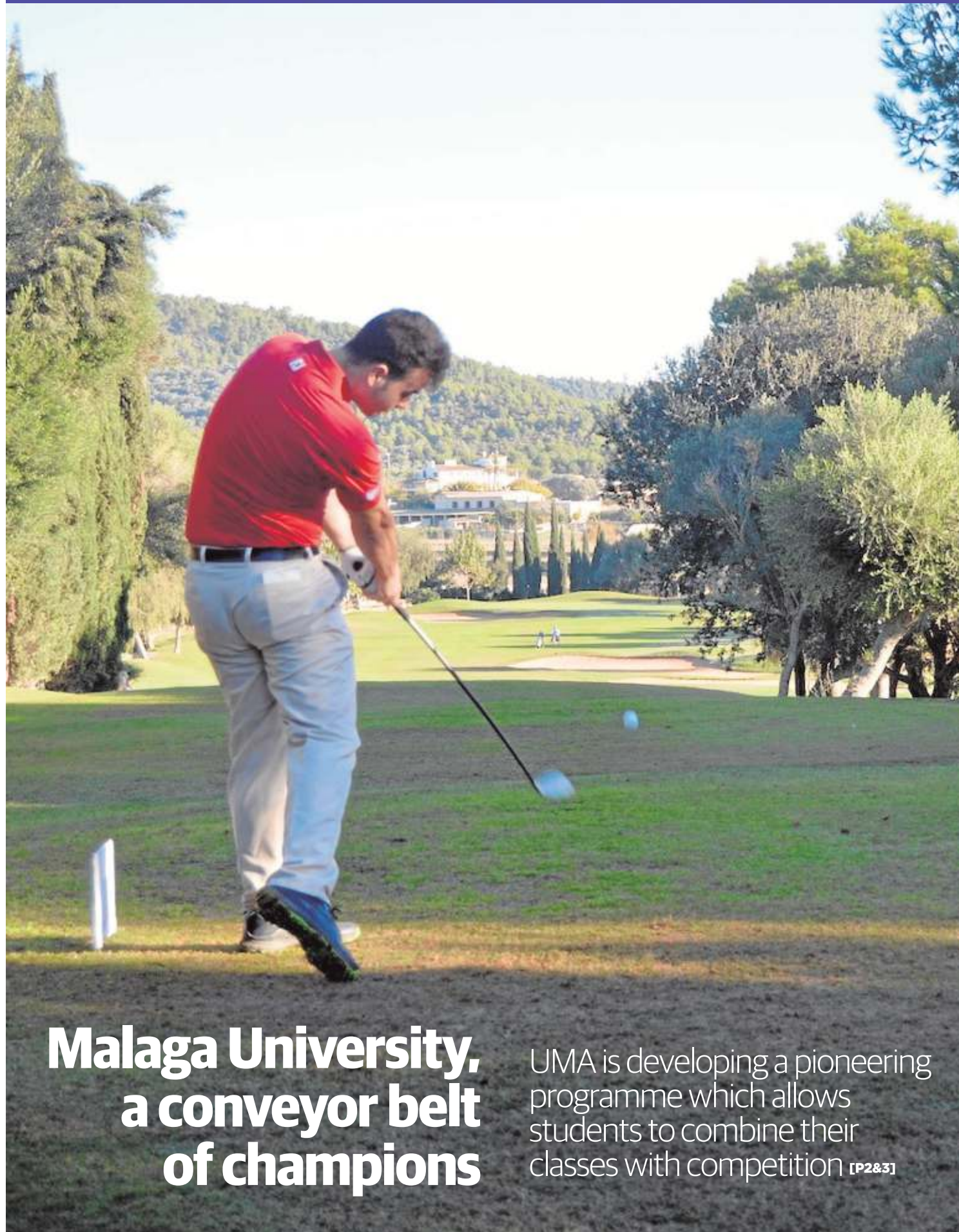


Andalucía Costa del Golf



Malaga University, a conveyor belt of champions

UMA is developing a pioneering programme which allows students to combine their classes with competition **[P2&3]**



OPEN DE ESPAÑA

Cabrera Bello: "I'd love to win the Open"

