

Costa del Golf



García ends the season on a high

The 'Niño' won the Andalucía Masters last month at Valderrama after six years without lifting a trophy on home soil [P4]



PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS

Miguel Ángel Jiménez's new lease of life

The Malaga-born golfer has had a good year, but missed his chance to win the veterans' tour [P3]



YOUTH GOLF

University brings in new scheme for golfers

Young players can now combine sport and study with the programme launched in Malaga [P5]

The golfing peak season is here

Clubs around Malaga province are ready to receive thousands of tourists attracted by the mild climate and quality courses [P6]

The Costa del Sol has its eye on hosting the Ryder Cup again in the future

The administrations are keen to sponsor professional championships again as a means of promoting the region after the success of the Andalucía Masters and the Spanish Open



Georgia Hall, during the Spanish Open at Guadalmina. :: SUR

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

It is 20 years now, nearly a whole generation, that the Ryder Cup took place at Valderrama and this iconic golf club has bathed in its glory ever since. This event marked a turning point in a sport which attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists to the Costa del Sol.

On that occasion Severiano Ballesteros captained the combined European team against a very young Tiger Woods, who was making his debut in the biggest team competition in the world.

The Ryder Cup put Spain on the map in terms of golf, and since then dozens of professional tournaments have been played here, most of them in Malaga and Cadiz provinces. Years after the Ryder Cup, the economic crisis meant that Andalucía was no longer part of the agenda for the European Circuit, but that absence was compensated last season by the region hosting the Spanish Open for men (at Valderrama) and women (Aloha in 2016 and Guadalmina this year).

The Junta de Andalucía is committed to promoting its golf facilities through major tournaments, because it is aware that events such as the Masters at Valderrama have a potential audience of over 400 million households, with 15 hours of live TV broadcasts to source markets such as the UK, France, Germany and the USA.

Andalucía has 102 golf courses, of which approximately half are in Malaga province and just over 20 per cent in neighbouring Cadiz. The Malaga provincial government and the 'Mancomunidad de Municipios' of the Western Costa del Sol are also keen to attract golf to the region. Their sponsorships have been essential in enabling the two most recent editions of the Spanish Women's Open to go ahead.

San Roque is the best example of the economic impact of a professional golf tournament

A major benefit of golf for the region, from the point of view of tourism and sport, is the average amount of money spent by this type of visitor: 117 euros a day, nearly twice as much as that spent by travellers in general. The average stay is also 10.8 days, which is two days longer than average, and the ability of this sport to attract year-round tourism is another reason why the administrations are so keen on hosting professional tournaments, such as the Ryder Cup.

The worldwide prestige which Valderrama acquired in 1997 had a huge effect on the economic and social fabric of the area, as has been seen from the Andalucía Masters, which has awakened interest among private sponsors and several of the best golfers in the world, who normally come to Valderrama to prepare for the season.

Employment and economy

San Roque is the best example of the impact of a championship such as this. The mayor, Juan Carlos Ruiz, says that golf "generates employment and economic activity," and points out that ever since the Ryder Cup, Valderrama has hosted more than 20 top level tournaments "and those have been an excellent showcase for us."

The council has already asked the government to declare the Andalucía Masters an event of public interest so it can offer incentives to sponsors and enable it to continue, although the initial commitment from the regional government was to guarantee the championship for at least four more years.

Sources on the European Circuit say the Costa del Sol is the area in continental Europe with the greatest concentration of golf facilities and they point out that in Andalucía there are more than 43,600 licensed players. The impact of golf on the region is calculated to be 730 million euros a year. In addition to the Ryder Cup, Andalucía has hosted 21 editions of the Volvo Masters, 11 of the Spanish Open, three Volvo World Match Play Championships, three Andalucía Valderrama Masters, three World Cups and two World Golf Championships.

Valderrama became the first course outside the USA and the UK to host the Ryder Cup and for a week it captured the headlines of half the world's press. With regard to the sport itself, José María Olazabal recalls that it was the first time he

Jiménez relives his youth

Despite running out of steam in last week's finale of the PGA Tour Champions the Malaga player is on good form and far from retirement

played with his friend Severiano Ballesteros as captain: "We had trained together many times, but that time things were different. Seve was in charge of everything, with the help of 'Pisha' (Miguel Ángel Jiménez)."

"It was very exciting. I remember, though, that I was going through a very difficult time (a rheumatic illness meant that he was in pain whenever he walked, for several months). I was feeling very down, but the event was thrilling."

