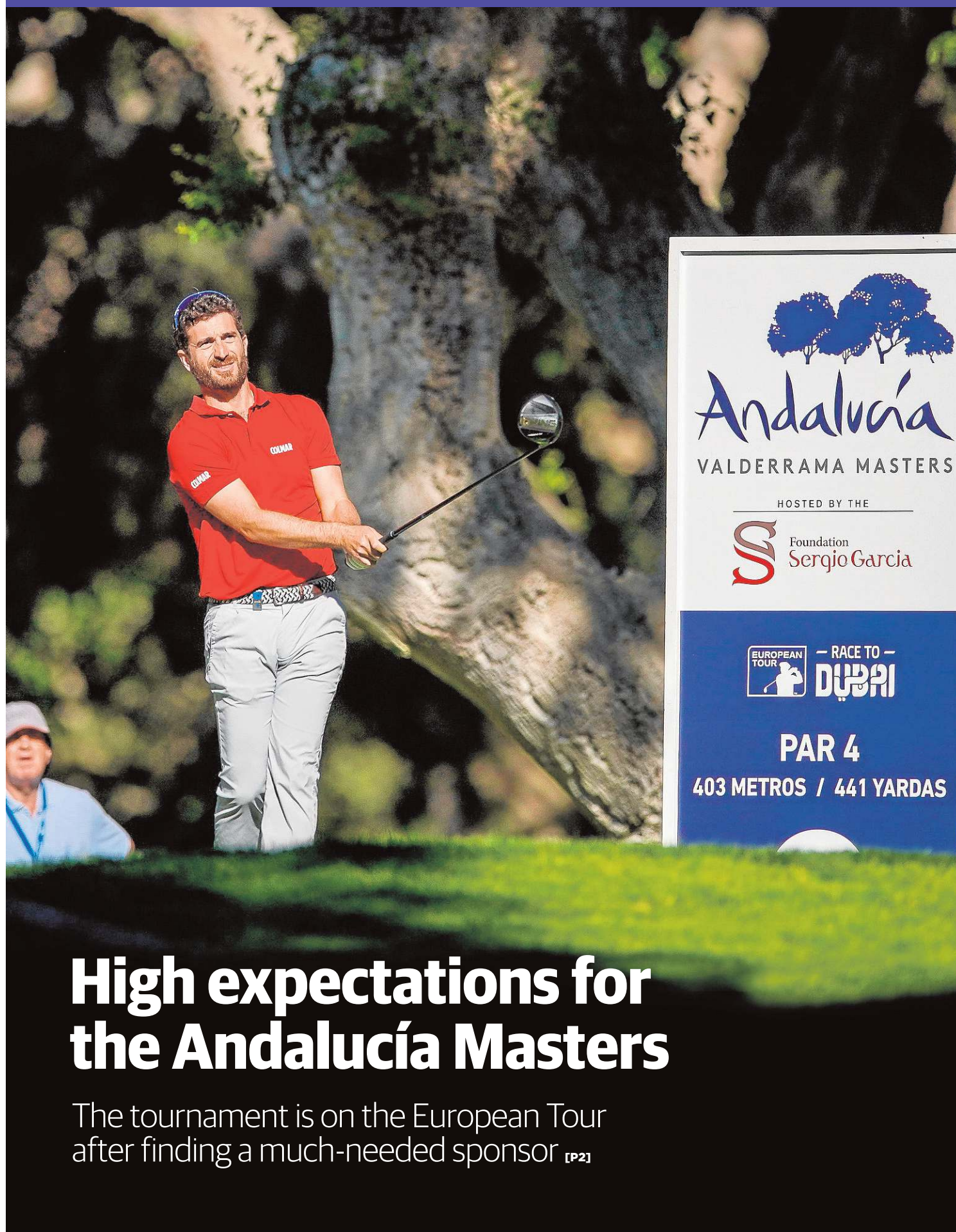


Andalucía Costa del Golf



High expectations for the Andalucía Masters

The tournament is on the European Tour after finding a much-needed sponsor [P2]