The Open de España makes its comeback on the European Tour this weekend **[P7]**



AUGUSTA

Sergio's Masters defence doesn't go to plan

The Spaniard set an unwanted record in his disastrous defence of the green jacket **[P4]**

Tourist destination: Seville

As the weather is improving and the high season approaches, the Andalusian capital is promoting its golf courses. **[P6]**

Malaga University has a pioneering programme for promising golfers

The project enables students to combine their academic studies with golf training and exam dates and timetables can be changed if they clash with competitions

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

Amateur golfers have been complaining for decades about the difficulties that exist in Spain, as in other European countries, in combining a promising sporting career with higher education. The situation has led many young players to move to the USA, where the universities offer training facilities and are prepared to change exam dates if they coinci-

de with tournaments.

Now, however, Malaga University (UMA), has become a benchmark in Europe as the first to offer its students a structured programme which enables them to combine academic studies and top-level golf, with tuition from sports professionals and lecturers in different subjects.

The project, called University Golf Program Malaga (UGPM), is a pioneering golf programme in Continental Europe, and is the only one outside the USA and the UK which enables students to continue their studies and play professional golf at the same time.

Now in its fourth year, the pro-

gramme has made a quantitative and qualitative leap as 22 Spanish and international players have signed up for it. This innovative project has consolidated Malaga as a European alternative to American universities for those who wish to

The university sports statute makes it possible for promising golfers to combine their academic studies with training and competitions

combine their studies with top-level golf.

The programme became possible after the governing board approved the university sports statute in 2014. It meant that UMA was the first state-run university in Spain to have a legal framework within which it could organise studying and sport in such a way that students could benefit from both.

The programme combines academic measures (changes of exam or test dates, different timetables) with a demanding schedule of training and competitions. In exchange the students have to obtain good academic results, on one hand, and

defend the colours and values of Malaga University in competitions in which they take part. The results so far have been excellent in both respects.

A good measure of the success of this programme is that at present the students who have taken part in previous years have continued, and at the moment a record 20 men and two women from different countries are participating in it. Eleven are Spanish and the others are from different countries in Europe, such as Italy, Holland, Germany, Poland and Austria, who have selected Malaga as the ideal place to continue their studies without having to give up their golf. Few British or American universities have such an extensive team as Malaga this year.

Sporting success

Last season, the students on the UGPM programme became champions and runners-up in Spanish Universities competitions (individual and team), champions of the European Universities competition (individual) and quarter-finalists in a team competition in which several British universities which have developed similar programmes over the years took part.

Some students also achieved other successes, such as Victor Pastor, who is studying at the Faculty of Psychology, in the European Universities Championships. He is one of the young Spanish golfers with a great future and will soon be leaving the team and turning professional.

The UGPM provides the students with a demanding training and competition schedule and incorporates the most advanced technology which can be applied to golf.

The young golfers train at the Real Guadalhorce Club de Golf, keep fit at the university's own sports facilities and undergo sessions of sports psychology. Other aspects, such as medical attention and physiotherapy, are also part of the programme and are adapted to their academic calendar.

Technical preparation is provided by Iván Hurtado, while the fitness aspect is guided by José Enrique García González and the mental element of the game by sports psychologist Rocío Pomares.

The preparation team is completed by Jorge Pozueta, who acts as technical coordinator of the pro-



The programme includes academic studies, training and physical and technical preparation. :: SUR



The programme is now in its fourth year. :: SUR



Some of this year's students. :: SUR

gramme and is responsible for putting the players/students in touch with the professionals they need for tutoring, coordination, academic support or physiotherapy. Among the academic subjects most in demand among the young golfers are those offered by the Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences, although some players from the UGM team are studying Mechanical Engineering, Chemistry, Psychology or Physical Activity and Sport Sciences.

The university offers facilities within the academic sphere to the UGPM golf players, who benefit from the aforementioned university sports statute, which was specifically designed by UMA to support top-level sportspeople in combining their academic studies and sports career. The project is a combination of the university's more than 60 degree courses, an integral high performance programme and an extensive calendar of golf competitions.