That excitement could return to the Costa del Sol if certain plans come to fruition. The public administrations have their eye on the Ryder Cup again, as the most important competition in golf and one of the sporting competitions with the greatest following in the world.

At present, it is impossible because of the cost of organising the Ryder Cup and the lack of private support, but they are still working on the idea, bearing in mind that golf tourists have such an impact on the Andalusian economy. They spend around 70 per cent of their budget on eating out and shopping, far more than the average.

POSITIVE SIGNS AFTER THE YEARS OF CRISIS

Things are improving in the golf sector. After nearly a decade of difficulties as a result of the economic crisis and the increase in IVA, clubs in Malaga province are now carrying out improvement works and taking on more staff. The excellent tourism figures and arrival of new professional and amateur tournaments have been key to the sector's recovery; on the Costa del Sol golf generates around 900 million euros a year, directly and indirectly. Malaga province, with over 70 golf courses, is one of the principal destinations in Europe and golf is especially attractive for the local economy because these visitors spend more than most. Last year the sector grew by about four per cent, after a situation when several clubs had to close during the worse years of the crisis, from 2012 to 2014.

∴ ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

MALAGA. A few years ago Miguel Ángel Jiménez decided to compete in the PGA Tour Champions, a competition which has been organised since the 1930s for professional players over the age of 50 and was previously known as the Senior PGA Championship. Far from this being a step towards retirement, however, for the player known as 'El Pisha' this has been an incentive and a step forward in his career. Not only is he still competing on the two main tours in the world, the European and American, but he still displays the same intensity and professionalism in everything he does.

Last month Miguel Ángel Jiménez was very close to achieving his fifth victory on the PGA Tour Champions, and he only ceded in the playoff in the PowerShares QQQ Championship with German player Bernhard Langer. The third and final day had begun with a triple tie between the Spanish player, Bernhard Langer and David Toms.

The American was sole leader for much of the day, but a double bogey at the 15th and a bogey at the 17th opened the way for his rivals. Miguel Ángel Jiménez - with a beautiful eagle at the 18th hole - and Bernhard Langer ended the day at -5 for -11 of the total. Then it was the moment to head to the 18th for the playoff. Both players made the par at their first extra hole, and a birdie at the second gave victory to the German, who has been the king of the Tour since making his debut in 2007.

This second position was another example of the way Miguel Ángel Jiménez's efforts are paying off. The player from Malaga went into the Schawb Cup, the final and biggest prize on the PGA Tour Champions, in fourth position. On such good form, he could afford to be optimistic, but on the day of the Tour's grand finale at the Phoenix Country Club last week, Jiménez ran out of steam.

Despite being one of five players whose success in the Schawb Cup depended solely on their own performances, Jiménez had a difficult tournament and ended up in the second to last position.

Nevertheless the PGA Tour Champions is giving Jiménez a chance to relive his successful youth, and he has now achieved four victories on the Tour. He won the first time - that was the Greater Gwinnett Championship, played in April 2014 -, came eighth in the second and in January 2015 he won the Mitsubishi Electric Champi-



Miguel Ángel Jiménez has had a good season in the veterans' PGA Tour Champions. ∴ sur

onship. Last year he achieved success at the Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic.

In February this year, he was on the point of obtaining his fourth victory in the Chubb Classic, where he found a tremendously inspired Fred Couples. He triumphed two months later at the Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic.

His results have left in sixth position overall in the ranking for year's PGA Tour Champions.

Different facets

Although he has been playing professional golf since the early 1980s, Miguel Ángel Jiménez shows no sign of slowing down.

The 21-time winner of the European Tour recently inaugurated

The Malaga player finished sixth overall in the PGA Tour Champions for veterans that came to an end last week

Last month Jiménez inaugurated the new short golf facilities at Las Colinas Golf & Country Club

the short golf facilities at Las Colinas Golf & Country Club, which he designed.

"It has been really exciting to see how the project progressed since we started working on it at the beginning of this year, and I want golfers from all over the world to come and enjoy this top level facility," he said at the time.

His most visible impact on the golf courses of the Costa del Sol can be seen on the municipal course in Torremolinos, which has been named after him, and it is a project in which he has always been closely involved.

He may be 53 years old now, but Miguel Ángel Jiménez is still on excellent form and his energy remains inexhaustible.

Sergio García celebrates a masterly win in the Andalucía Masters

The Spanish player, now looking forward to the birth of his daughter, brought the best season of his career to a close at Valderrama

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

In recent months there have been so many reasons for Sergio García to celebrate that it is sometimes hard to know why people are congratulating him: it could be for his recent wedding, the impending birth of his first child, his distinction as a lifetime member of the European Tour or his epic win in Augusta, which his fans are still remembering with joy.

