bit of work in the afternoon so hopefully I can keep some good feelings going. Usually I come out of the blocks quite quickly, in the last few years anyway."

"This year has been a little bit slow so far but hopefully we can progress working forward and hopefully this year keep progressing."

**Charl Schwartzel:** "I struggled with my knee a little at the end of the year and it never really got better so by the time it came to January for my MRI scan it turned out I needed a longer break."

"That has actually allowed me to be a lot fresher than I think I would have been, to sort out some of my clubs and get some practice done to get my game in shape. I think overall it's been a good thing. It's been nine weeks since I last played competitively and it's the freshest I've ever been."

"I'd like to climb the world rankings more this year. I'm focussed on Majors, 2011 is a long time ago so I'm playing PGA Tour for the majority of events so I'll see if I can get it going out there, that's what I'm aiming for."

"I have memories of this place from 2002, I played the Eisenhower Trophy as an amateur and I don't remember it being this hilly. I can't remember how we did so we obviously didn't win. We had some great fun, myself, Louis Oosthuizen and Shaun Norris who is also here this week."

"There's a lot of holes that I remembered when I was out there today and I'm actually very excited to be here. It's a course that was a good memory even if we didn't win. It's nice to be back here and hopefully I can make new memories here."

**Anirban Lahiri:** "It is like coming back home for me. I won a couple of years ago in Kuala Lumpur, obviously I've played in two EurAsia Cups and so many years on the Asian Tour so it is always a warm welcome for me."

"I played at Saujana as an amateur many years ago so it is like déjà vu for me. It has been a while but it is nice to be back."

"I got off to a good start end of last year in Malaysia. It has not been as good as I would have liked it to be. I have only played three events this year but I feel like my game is in the right place. I'm making a lot of birdies which is a good sign. I probably need to tighten my round a bit and put four good rounds together."

**ENDS**

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## **THE EUROPEAN TOUR - CELEBRATING GOLF. WORLDWIDE.**

### **About The European Tour**

The European Tour celebrates men's professional golf on a global stage. In 2017, the European Tour International Schedule features a minimum of 48 tournaments in 26 countries, including eight Rolex Series events, all part of the Race to Dubai. The year-long competition crowns the European Tour Number One at the end of the season, a title claimed in 2016 by Henrik Stenson for the second time.

Since its formation in 1972, the European Tour has witnessed 27 Members celebrate a total of 53 Major Championship titles between them, enjoyed ten Members attaining the pinnacle of World Number One and has celebrated its diversity as players from 36 different countries have won on the Tour.

The European Tour also manages the Challenge Tour, which featured 28 tournaments in 22 countries in 2016, and the Senior Tour, which featured 13 tournaments in nine countries in 2016. It is also the Managing Partner of Ryder Cup Europe, the body which, alongside the PGA of America, administers golf's greatest team contest, The Ryder Cup.

The European Tour broadcasts live coverage of its tournaments to more than 490 million homes in more than 150 countries every week, generating in excess of 2,200 global broadcast hours for each event. It also enjoys the support of many of the world's leading business brands with Rolex, BMW, Jumeirah Golf Estates, Emirates and Titleist as Official Partners.

### **About The Rolex Series**

The Rolex Series is the premium category of tournaments on the European Tour's international schedule, featuring eight events each with a minimum prize fund of US\$7million. It comprises: the BMW PGA Championship (May 25-28), the HNA Open de France (June 29-July 2) the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open hosted by the Rory Foundation (July 6-9), the Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Open (July 13-16), the Italian Open (October 12-15), the Turkish Airlines Open (November 2-5), the Nedbank Golf Challenge (November 9-12) and the season-ending DP World Tour Championship, Dubai (November 16-19), where the 2017 Race to Dubai champion will be crowned.