New changes to the rules of the game

The R&A and USGA are introducing technical modifications which will come into force next year to make golf "more attractive and accessible to newcomers"

:: A. GÓMEZ

MÁLAGA. The Royal & Ancient (R&A) and the USGA have revealed four changes to the rules of golf which will come into force next year. These important modifications will affect almost any round of golf, whether professional or amateur. The first new rule establishes that from 1 January 2019 the ball must be dropped from knee height. At present it can be positioned almost on the ground, at a height of two fingers above it. The second modification relates to the golf club which is used to take relief. Players will no longer be able to use any club from their bag, but will have to use the longest one they have with them, with the exception of the putter. It means that all the relief strokes will be made with the driver, unless the player is not carrying one. The changes also eliminate the penalty for an accidental double hit; only the hit used to strike the ball will be counted. But the most controversial modification is that, with the aim of easing the rhythm of play, the USGA and R&A stipulate that from next year players can drop a ball in the vicinity of where it went out of bounds or was lost if it has fallen into a water obstacle. It will no longer be necessary to return to the tee. There have been attempts to introduce this rule for years despite



Relief drops will have to be from knee height. :: SUR

strong criticism from those who believe it gives too much freedom in estimating the point where, for example, a ball has been lost, because that is sometimes impossible to know. **There will be no penalty stroke if a player accidentally hits the ball while preparing**

This rule will not be applied in professional or top level amateur tournaments. It will be a local regulation: in other words it can be applied at the choice of each club and the committee of every tournament. There will be a two-stroke penalty. Other basic rules will also change next year. There will be no penalty for accidentally moving a ball, for example on the putting green or while searching for a lost ball, as long as it is clear that it was not moved deliberately. Nor will there be a penalty for putting with the flagstick in place.

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Sergio García handing over the green jacket to Patrick Reed. :: REUTERS



García reacts to a bad shot. :: REUTERS

Sergio breaks unwanted record in Masters defence

Patrick Reed claimed the prized green jacket from the Spanish golfer who failed to make the cut at Augusta

■ DARYL FINCH

What a difference a year can make. Last year in the Masters at Augusta, Sergio García was the best, claiming the coveted green jacket and the first major title of his career. This time he was joint worst in 82nd place and setting unwanted records.

Things quickly unravelled for the

Spaniard. García is not the first defending champion to miss the cut. In fact he is the 11th. But he did so with an astonishing two-day total of 15 over 159, breaking the record set by Nick Faldo who a year after his 1996 win posted a 156.

García never recovered from his performance on the 15th in the first round, when he dropped five

balls in the water, completing the five-par hole in 13, matching the highest single-hole score in tournament history.

On Friday, García made six bogeys and a double bogey. A birdie on the last hole allowed him to break 160 - not enough to make the cut which, at five over 149, was the lowest since 2015.

The Spaniard had to keep himself occupied until the Sunday when he handed over the green jacket to American Patrick Reed.

Reed claimed the crown after shooting a final-round 71 to earn a one-shot victory over compatriot Rickie Fowler. Reed finished on -15 under, holding off Fowler, on 67 -14 and Jordan Spieth 64 -13.

"Any time trying to close off a golf tournament is really hard but to close off my first major at a place that's so close to me, being where I went to college, means so much," said the 27-year-old who became the ninth first-time major winner in the past 12 Masters.

When asked earlier in the week why he thinks only three players have managed to defend their Masters titles, Sergio García said: "The simple answer is it's just difficult to win."

"It doesn't matter if it's back-to-back or just one. Some people don't realise how difficult it is to win any tournament, and a major is even tougher, and Augusta and the Masters, it's even more difficult."

A question of strength

Juan Postigo won his fourth Spanish Championship in Adapted Golf without the use of a prosthesis



Postigo has always refused the use of a prosthesis since starting in the sport. :: SUR

■ ALBERTO GÓMEZ

MALAGA. The Cantabrian Juan Postigo secured his fourth Spanish Championship in Adapted Golf at the Real Club Pineda in Seville in March. Postigo came out on top in a tight final, seeing off Antonio Llerena, a player also going for his fourth title.

Llerena led the championship by three shots at the start of the second and final day. However, Postigo recorded a 73, four shots less than Llerena to win the title.

