



MALTA GOLF ASSOCIATION

PRESS RELEASE

JJ MICALLEF MAKES MALTESE GOLFING HISTORY



With a score of 9 over par over 54 holes, JJ Micallef became the first Maltese male golfer to win an amateur international open tournament. This excellent feat was achieved at the Aphrodite Hills Golf Course – the venue for this year’s open for the Cyprus Amateur Men’s Open under the auspices of the Cyprus Golf Federation.

JJ, a member of the Royal Malta Golf Club, has been representing Malta as part of the National Team on several occasions. This historic win crowns other achievements including his second place in last year’s Turkish Open; bronze medal in the European Team Shield Championships also last year as well as silver medal in the GSSE held in Iceland in 2015.

Fifty-four participants entered the tournament including young Laurens Schulze Doering also an RMGC member who at 13 years of age was experiencing his first major male international tournament. With an aggregate score of +38, Laurens placed a creditable 24th. Laurens start to this tournament could not have been any better. After twelve holes, he was high on the leader board with only 1 over par through three bogeys and two birdies. The last six holes however rendered a very different picture. Two bogeys and four double bogeys later, Laurens registered an 11 over par for the first eighteen holes of the tournament. Unfortunately, this seemed to have set the tone for the next two days as Laurens could only manage one birdie and sixteen pars over the next thirty-six holes of play achieving +12 and +15 respectively. More importantly for Laurens, this first participation in a men’s event at such a tender age would have showered him with experience to serve him well as he matures in the game and imminently becomes a member of the National Team.



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JJ's start to the tournament was next to a perfect round of golf. After getting a birdie on the second, he dropped a shot on the fourth to get it straight back on the fifth. He then proceeded to par all the next eleven holes to remain one under par until he reached the par three 17th. JJ's tee shot plugged into the greenside bunker costing a triple bogey. Despite the set-back JJ managed to claw another birdie on the last hole to card in a 1 over par for the first day – one shot behind the leader and three ahead of the rest of the field.

It is said in golf, that another day is a totally different challenge. With six bogeys on the front nine of the second day, a different challenge presented itself to JJ. His two birdies did nothing to succumb his dejection due to another two bogeys and a double bogey for a +8 return to place third and three shots behind the joint leaders (Staykov and Toennesen) after 36 holes played.

Three shots further back with +12 lay Andrew Halifax. Playing one flight ahead of the leaders on the last day, Halifax left his best golf for the final day. With four birdies, twelve pars and two bogeys, Halifax returned a -2 for the day – the best score over eighteen holes – for the tournament and with an aggregate of +10 over thirty-six holes was the leader in the Clubhouse with only three players out on the golf course.

Staykov's bid for the tournament evaporated almost immediately after two double bogeys with only three holes played. Despite successive pars until the 12th hole, another two bogeys and two double bogeys dropped Staykov's to an overall fourth place with an aggregate of +16.

This left JJ and Toennesen to battle it out and by the 5th hole the score had evened itself out with JJ making the three-shot deficit that he had initiated with some excellent putting. By the ninth hole, JJ edged one shot ahead after Toennesen double bogeyed the par four 9th. By the 14th, JJ was still one ahead to then go four ahead in the next two holes through a par and a birdie against Toennesen's two bogeys. In reality, these two holes made a big difference as Tonnesen proceeded to par the 17th and eagle the 18th to JJ's bogey and par to claw back three shots – one shot shy from inviting a sudden death play-off.

The players' participation in the Cyprus Open was thanks to the funding scheme of the Maltese Olympic Committee whilst Nike Golf was behind the players' sporting wear.

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