AMATEUR TOUR

The Costa del Golf Tour gets under way

This amateur tour takes place across four legs and stops off at some of the area's best courses [P3]



LPGA & LET

Women golfers paving the way for Spain

The country has the third most female golfers ranked in the top 500 in Europe [P4]

Tourist destination: Almeria

The province is developing a strategy to attract golf tourism, putting the focus on its unique courses [P6]

The Andalucía Masters promises to be more exciting than ever

Jon Rahm and Sergio García have confirmed their participation in the tournament which features on the European Tour after finding the private sponsor it needed

■ ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

MÁLAGA. The Andalucía Masters, which returned to the European Tour calendar in 2017 after an absence of six years, is now revving up for the next edition. Sergio García has become involved with the tournament, which will run from 27 to 30 June, through his Foundation which was created in 2002 to help economically disadvantaged children and young people by means of social assistance and the chance to practise sport in the open air.

"Our Foundation's involvement makes the tournament even more special, and we are hoping to raise more funds for those in need. With Jon's presence, and that of other players who will be taking part this year, and with all the new features which are being announced, this tournament is going to grow considerably. It is going to be an impressive week," said García at the presentation of the event.

After becoming the first Spanish



Representatives from Valderrama, federations, organisers and sponsors, after the presentation. ■ FERNANDO HERRANZ

player to win a tournament on strokes at the Real Club Valderrama thanks to his hard-fought triumph in the 2011 edition, the 2017 Masters champion and Ryder Cup record-holder extended his relationship with the course with his second title when it returned to the international calendar of the European Tour.

"I'm delighted to be going back to Valderrama, especially as Jon Rahm is also coming. Winning again last year was like a dream come true and I'm sure that 27th-30th June at this year it's going to be another very special week, especially for the Spanish fans," he said.

Last year García added to his impressive record at Valderrama by lifting the trophy for the third time in a historic course for Spanish golf, because it was where the legendary Seve Ballesteros led Europe to victory in the Ryder Cup in 1997. However, this year the battle for the title of the tournament will be especially enticing to watch.

This is because García will be accompanied by Jon Rahm, the current world number 11, who made his debut as a professional in the 2017 tournament and, despite missing the cut at Valderrama, dazzled local fans by winning his third title (also on the European Tour) in the Spanish Open the following year.

"I'm very excited to be coming back and also being at Valderrama in the summer, because that is the ideal time to visit the south of Spain. It is a very important part of our



Sergio García is aiming to win again. ■ SUR



Jon Rahm's presence will be an added attraction. ■ SUR

country and of the world, in fact," said Rahm. "Last time I didn't play my best tournament and I missed the cut, but this year I hope to give Sergio a run for his money and fight him for the title".

This will, without a doubt, attract the attention of the Spanish and international media and will make Andalucía the centre of world golf once again for a few days.

"We're lucky enough to have two tournaments on the European Tour in Spain and, to a great extent, we have to thank Sergio and his foundation for one of them. I will give all the support I can. I hope we have a good week and that we put on a good show," said Rahm.

Sponsorship

Estrella Damm is the new main

sponsor of the Andalucía Masters for the next five years. Thanks to this new incorporation, the prize money for the Estrella Damm N.A. Andalucía Mas- Fundación Sergio García will be three million euros - one million more than in 2018.

This sum will undoubtedly attract some of the best foreign players. That is also why this is predicted to be a unique event.

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The Costa del Golf Tour begins

Los Arqueros will be hosting the first leg of one of the area's biggest amateur tours, for which there is still time to register, this Saturday

■ ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

MÁLAGA. The tournament of all summer tournaments on the Costa del Sol has arrived. On 15 June Los Arqueros will be the first host course of the Costa del Golf Tour 2019, which will be celebrating more than five years of attracting hundreds of enthusiasts each day to some of the finest courses in Andalucía.