Postigo, European champion in 2016, is a golfer whose right leg was amputated. He plays without a prosthesis and he now adds this win to his victories in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

The golfer is now preparing to accomplish the dream that every sportsman or woman has "since childhood": to become a professional and "make a livelihood out of playing sport". This would make him the first amputated golfer in Spain to become a professional.

His progression has been rapid. When he was nine years old, he was first taken to a golf course by his grandfather who had recently retired. From that moment on, Postigo decided that he would give up sailing, for which he had had a passion since his early moments, to pursue his new-found love.

The lack of a leg due to a congenital problem has never posed any difficulty for him; he has always learned how to adapt. "I don't have any issues because I've never known what it is like to play with two legs," explains Postigo, who says the only "difficulties" he experiences are the same as those of any other player, such as "getting out of a bunker".

During the last six years, Juan Postigo has gone from an initial handicap of 36 to 1.4. Despite getting his handicap down to four very rapidly, he had to take a "little break" from the sport because of an operation before continuing his progression.

Though Postigo insists that he hasn't encountered "any added challenge" because of his disability and goes round courses with his crutches and club bag on his back. He started playing with a prosthesis but after undergoing surgery which struck a nerve, he is unable to wear one anymore because of the pain.

In order to make up for the lack of the power that players with two legs can generate, Postigo trains six days a week, three of which are double sessions.

Now, he says that his long game, once "a weak point", is "quite consistent" compared to the early days when his body "wasn't prepared to get distance and stability".

Women golfers rebel against the gender pay gap

Female golfers on the major tours say men receive much more money when they win even though the amount of effort is the same

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

The world of sport is no exception to the salary gap between men and women. The celebration of the ANA Inspiration, the first major golf tournament of the year, coincided with different activities which were organised to call for equal pay on the men's and women's tours.

Even in the Californian desert, where the tournament took place, athletes from different disciplines joined actress and activist Ashley Judd last month to talk of their experiences and to demand equality in the world of sport, as well as other spheres of life. For the majority of participants in the talks at the Mission Hills club, it is frustrating to receive less money when they put the same amount of effort and dedication into their sport as their male colleagues. In this respect, sports such as tennis, hockey and athletics have been far ahead of golf for years.

Over 40 years ago, American tennis star Billie Jean King accepted a challenge from male champion Bobby Riggs, who despite being 56 years old insisted that he was capable of beating any woman. Riggs, who was blatantly sexist, had beaten Australian player Margaret Court, the then world number one, months earlier.

King beat him 6-4, 6-3 and 6-3 in an exhibition match watched on TV by 90 million people. That was more than a tennis match; it

was a vindication for the call for sportswomen to be considered as professional and capable as their male counterparts. King's achievement was fundamental in the fact that tennis is the only sport in which men and women are paid the same in their most important tournaments, including the Grand Slam trials.

Golf is still far from awarding equal prizes in its championships, but the number of women's tours, especially in America, has increased considerably in recent years, in the same way tennis became more popular in the 1990s. In Spain, however, golf still suffers from being seen as an elite and over-complicated sport.

"It's much more expensive than surfing or skiing. There is a lack of sports culture, of knowledge. Even recently, someone asked me if golf counts as a sport," says Marta Figueras-Dotti, a retired professional golfer who is famous throughout Europe.

The increased interest in golf is evident in the USA and some Asian countries, where the economic and media impact of women's tournaments grows every year. In southern Europe the growth is much more discreet, although in some countries such as France, where one of the five 'majors' takes place every year, women are now attracting thousands of fans to the golf courses. The time to break down barriers is starting.



Anna Nordqvist with her caddy, in a file photo. :: SUR

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Seville starts the tourist season with its golf courses in peak condition

The region's capital city is expecting hundreds of thousands of visitors as it prepares for the April Fair and the onset of lovely spring weather

**ALEJANDRO
DÍAZ**

Spring is a lovely time of year in Andalucía and there are plenty of traditional, cultural and sporting events for visitors to enjoy such as the April Fair in Seville, the parties in Córdoba, the 'romería' pilgrimages of El Rocío and the Virgen de la Cabeza in Andújar, the Jerez Fair, the May crosses, Corpus Christi and the Motorcycling Grand Prix in Jerez.

