

Osprey Valley welcoming the top golfers on Canadian tour

Written By JAKE COURTEPATTE

Hitting the GTA for the first time, PGA Canada is hosting the most high-stakes weekend of the season right in our own backyard.

This weekend marks the inaugural edition of the Osprey Valley Open, held at Osprey Valley Golf Club in Alton, where the best of the Mackenzie Tour will challenge the 'Toot' championship course.

'We are delighted to be welcoming a Mackenzie Tour event to Osprey Valley. Hosting some of the world's top up-and-coming players this summer provides us a wonderful opportunity to showcase what we believe makes Osprey Valley such a special place,' Osprey Valley President Chris Humeniuk said. The pressure couldn't be higher: the top three players on PGA Canada's 'Order of Merit' following the Osprey Valley Open will earn an exemption into the RBC Canadian Open, next weekend's \$6.2-million PGA event at Glen Abbey in Oakville.

'The way this course is designed, it should force our golfers to be at the top of their game, something they would need if they reach the Canadian Open,' said Mackenzie Tour President Jeff Monday. 'It should be very interesting for both players and fans.'

Entering the field as the tournament favourite is George Cunningham, a former University of Arizona student who took the low round in June's GolfBC Championship, racking up close to \$55,000 in winnings on tour so far this season.

Hot on his tail will be Canadian Michael Gligic, a Burlington native who finished in a tie for second last weekend in Windsor.

Throwing some local flavour into the mix: Caledon's Cougar Collins, coming off of his freshman year at Eastern Michigan University, earned a local sponsor's exemption into the tournament.

'Cougar has proven himself as an outstanding up-and-coming player and we're happy to award him an exemption,' said Osprey Valley Open Tournament Director Brad Parkins. 'We look forward to seeing him compete against the Mackenzie Tour players, and hope to see many members of the local community come out to cheer him on.'

Collins said playing in the tournament will be an 'incredible honour.'

'Being able to compete against a field of this high a calibre is a huge opportunity to test myself and gain valuable experience, and I can't wait to play.'

As for the course itself, all three courses on the 54-hole facility were designed by renowned Canadian golf architect Doug Carrick. The Toot course, this weekend's playing grounds, is a parkland-style layout that features 'rolling fairways, large landing areas and undulating greens,' according to the club's website.

The \$200,000 purse should prove to be enough of an incentive for any player looking to take their game to the next level, with \$36,000 reserved for Sunday's winner, one of the larger purses on the tour. A field of 156 golfers is expected to compete for the prize.

Ranked #70 on ScoreGolf's list of Top 100 Courses in Canada, the background of Osprey Valley's views, combined with the caliber of golf just a step below the best in the world, should prove to be an incentive for the local golf fan.

'We're certainly happy to be playing in the Greater Toronto Area for the first time,' said Monday. And we think our players will love what they see once they arrive on the property.'

Monday's qualifying rounds were postponed due to poor weather conditions, with qualifications being moved to Tuesday before the

event officially kicks off on Thursday.

Tickets can be purchased to the event at the PGA Tour Canada website.