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Top notch captains to lead the field in the showdown at Saujana

Defending champion Shubhankar Sharma and Malaysia's top-ranked Gavin Green will join Major champions Ernie Els and Pdraig Harrington, and host of other international stars at the Maybank Championship 2019

Kuala Lumpur, 18 JANUARY 2019 - Maybank today announced legends of golf and Major title winners, Ernie Els and Pdraig Harrington, as among the star attractions who will be at the Maybank Championship at Saujana Golf & Country Club from 21-24 March 2019.

Defending champion Shubhankar Sharma and Malaysia's top-ranked Gavin Green will also be part of the formidable field that will have players drawn from the world Tours, including a contingent from the ASEAN region.

The 156-field make-up embraces an all-new category for this tournament, with 15 players from the top-150 of the Official World Golf Ranking, qualifying solely on merit. They join another 60 players drawn from both the Asian and European Tours.

By retaining the iconic ASEAN category, the Maybank Championship has elevated its player field and made it inclusive of world-class players from all the federations. A string of players from Australia, China, New Zealand and South Korea - some of them with an eye on making the President's Cup team later this year - will also add significantly to the international composition of the tournament.

But it is the inclusion of Els and Harrington that will capture the imagination of the fans as they await the fourth edition of the Maybank Championship. It is fitting too that included in the field at the US\$3 million event in Kuala Lumpur are players of top quality - and this is something Datuk Abdul Farid Alias, Group President and CEO of Maybank, alluded to when he said the Bank was more than delighted to host such pedigree at an event whose tagline is "Where the Best Meet."

"The inclusion of the game's most active global player Ernie 'Big Easy' Els, as well as three-time Major winner and recently appointed European Ryder Cup captain, Pdraig Harrington, underscores our objective to feature some of the best players in the world at this premier golf tournament."

"Having our defending champion, Shubhankar Sharma, Maybank's ASEAN ambassador Gavin Green, Japan's prince of golf Ryo Ishikawa and 'Babyface Assassin' Poom Saksansin in the field, also reaffirms our objective of providing a platform for Asian stars to shine," added Datuk Abdul Farid.

“There is no doubt they will add tremendous character to the championship, even by just being here in Kuala Lumpur,” he said. “But that is not all. The championship will showcase not only the best in golf, but also present a strong essence of our event DNA with delightful cuisine and lifestyle elements of the finest tastes at the week-long event.”

“Essentially, the Maybank Championship embraces these spheres of sport and life in a tournament that is family-orientated. The championship is a week where all get to enjoy, watch and experience a first-class event - on and off the course,” said Datuk Abdul Farid.

The Big Easy, a household name in this region with ventures in Langkawi and Johor Bahru at the Els Club, is forever a favourite with the fans, especially with his easy going, laid back demeanour on and off the course. And with four Major titles to his credit, two US Opens and two British Opens, along with 28 European Tour titles and 19 on the PGA Tour to his credit, Els is as seasoned as they come.

The likeable South African, is captain of the International Team in this year’s Presidents Cup.

Harrington, back-to-back winner of the 2007 and 2008 British Opens and with a US PGA Championship trophy also in his cabinet, was announced last week that he will skipper the European Team when they defend their title in the United States next year will add to his stature at the Maybank Championship. The Irishman, who won four times in Asia, including in Malaysia back in 2010 when he captured the Iskandar Johor Open title, was an overwhelming favourite to get the job.

With several visits to Malaysia under his belt and now hugely popular in the galleries, Harrington’s presence at this season’s Maybank Championship will add immense excitement for those who know and love the game.

Shubhankar was a worthy winner last year and he has used his Maybank Championship success to forge his way to the top of the Asian Tour Habitat for Humanity Order of Merit.

The Indian star’s victory at Saujana also helped catapult him up the world rankings and into the US Masters at Augusta National Golf Club, four World Golf Championship (WGC) events and earn his European Tour card in the process.

His return to defend “The Tiger Trophy” will be followed closely by the fans in tournament week and there is no doubt he will be keen on a repeat at the Maybank Championship - if not only to get his new campaign off to a solid start again.

Green, the Asian Tour’s out-going number one having won the 2017 Order of Merit which also earned him full playing rights on the European Tour in 2018, will similarly be aiming to get his season off to a sound start and more so in an event whose title sponsor is Maybank.



Looking ahead to the tournament, Green said: “This is Maybank’s flagship golf tournament and for us who are playing on home soil, we all want to do our best and put that extra bit of effort into it.

“It is a European Tour co-sanctioned event and because of that it features some of the world’s leading players, making it even more difficult to win. But we will give it our shot and see what happens,” added Green.

Ishikawa, the “Bashful Prince”, is no stranger to Malaysia and given his iconic global appeal is massively popular when walking the local fairways. His presence, and support from the local Japanese fans, is also expected to impact the Maybank Championship profoundly.

Poom Saksansin is definitely a megastar in the making. His recent victory on the Asian Tour in Indonesia, where he left the likes of then world number two - and now number one - Justin Rose and fellow Ryder Cup winner Henrik Stenson in his trail, clearly illustrates his potential.

A member of the 2018 EurAsia Cup, Poom has won in each of the last three Asian Tour seasons and as he continues to develop his game, many have predicted much more to come from the 25-year-old.

Shinichi Mizuno, who qualified by virtue of his victory in the PGM Maybank ADT Championship at Saujana in December, will also be there.

The Maybank Championship is a tournament that brings together the best of ASEAN and the world and recognises golf for the sport it truly is - a spirited game that embodies integrity, patience and respect.

With a list of some of the world’s leading golfers at Saujana, drawn from almost 30 nations, the Maybank Championship looks set for another entertaining and enthralling tournament. Unsurprisingly, it inspires a mix of international and Asian golfers in a truly world-class Malaysian championship.

For further details on upcoming events and other information related to the Maybank Championship, please log on to: www.maybankchampionship.com.my



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