Last month, to crown his best ever season, the Spanish player won the Andalucía Masters trophy and celebrated his third victory of the year after Dubai and the Green Jacket. The 'Niño' (Boy) as he has been nicknamed ever since he was young and on the point of beating Tiger Woods in 1999, is now in his thirties and maturity suits him well.

García came to Valderrama for two reasons: his foundation, which improves the life of children at risk of social exclusion, was hosting the event, and he is a favourite among the public, taking over from Jon Rahm, who was unable to make the cut at the magical but treacherous course in Cadiz province. There were plenty of reasons for him to feel under pressure, but those ghosts seemed safely locked away in the drawers of the past. In golf, as in any individual sport, the psychological aspect plays a key part in the way the game develops, but this player



García celebrates his win over Joost Luiten at the Andalucía Masters :: RCV

from Castellón learned some time ago to overcome the anxiety which can hold sway at the final holes. With a newfound professional and personal calm, Sergio García has managed to play on all courses this year with the tranquility of someone whose outstanding accounts have all been settled.

The last day of the Andalucía Masters, which is part of the European Circuit, ended up with an exciting face-to-face between the Spaniard and Joost Luiten, who had been inspired for much of the game. At the 15th hole the Dutch player, who on the second day had achieved a spectacular albatross, probably the best stroke ever seen at Valderrama, tackled the leadership which García had held throughout the day, but a bogey at the 16th and an extraordinary reaction from the Spaniard (a birdie at the 17th) decided the balance. Sergio ended up delivering a final card with 67 hits for a total of 12 below par, one stroke ahead of Joost Luiten.

He shook hands with his rival, thanked the public for their support, and beamed with happiness. Victory was his, as had occurred in 2011 when he beat Miguel Ángel Jiménez, who was unable to be present at this event because of his commitments on the senior circuit.

In few tournaments has García shone as brightly as at Valderrama, not just because of the result, which was close at the end, but for his newly confident and happy attitude. He seemed barely able to contain his joy during the four days of this championship.

The Andalucía Masters, which was a success in terms of organisation, sponsorship and play, was so brilliant that the Royal Spanish Golf Federation should take note to recover the Spanish Open, cancelled this season, and prevent this classic on the European calendar falling into oblivion.

GARCÍA CROWNS THE BEST YEAR OF HIS CAREER

It was the summer of 1999 when Sergio García erupted cheekily onto the world golfing scene, and he grabbed the attention of half of America, in suspense at the possibility that an unknown would snatch the PGA Championship from Tiger Woods.

It looked as though the American idol was on the point of succumbing to the impudence of 'El Niño', but in the

end García failed in the attempt although by then everybody in the world of golf knew his name.

Nearly two decades later, little or nothing remains of that cheeky adolescent. García is an experienced player with numerous titles, has won the battle with his own ghosts and shown that he is capable of achieving his first major victory when many had relegated him into the shadow of Jon Rahm, whose cyclonic arrival on the professional circuits remind many of García's early years.

Defined for many years as the best golfer in history without a 'grand' title to his name,

García was convinced that he could attain a major victory.

There have been few times when professional sport has owed so much to a player as golf does to García, who in April broke the spell by winning in Augusta.

Travelling light, the Spaniard now competes with the calm of someone whose scars have healed. The green jacket has not made him a better golfer, but he is a different golfer now. The Andalucía Masters at Valderrama last month demonstrated that. García was the leader on two days, the second and the last; he saw some amazing play by his closest followers, such as Joost Luiten's



García celebrates his win with his wife, who is expecting their first child. :: RCV

incredible albatross; he headed the table in the final round, alone and tied with others, but none of these ups and downs, which he would have feared in the past, bothered him.

García used experience and solidity to take the title by one stroke, enough for him to earn his 32nd trophy, the sixth in Spain, where he had not won since the Andalucía Masters in 2011 when he beat Miguel Ángel Jiménez. This latest victory briefly took him back into top 10 in world ranking, although he has since dropped to number 11. Now aged 37, the winner at Augusta has something new to celebrate: the best season of his career.

University launches a groundbreaking programme for golfers

The UMA allows over 20 students to combine their academic studies with their training and competition schedule

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

The University of Malaga (UMA) has become the first higher education centre in Europe to offer its students a programme which combines their studies with playing elite golf. The university has devised a structured plan which includes lessons from sporting professionals and different academic disciplines. The University Golf Programme Malaga (UGPM) has presented itself as a European alternative to the courses at American universities which combine sports and education.