Los Arqueros was the first golf course on the Costa del Sol to have been designed by Severiano Ballesteros. He used to say it was a good course for players of all types, a reasonable challenge for the average golfer and difficult enough for professionals.

Surrounded by rugged mountains and just ten minutes from Marbella, the impeccable fairways of Los Arqueros Golf & Country Club are set amid spectacular mountain countryside where the players can enjoy fantastic views over the Mediterranean. Inaugurated in 1991, Los Arqueros is a challenging 18-hole par 71 course.

The tournament, which is organised by SUR and its specialist publication Costa del Golf, has become an unmissable event for golf fans. During all these years, it has grown in every way, quantitative as well as qualitative, which is why this year's edition is probably the best of all those held so far.

Some of those competing have taken part in every single one. What began as an initiative which the organisers hoped would continue, is now a tournament which nobody wants to miss on the amateur golf calendar of Andalucía. It is a circuit on which all players of every level find their place. It is also well-known for being an entertaining event with a great atmosphere.

The registration period for the Costa del Golf Tour is still open. Oferplan has launched a voucher with which you can enjoy the competition, green fee and buggy in-



The eighth hole at Los Arqueros, which is hosting the first leg. ■ SUR

cluded, on the three courses for 179 euros. The final will be attended by the highest-classified players from the different categories.

Registration for just one of the three tournaments costs 120 euros, although Oferplan also offers a discount so that each tournament

costs 65 euros, for those who prefer to enjoy one or two specific legs.

It should be pointed out that, as in previous editions, the tournament will be held under individual Stableford rules, where each hole scores in relation to the par (one point for a bogey, two for the par, three for a birdie and four for an eagle). Access to the final will depend on the results of the first three days of competition, although players can register for one, two or all three legs, with the possibility of competing in the final in all cases.

Other legs

After the inaugural round on 15 June, the Costa del Golf Tour will continue on to the other courses. The second leg is also this month, on 30 June, when the participants, organisers and collaborators are due to meet at El Paraíso Golf. Barely a week later, on 6 July, the third leg will take place at Alcaidesa Golf, before fourth at Cabopino on 21 July. The grand final will be at Guadalmina this year.

THREE LEGS, A GRAND FINAL AND A UNIQUE TOUR

Reaching the grand final at Guadalmina will depend on the results of the first four days. Those interested in taking part can register online via Oferplan or by contacting Diario SUR's commercial department. The tour, which began over five years ago, aims to beat all records this year.



The grand final will be at Guadalmina. ■ SUR

SCHEDULE 2019

15 June

Los Arqueros
I Prueba Costa del Golf Tour
Open tournament

17 June

Lauro
Interautonómico Absoluto
Femenino 2019
Open tournament

24 June

Antequera Golf
Campeonato de Europa
Universitario 2019
Open tournament

30 June

El Paraíso
II Prueba Costa del Golf Tour
Open tournament

6 July

Alcaidesa
III Prueba Costa del Golf Tour
Open tournament

13 July

Aloha
Torneo Benéfico Horizonte
Open tournament

21 July

Cabopino
IV Prueba Costa del Golf Tour
Open tournament

3 August

Aloha
Valle del Golf Aloha - Brisas
Open tournament

10 August

Aloha
Memorial Ibarrondo
Open tournament

17 August

Aloha
Torneo padre e hijos
Open tournament

28 September

Torrequebrada golf
Campeonato de España Dobles
Senior Femenino 2019
Open tournament

5 October

Aloha
Trofeo Benéfico ASPANDEM
Open tournament

5 October

Aloha
'Pitch and Putt' Nacional
Open tournament

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Carlota Ciganda made history by breaking into the top 10. :: SUR



