



MALTA GOLF ASSOCIATION

PRESS RELEASE



MALTA JUNIOR OPEN 2019

The third Malta Junior Golf Open has just been held at the Royal Malta Golf Club. 76 boys and girls, all under the age of 18, travelled from 14 different countries to join 6 local players in this tournament endorsed by The R&A towards the World Amateur Golf Ranking points system. The format of the competition was medal stroke play with the winner declared as that having the best gross aggregate score over 54 holes. The conditions, for the competition, took care of gender equality by making sure that the tournament had joint winners according to gender – indeed the girl players contributed to just over a third of the tournament's field.

The tournament attracted a strong field. 24 players had a handicap of 3 or better; 18 had a playing handicap between 4 and 5; whilst another 24 had a handicap between 6 and 10. The best registered boy was Gal Patrik Stirn from Slovenia with a handicap of +1.2 whilst the best entry from the girls was Sophie Nibus from Belgium with a handicap of +0.5. Approximately half the field were under fifteen years of age.

In a first day characterised by very strong winds, these two players struggled to find their form and were unable to feature in the tournament due to the early damage suffered. Indeed, on this first day, not one player was able to shoot par for the course. The best scores from the boys came from Fynn Hessenkaemper with a one over par followed by local boy, Laurens Schulze Doering with two over par. James Skeet came in third with a six over par. The best girl score for the first day was registered by Andreina Pupa D'Angelo with seven over – two better than Anna Neumayer and Milla Marlen Sagel.

The golf course was a totally different element in the second day as the wind completely died down offering a calm sunny spring day. Surprisingly, however, although most of the players improved their scores no one was able to beat the course. The best score for the day was one over par carded in by Julia Ley to leap frog her to lead the girls by two shots over Sagel. Lena Hassert stood three shots further back whilst D'Angelo stood fourth with an aggregate of 16 over par over two days.

As already mentioned, despite the good conditions, none of the boys managed to beat the course. Hessenkaemper and Schulze Doering both carded five over par to retain their first and second places respectively. Skeet's 3 over par saw him retain his third place albeit narrowing the deficit from the leader to only three strokes.

On the final day, the girls' tournament ended up in a battle between Ley and Sagel. After nine holes of play, Ley maintained her one-shot lead as both girls went out in one over par for the course. Three holes later the status quo was retained with both girls making two bogeys and a par. Ley then made successive bogeys on the 13th and 14th and made a par on the 15th to Sagel's straight pars and a birdie. This gave Sagel a one-shot lead for the first time in the tournament. Both girls made a bogey on the 16th. Sagel's bogey on the 17th to Ley's par saw the girls tied for the tournament with one hole to go. Somehow Sagel retained her nerve and made a par on the 18th to Ley's bogey to claim first place. Playing in the flight ahead, D'Angelo had played her best round with a two over par for the course to tie Ley. This was sufficient for her to claim the second place on countback. Hassert dropped to fourth place - three shots further adrift.

The boys' final three ball was just as exciting. Hessenkaemper and Schulze Doering struggled on the front nine going out in five and four over par respectively to tie allowing Skeet to take the lead by one shot having played only one over par. Skeet then played the next four holes par, birdie, bogey, par to Schulze Doering's par, birdie, par, par and Hessenkaemper's double bogey, par, par, par. This tied Skeet tied with Schulze Doering in first place with Hessenkaemper three shots back. Schulze Doering then put his drive out-of-bounds behind the green of the par four 14th and the resultant double bogey gave Skeet a lead of two shots – a lead which he would not surrender either to Schulze Doering or to Hessenkaemper who could not better either of his fellow competitors' scores.

Whilst all eyes were fixed on this flight, in the flight ahead Jonas Benedikt Schorratz was having the best round for the tournament. With eight birdies (four on each of the nine holes) and only three bogeys, Schorratz carded a five under par for the course to move him up a staggering eighteen places in the leader board and leap frog Schulze Doering into second place by one shot – two shots behind Skeet.

The tournament also awarded the best net scores. The overall best net score was claimed by local girl, Filippa Schulze Doering, whilst the overall best net score was awarded to Marvin Zabel. Oliver Stuart took the best net score from a Royal Malta Golf Club member.

Eight birdie players from the RMGC Junior Academy were also given the opportunity to play at the back end of the main competition. The aim of this competition was to expose these young players to a world ranking event and increase their confidence to compete on an international platform. Playing aggregate Stableford off full handicap, Cherlyn Christmas was declared the winner with 117 points on countback from Aleksandr Vagimov. Noah Gratil placed third with 112 points.

On behalf of the RMGC Captain and Irwin Gratil who managed the Organising Committee, I extend our appreciation to the sponsors and to all who helped to make this tournament great success.

William Beck
22nd April 2019