

Carlsbad's **ACE** in the **HOLE**



Photo: Golf & Travel International via LPGA

La Costa Resort & Spa is back on the professional sports scene, as it hosts the new Kia Classic presented by J Golf—and tennis is just around the corner. By Scott Kramer

Four years removed from hosting a professional golf tournament, La Costa Resort and Spa in Carlsbad is back in the national sporting spotlight. The Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Tour brings its new Kia Classic presented by J Golf to the luxury hotel on March 22. And that represents a prime opportunity for both the resort and the city.

"La Costa has a 40-year tradition of hosting golf tournaments for the PGA Tour, and now gets the opportunity to welcome an LPGA event to our community," says April Shute, La Costa vice president and general manager. "A tournament of this caliber is exciting because it brings the world's best players here, brings in day and overnight visitors to patronize local businesses, and highlights Carlsbad on television throughout the world. The event at La Costa is the LPGA's first [U.S.] tournament for 2010 and kicks off its 60th anniversary year. We're proud to be a part of that."

The full-field, 144-player event immediately precedes the first major of the year—the Kraft Nabisco Championship in Rancho Mirage—and because of that, officials are anticipating that most of the tour's top players will participate. "We are thrilled to once again showcase the best golfers in the world in the San Diego area," says Mike Whan, new LPGA Tour commissioner and former marketing executive at Carlsbad-based TaylorMade Golf. "The support of J Golf and a respected venue like La Costa Resort and Spa will go a long way toward making this a first-class event."

Jim Felechner, tournament director for the Kia Classic, agrees, adding that tour officials are very excited about the national media attention that the event will draw. "It's being broadcast in an East Coast prime-time slot on The Golf Channel," he says. "We're always looking for the best venues to host an event. This is a unique opportunity for the LPGA Tour to work with a world-class resort like La Costa. It has a rich history of tournament golf with the PGA Tour in past events, it's a phenomenal facility and is really set up for tournament golf. There's a great clubhouse, locker rooms and a great golf course, which will be the same combination and setup of holes for our tournament that was used for the men's Accenture Match Play Championship when it was here. It's quite nice."

In fact, La Costa has hosted plenty of professional golf events in its time, including the CBS Golf Classic in 1965 and the Haig Scotch Mixed Foursome Championship from 1965-1967. Then came its longest-running tournament that attracted the PGA Tour's best from 1969-1998, known first as the Tournament of Champions and later as the Mercedes Championship. The Accenture event graced its fairways from 1999-2006.

Weather in late March will be one major advantage for the LPGA Classic, compared to the PGA Tour's past events here that were typically held in January and February—and that was a strategic decision. "We looked at the calendar and felt it worked for us," says Felechner. "Hopefully



Photos: Getty Images via LPGA



the traditional weather patterns at the end of March will prevail, and we'll have great weather here. And it will be warmer, too." As PGA Tour officials found out many times when they tried to stage tournaments at La Costa, and as they still do at Torrey Pines in La Jolla, wintertime is perpetually a challenge for most Southern California golf courses that can experience large temperature swings and significant rainfall. La Costa flooded several times during past events, delaying rounds, muddying spectator walkways and creating logistical nightmares for officials. All of that ultimately led to the Accenture moving to Tucson. Since then, the resort and its

for it, and we thought La Costa was a perfect fit," says Felechner. He adds that officials have also been seeking corporate partners in the San Diego area for involvement at every level to help make the event successful, as well as 600 volunteer workers who serve several functions, such as gallery control, greens reporting and pro-am registration.

With all of those pieces in place, the tournament aims to come off flawlessly. Not to mention that golfers have been continually committing to play over the past two months and seem genuinely enthused to tackle La Costa. Among the early commitments were

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two golf courses have gone through an upgrade of more than \$140 million. The course seems to handle drainage much better these days. In addition, for the Kia Classic, an expert agronomist is working with greenkeepers to ensure that the course is kept in prime condition.

And that commitment to professionalism was one of the key factors that led to the tournament landing at La Costa, once the LPGA Tour and title sponsor J Golf—a Korean media giant—went looking for a site. "We felt San Diego was the right demographic

36 of the top 50 players from last year's money list.

"I'm very excited about the LPGA returning to the San Diego area for the Kia Classic presented by J Golf," says Paula Creamer, who finished ninth on the tour's money list in 2009. "J Golf has made a tremendous commitment to women's golf with this event, and with their support, and a spectacular host site like La Costa Resort and Spa, this tournament promises to be world-class in every way. 2010 is going to be an exciting year for the LPGA and we're all thrilled that it will get started in the San Diego area!"

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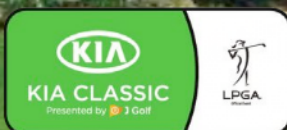
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JUST THE FACTS:



TOURNAMENT DATES:

March 22-23 (practice rounds)
March 24 (practice rounds & pro-am)
March 25-28 (tournament rounds)

TELEVISION:

The Golf Channel

EXPECTED FIELD NOTABLES:

Lorena Ochoa, Jiyai Shin, Cristie Kerr, Michelle Wie, Paula Creamer

Morgan Pressel, Brittany Lincicome, Ai Miyazato and Na Yeon Choi

PURSE:

\$1.7 million

\$20/day grounds, \$40/clubhouse,
\$65/weekly grounds, \$125/clubhouse,
15 and younger free with paid adult;
For practice rounds: \$10/grounds and
\$20/clubhouse

TICKET INFORMATION:

888.SEE LPGA (888.733.5742) or
www.lpgalacosta.com

ADVANTAGE: LA COSTA Pro tennis makes its

After a two-year hiatus, women's professional tennis returns to La Costa Resort and Spa this year as well, in the form of the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour's Southern California Open. The tournament will be held July 31 through August 8, and replaces the popular L.A. Women's Tennis Championship on the tour calendar. It's one of 10 tournaments (five World Tennis Association and five Association of Tennis Professionals) comprising the Olympus U.S. Open Series. Longtime Acacia Classic tournament director E. Paul Luskhe will return to run the event. La Costa's state-of-the-art tennis center, which has hosted pro players and celebrities since 1961, features 12 hard and clay clay courts, with seven lighted for night play.