Nuria Iturrios has been having an extraordinary season. :: SUR



Azahara Muñoz is showing her best form again after injury. :: SUR

WORLD RANKINGS

13. Carlota Ciganda
33. Azahara Muñoz
162. Nuria Iturrios
194. Beatriz Recari
263. Luna Sobrón
358. Noemí Jiménez

qualified for the US Open, and Nuria Iturrios (162), who climbed 31 positions to be among the top 170 in the world, have allowed Spain to be considered a European golfing power. Beatriz Recari (194), Luna Sobrón (263), Noemí Jiménez (358), Marta Sanz (364), María Parra (457), Silvia Bañón (465), Elia Folch (473) and Carmen Alonso (482) are joined among the first places by Ciganda in 13th and Muñoz just outside the top 30 in 33rd after having been very close to the top ten before health problems caused a setback.

Earlier in the month, Ciganda made history by getting into the top 10. She surpassed the 13th place achieved by Azahara Muñoz following her victory in the Lacoste Ladies Open de France Dames in 2014 and which until now was the record for Spanish women's golf. Beatriz Recari also reached the top 20 after previously being 17th in 2013. Ciganda, still without having won a 'major', has been showing an enormous consistency for years.

Muñoz this year celebrates ten years on the American Tour. She has already secured several top-10 finishes this year and came close to winning the Kia Classic, where she finished second. She was third in the HSBC World Championship, sixth in the Australian Open and fifth in the Handa Vic Open. Her good start to the year saw her return to among the top fifteen players in the world.

Muñoz alternates the American and European Tours and boasts five titles, among them the Sybase Match Championship, one of the most important tournaments in the world, with nearly 400,000 dollars in prize money. The San Pedro-born golfer divided her first years as a professional on both sides of the pond before settling permanently in Florida, where she lives with Tim Vickers, whom she married in 2015. Muñoz is a player forged in the United States, where universities offer many more facilities for elite athletes than in Europe.

countries: Japan (100), South Korea (83) and the United States (73). The list is completed by Thailand (27), Chinese Taipei (21), Sweden (17), China (14) and the UK (14). The latter three are closely followed by Spain, with thirteen golfers among the top 500 in the ranking.

At European level, only two countries, Sweden and the UK, surpass Spain, but none has a 'top 10' among their ranks. The leaps made by Fátima Fernández Cano (490), who

Another formidable 'Armada'

Spain comes in eighth place with regards to players in the top 500 of the women's world rankings

:: ALBERTO GÓMEZ

MÁLAGA. Spanish golf is going through one of its best periods. The world rankings show that the so-called Armada is performing well.

This is not just down to the rise of Carlota Ciganda in the last few months, finally making a breakthrough into the top 10, nor because of the recovery of Azahara Muñoz, who has had excellent results in sev-

eral tournaments held this season.

Only eight countries have more female players than Spain in the top 500 in the world, and three of them are almost out of reach because of the popularity of the sport in those



A TOURNAMENT AGAINST CANCER AT MIJAS GOLF

Following the success of last year's event, Un Sí Por La vida-Unidos Contra El Cáncer is this Saturday morning holding its second charity golf tournament at Mijas Golf. The event, which will raise funds for patients and families in the Guadalhorce valley, is in memory of Blas Fernández, a former worker at the course who worked practically right up until he died aged 56. Sign up for 60 euros (952 476 843).

Herbin comes out on top at La Reserva de Sotogrande

:: ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

MÁLAGA. Despite wind hampering the first two days of play, it was a dream final last month as the course at La Reserva de Sotogrande decided the winner of the invitational of the same name, part of European Tour.

French golfer Céline Herbin saw off the challenge of the German Esther Henseleit to claim the trophy, shooting 69 on the final day, including two birdies on the final two holes.