Visiting Seville at this time of year is a unique experience, especially for those who come during the April Fair. However, golf is also a major tourist attraction here so lovers of this sport can enjoy all the attractions of this historic city without foregoing the chance to play a few holes.

Seville's fame as a golfing destination is primarily due to courses such as the Real Club de Sevilla, which was designed by José María Olazábal. Its proximity to the city centre makes it a firm favourite with those who want to enjoy a few days' sightseeing. It has hosted some of the most important championships in the world, and is reputed to be one of the finest courses anywhere. It is an ideal place to play golf and spend time with the family, as it has a clubhouse, sports club and children's club as well as a restaurant and cafeteria.

However, there are many other golf courses in Seville province as well, such as Club Zaudín Golf which was the last course designed in Spain by one of the best golfers of all time, Gary Player. This is an 18-hole par 71 course, which lies among orange and olive trees.

Nature and design are masterfully combined at Zaudín Golf, with its wide fairways and undulating greens surrounded by hundred-year-old olive trees. The town is filled with art and history and is in itself a treasure well worth discovering.

The clubhouse at Zaudín Golf used to be a mansion on an Andalusian estate where citrus fruits and olives were grown, and much of the original structure has been retained including the floors, colours, and architectural design. It is surrounded by well-established palm trees and has a bar, café, restaurant, terrace and a large room for celebrations.



The Real Club de Golf in Seville has hosted tournaments on the European Tour and forms part of the history of the sport. :: SUR



Seville's April Fair attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists. :: SUR

The views from the terrace are impressive, with the city of Seville as a backdrop.

However, there are other options

for golf lovers as well. One is Las Minas golf club, whose course was designed by Antonio García Garrido and is ideal for beginners as well as

There are two top quality golf courses very close to Seville city and visitors will find plenty of others elsewhere in the province

experts. The nine-hole course has long and difficult par fives, extensive undulating modern greens with a modern design and four strategically-placed lakes.

Meanwhile the Real Club Pineda, whose first round was played by architects Rodrigo and Felipe Medina Benjumea, has an 18-hole course with wide fairways and numerous trees. The course is flat with three lakes and bunkers. There are also two practice tees, one of them for the exclusive use of the golf school, two putting greens and a practice bunker. Since 1965 Pineda Golf has hosted the Giralda Golf Cup, which is sponsored by the Count of Barcelona.

The authorities in Seville are currently in the process of expanding the golf facilities in the province even further. For example, last month Seville city council approved basic plans for a major sports complex including a golf practice centre, five football pitches, six padel courts,

a gymnasium and large public recreation area at Los Bermejales.

These are just some examples of the exceptional golf facilities in the region for those who decide to holiday there or who feel like playing golf during the day and celebrating at the April Fair in Seville at night.

The 'Feria de Abril' always takes place after Easter and it dates back to 1846, when councillors José María Ibarra and Narciso Bonaplata proposed that a three-day livestock fair should be held in April every year. After being approved by Queen Isabel II, the first fair took place on 18 April 1847 at the Prado de San Sebastián, and was visited by around 25,000 people. Over the years it became one of the most important events in the city, and became less of a livestock fair and more of a party.

Spring in Andalucía

Of course, spring does not only happen in Seville; the whole region of Andalucía is worth visiting at this time of year. The natural parks, such as Doñana, Sierra Nevada, Cazorla and Grazalema are at their most beautiful in spring, and as the weather becomes warmer the lovely beaches of Málaga, Huelva, Cadiz and Almería are extremely tempting. It doesn't actually matter which part of Andalucía you choose to visit; each and every one has something very special for travellers to enjoy.

"I would love to win the Open de España"

Rafael Cabrera-Bello is competing in the tournament which returns to the European Tour this weekend

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

MÁLAGA. Rafael Cabrera-Bello has returned to Spain with the hope of making his childhood dream come true: winning the Open de España, one of the oldest and most prestigious tournaments in Europe, which began on Thursday April 12th and continues until Sunday 15th.

The world number 21 recently confirmed that he would be participating in the 91st edition of this tournament, which is taking place at the National Golf Centre in Madrid, a public course and the headquarters of the Spanish Royal Golf Federation.