Last month, the programme was announced at the facilities in the Guadalhorce Golf Club, which has worked



The 22 players who are part of the programme at the UMA in Guadalhorce. :: SUR

with UMA to create this plan and where the majority of the sports activities will take place. The programme has been made possible thanks to the endorsement of the University Sports Statute Committee in July 2014. In this way, the University of Malaga has become the first public Spanish university to get legal approval to combine sports and studying.

Academic measures, like alternative exam dates and tutoring schedules, are combined with an intense training and competition programme. Students on this programme must still perform well academically, but at the same time uphold the values and standards of the university in the competitions in which they compete.

So far, the academic results of the elite athletes at the UMA are exceeding the expected average and the sporting achievements have been spectacular, all while respecting the University's core values of respect, trust, and team spirit.

Currently, the programme is taken by 22 students, 20 boys and two girls. Eleven of the students are Spanish and the others come from other countries such as Italy, Holland, Germany, Poland, and Austria. They have chosen to attend university in Malaga so that they did not have to give up golf.

In the 2016-17 season the students in the programme either singly or in teams, were all winners or runners-up in the España Universitarios championship. They also won at the European Universities Golf Championship, competing against elite university athletes who have had programmes like this one for years.

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Golf clubs in Malaga are preparing for their peak tourist season

The Costa del Sol remains a leading destination for golfers and this sector plays an essential role in encouraging year-round tourism

ALEJANDRO
DÍAZ

Officially, the days of sunshine and sand are at an end now, at least in terms of the summer season on Costa del Sol, a destination which was given its name because of its long hours of sun all through the year. November is normally considered 'low season' for tourism, but even so many businesses and institutions are preparing for an influx of visitors because this is now becoming a region where tourists come all year round.

One of the reasons for this is the golf sector, for which November is the start of its own 'peak season'. The Costa del Sol has some of the biggest and best golf infrastructures in Europe and a major advantage over other regions: its climate. Winter is hard in most European countries, and the low temperatures at home are a good reason for many golf fans to head for somewhere warmer to play. And that's where the Costa del Sol comes into its own. It is a favourite destination and each year it reaches a better position in the tourism markets from Europe.

Golf is attractive in terms of tourism and sport. Visitors who come to the region for golf spend an average of 117 euros a day, double the amount spent by travellers in general. They stay longer (10.8 days, two days more than average) and their ability to extend tourism throughout the year makes them highly attractive to the public administrations and private companies, who are doing everything they can to encourage them.

"We want Andalucía to become a benchmark for golf again. We have everything here: climate, hotels, leisure activities, culture, magnificent sports facilities.... golf brings wealth to our region, because this type of tourist has a very strong impact on our economy," said the Junta de Andalucía's Minister for Tourism and Sport, Francisco Javier Fernández, just days before what has been one of the greatest landmarks for Andalusian golf in a long time: the Andalucía Costa del Sol Spanish Open, which took place at Guadalmina in September.

This tournament, in addition to the Andalucía Valderrama Masters in October, was a global showcase for the Costa del Sol at a key moment:



The winter is an ideal time of year to play golf on the Costa del Sol. :: SUR

THE UK, PRINCIPAL SOURCE MARKET

Ten per cent of British tourists who come to Spain, and 70 per cent of those who come to Andalucía, stay in Malaga. That's why tourism is of such vital importance for the economy of the area. The profile of a British tourist who chooses Malaga-Costa del Sol for a holiday is someone who has a job and is 47.3 years old, on average. Unlike the tourists who used to come, though, these are not passive. Although many of them welcome the chance to relax on a beach during their stay, nine out of every ten also plan to take part in some acti-

vity while they are here, such as walking, cycling, mountain climbing, cultural visits, tours of places of interest, gastronomy etc.

These are all tourism segments which, like golf, can attract visitors throughout the year, not just during the months of hot weather and sunshine, because the beaches are no longer the main reason for them coming.

Surveys of British visitors to Malaga show that they score the destination nine out of ten and 99 per cent say their trip has been a positive or very positive experience. In fact, 96.6 per cent say they would recommend Malaga to others and two out of every three visitors from the UK say they will come back within the next two or three years.

the president of the Malaga provincial government, Elías Bendodo. "The impact of golf in Malaga province is extremely important: 1.4 billion euros in direct and indirect production, with golfers who stay for an average of 12.3 days and an average total spending of 1,800 euros."