Winner Céline Herbin. :: LET



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Almeria developing a strategy to grow golf tourism in the summer

The regional government wants to attract more visitors to a sector which brings millions of tourists to Europe every year



The province has some of the very best golf courses. :: SUR



Several tournaments take place in Almeria. :: SUR



The city has numerous remains from the Moorish period. :: SUR

ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

In Almeria 'tourism' began a very long time ago with visits from the Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans and Carthaginians. Those who stayed longest were the Moors, who left a profound mark on towns and villages. This province can boast numerous attractions, such as endless beaches, golf courses and very popular marinas, especially Almerimar. There are also some lovely natural parks, particularly Cabo de Gata-Níjar with its volcanic for-

mations, beaches and charming villages. The dry and rugged Tabernas desert is also famous worldwide and many American westerns have been filmed there.

In recent decades Almeria has become an increasingly popular destination, attracting more tourists of more nationalities every year. The secret lies in its enormous range of opportunities for visitors, especially the excellent golf facilities. Its record number of sunny days and the experience of practising your swing between the sea and the desert make this province an ideal destination for golfers.

Summer is normally low season for golf, but in May the vice-president of the Junta de Andalucía, Juan Marín, who is also the Minister for

Tourism, announced a new plan to attract more tourists to Almeria province, and he said that golf has an important role to play in that. He explained that the regional government will be using digital marketing tools to make the province better known worldwide, and it will also be organising familiarisation visits for travel agents and tour operators so they gain first-hand knowledge of the area.

He also said that Almeria will have a presence at the world cruise tourism fairs such as those in Miami, Hamburg and Southampton.

There is, however, no doubt that the golf courses in Almeria will receive a good number of visitors this summer anyway, partly due to the choice: there are courses beside the sea, close to the mountains and, of

course, the only desert course in Europe, Desert Springs.

Inspired by the famous desert courses of Arizona and California and built to USGA specifications, Desert Springs Golf Club is a spectacular example of a man-made creation in harmony with nature, as it contains thousands of cacti, enormous areas of flowers and rocks, streams and dry rivers.

There is an amazing contrast between the impeccable emerald of the greens and fairways and the arid but at the same time colourful desert landscape. The 600,000 cacti and other desert plants grow progressively denser, making the game more difficult as you progress further from the fairway, and of course cacti are prickly plants so that aspect also has to be taken into account. This is a demand-

ing and exciting course and it requires a variety of strokes which challenge the skill of every player, from beginners to professionals.

Another well-known course in Almeria is Almerimar Golf, designed by Gary Player, and the only one with 27 holes. It covers approximately 800,000 square metres, between lakes and palm trees, and lies within a top-class residential development, beside the sea and sheltered by the hills which surround it. There is one five-star hotel, another which is four-star hotel and it is located next to a spectacular marina, just seven minutes from El Ejido.

In Roquetas de Mar, one of the most popular tourist resorts on the Mediterranean with the highest number of hotels in Almeria, is Playa Serena Golf, set beside the sea with lovely views of the Mediterranean and also the mountains. It is a precise

The Junta de Andalucía is promoting the destination to international markets to attract year-round visitors

course with ten lakes, eight of which are natural and a stopping place for exotic species of migratory birds. It has 18 holes and is a par-72 course.

Marina Golf is another modern course with spectacular views. A paradise for golfers, it is in Marina de la Torre, a residential area with four hotels at the foot of the hill below Mojácar, a village which has won awards for its beauty.

This course has two very different halves: the first three holes are close to the sea, followed by one of the most spectacular holes in Spain, the par-five fourth hole. The course then ascends to the next ten holes, with a small hill and a valley sheltered from the marine breeze, before finally returning to the sea to finish the remaining holes.

Other golf courses in Almeria which will be delighting visitors this summer are Cortijo Grande, Envía Golf, Valle del Este - which is also in desert style - Alborán Golf, Aguilón and Playa Macenas.

The tourism sector of Almeria has been modernising in recent years, with the aim of attracting visitors all year round and not just in the peak season. As well as developing its golf facilities, it has focused on cruise and agrotourism. This has been accompanied by the development and optimisation of hotel complexes, efforts to reinforce residential tourism, promoting Mediterranean gastronomy and improving communications.



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