Three-time winner of a tournament on the European Tour, the most recent being the Scottish Open last year, Cabrera-Bello has made an outstanding start to the season, finishing in the top ten on three occasions and with special mention for his third place at the WGC Mexico Championship in early March. That helped him to be placed fourth in the annual classification of the Race to Dubai, as did his contribution to the European team's victory over Asia in the EurAsia Cup in January.

"It would really mean a lot to me to win the Open de España,"

says the player from the Canary Islands, who is taking part in this championship for the 15th time.

"I'm very proud to have won Spanish titles in all categories since I was young and in the under-18s. That's why it would be a dream come true to win the Spanish Open and complete the circle even more. For a Spaniard it is without a doubt

The Open de España runs until 15 April at the National Golf Centre in Madrid, HQ of the Royal Golf Federation

the biggest victory you can dream of, from the time you are a child."

"The Open de España is one of the oldest events in the history of the European Tour and we are very proud of that. Some major players have won it; many of the Spanish ones are my idols, and this is definitely one of the trophies I would most like to add to my CV," says Cabrera-Bello, who was unbeaten in his debut in the Ryder Cup 2016 at Hazeltine National and is now playing in front of thousands of



Cabrera-Bello is excited at the prospect of winning his first Open de España. :: SUR



The Spanish player has had an outstanding start to the season. :: SUR

fans at this tournament, which is free to watch at the National Golf Centre in Madrid.

"A great many people come to watch the Open de España and support us every day. It's really exciting for all Spanish golfers. This is our fifth 'major'. Last year it couldn't take place and it has been difficult for the Spanish Golf Federation to keep it going," he says.

Cabrera-Bello is aware that the organisers have worked extremely hard in arranging the championship together with the European Tour and the Golf Federation of Madrid, and says it is a shame that the news came quite late. "We had to find a gap in the agenda to be here, but anyway I am very happy to be back again."

He also reveals that his favourite part is "the second round, the last nine holes".






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THE MONTH IN PHOTOS



◀ **Like old times.** It was like the good old days at the Arnold Palmer Invitational last month when Rory McIlroy birdied five of last six to win at Bay Hill (-18), pipping Tiger Woods who was among the favourites going into the final round. :: SUR



▲ **Record breaker.** Phil Mickelson made history last month when he became the oldest ever winner of a world championship. At 47 years, eight months and 16 days, he claimed victory in the WGC-Mexico Championship. :: SUR



▲ **Tourism.** There was a great focus on the golf industry on the Andalucía stand at the recent ITB travel fair in Berlin. The region hopes to use the sport as a way of increasing year-round tourism to the region. :: SUR



▲ **Career back on track.** Florida golfer Bubba Watson returned to winning ways last month, claiming victory in the WGC Match Play tournament after dominating Kevin Kisner on the way to an easy win. Though no one doubted his quality, this win, his first in two years, could provide the boost his career needed. :: SUR

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2018 AGENDA

20 April **Baviera**
Gran Senior Femenino
Open tournament

1 June **Lauro**
Camp. España. 3ª Cat.
Open tournament

2 June **La Cala Resort**
Cudeca Cup
Open tournament

2 June **Mijas**
Gran Premio AFA Fuengirola
Open tournament

14 June **Mijas**
ASGA
Open tournament

23 June **Mijas**
Gran Premio Solidarios
Open tournament

7 July **Mijas**
Memorial Blas Fernández
Open tournament

14 July **Mijas**
Maderas Gómez
Open tournament

21 July **Mijas**
Gran Premio Electrónica
Open tournament

28 July **Mijas**
Premio Lucha Conrta el Cáncer
Open tournament

10 August **Mijas**
Memorial Felipe Pérez
Open tournament

18 August **Mijas**
Gran Premio Sanitubo
Open tournament

25 August **Mijas**
Asociación Tamisuel
Open tournament

30 August **Lauro**
Campeonato Infantil Reale
Open tournament

2 September **Mijas**
Clubes de Golf de Andalucía
Open tournament

25 November **Mijas**
Clubes de Golf de Andalucía
Open tournament