Positive forecasts

The golf segment in Malaga province is starting its peak season with very good prospects and with the objective of consolidating itself as the ideal destination for fans from elsewhere in Europe to come and play golf.

According to the Costa del Sol Tourist Board, the province has a "powerful international projection" which offers all golf fans in Europe a place to play "in a privileged location with mild temperatures, far from the freezing weather in the centre and north of the continent."

With this in mind, the different clubs and courses on the Costa del Golf have special offers for long-stay visits, designed specifically to attract this type of specialised tourism. "Now more than ever is the time of year when we can boast about our climate," says Arturo Bernal, the CEO of the Costa del Sol Tourist Board.

He agrees that golf has a major role to play in attracting year-round tourism. "We are very popular with people from central and northern Europe, places which are friends of our destination, and the latest tourism figures confirm that," he says.

Among the clubs with special offers this season is Los Arqueros Golf, which is offering 2 green fees and a buggy for 175 euros, until 30 November. In December the price will go down to 135 euros. Baviera Golf, meanwhile, offers 2 green fees for 18 holes and a buggy from 8am to 9am for 110 euros, or a 'twilight green fee' with trolley for 55 euros after 1pm. This month La Quinta Golf offers an 18-hole green fee for 94 euros, which will be reduced to 69 euros in December. Marbella Golf offers two green fees and a buggy, plus 10 euros to spend in the club restaurant, for 155 euros.

As these offers demonstrate, the high season for golf in Malaga province is not just aimed at foreign tourists but also visitors from elsewhere in Spain, of whom there are a considerable number. It also encourages more local residents to play. Golf is especially popular among people who live in Malaga, as can be seen from the number of amateur tournaments which are organised throughout the year at the different clubs, on the eastern and western sides of the Costa del Sol. Nor should we forget the clubs further inland which are also unique in Europe and play a part in making Malaga province a unique destination for golf all year round.

Golf tourists spend an average of 117 euros each a day, double the amount spent by tourists in general

the months prior to the start of the peak season for golf show how important tourism is to the economy - it accounts for 13 per cent of the GDP of Andalucía and the 500,000 golf tourists represent around five per cent. That is why the institutions and private entities are working together to make the Costa del Sol the best golf destination in Europe.

"Golf brings employment and wealth. And plenty more besides. It is good for a region. That is why we have to protect it. We are in a place which has been touched by the hand of God, with an exceptional climate and numerous golf courses. That helps to attract year-round tourism," says

THE MONTH IN PICTURES



▲ **Golf for a good cause.** More than 2,000 players from 25 clubs all over Spain have taken part in the Seve Ballesteros Foundation tournament to raise funds for medical research. :: SUR



▲ **Father-son championship.** The European Father and Son Golf Championship, in which over 100 pairs from all over the world competed this year, was held at the San Roque Club and Almenara Golf Club. Mothers and daughters also took part. :: SUR



▲ **Natalia Escuriola.** Escuriola has shown great progress since she won the DISA Spanish Championship two years ago. Last month she won the Spanish Championship for the third time. :: SUR



▲ **Gaster wins in the Andalucía Alps.** Austrian golfer, Clemens Gaster, won the final round of the Alps de Andalucía Golf Tour, played at Santa Clara Golf course in Granada, which boosted his position in the Order of Merit table. He finished the tournament in 34th place with a score of 287. :: SUR

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2017 AGENDA

18 November
Sherry

Pequecircuito
Open tournament

24 November
Marbella

Acción de Gracias tournament
Open tournament

25 November
Añoreta Golf

Camp. Clubes sin campo
Open tournament

8 December
Marbella

“Turkey Trot” tournament
Open tournament

9 December
Laural

Pequecircuito final
Open tournament

Marbella

Marbella International Cup
Open tournament

9 January
Guadalmina

Andalucía men’s cup
Open tournament

Atalaya Park

Andalucía women’s cup
Open tournament

16 February
Costa Ballena

Women’s quadrangular
Open tournament

6 March
Marbella

Senior women’s
Open tournament

20 April
Baviera

Women’s senior cup
Open tournament

PROFESSIONAL TOURNAMENTS

17 to 19 November
European circuit

DP World Tour Championship
(Dubai, UAE)

23 to 26 November
European circuit

UBS Hong Kong Open
(Fanling, Hong Kong)

30 November to 3 December
European Circuit

Australian PGA Championship
(Queensland, Australia)

7 to 10 December
European Circuit

AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open
(de Bel Ombre, Mauritius)



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