

PGTI and Louis Philippe join hands to launch Louis Philippe Cup with India's top professional golfers

India's richest Pro tournament to be played in March 2012

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Bengaluru: Inspired by the successful fan appeal of city-based sports teams, the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), Louis Philippe and RNGM today joined hands to introduce a unique format of golf to be played involving the top 16 national professional golfers. The \$250,000 Louis Philippe Cup is slated to be India's richest domestic tournament. To be played between eight city-based teams of India's top professional golfers, the tournament will be held in Bangalore at the KGA Golf Course between 5th to 10th March 2012.



Star Indian players who have confirmed to participate include Bangalore's recent Asian Tour winner Mr. Anirban Lahiri and Gurgaon's three-time Indian Open champion and former Asian Tour No. 1 Mr. Jyoti Randhawa, accompanied by Singapore Classic winner Mr. Himmat Rai, also of Gurgaon. Two-time European Tour winner Mr. S.S.P. Chowrasia representing Kolkota, former Asian Games gold medallist and Asian Tour Newcomer of the Year Mr. Shiv Kapur representing Delhi, two-time Asian Tour winner Mr. Gaganjeet Bhullar who will represent Chandigarh and all the top ranked players on the PGTI Tour will also compete.

Each city team will consist of three players. Two of whom will be selected on the basis of their PGTI 2011 rankings as of end December and the third player will be a team choice. Teams will have a chance to pick talented players that play primarily overseas and are unable to maintain their domestic rankings like Mr. Shiv Kapur, Mr. Jyoti Randhawa and Mr. S.S.P. Chowrasia. The cities selected to field teams are Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkota, Lucknow, Delhi, Gurgaon and Chandigarh. Cities have been selected on the basis of the rankings of their top players (Lucknow has two players consistently ranked in the top 10 of PGTI – Mr. Vijay and Mr. Sanjay Kumar) and the number of golf clubs in those cities.

Said Mr. Padamjit Sandhu, Director, PGTI, "This is an important new innovation in format in professional golf and could potentially be a game changer in the way fans relate to India's top golf stars. We would like to thank Louis Philippe and Rishi Narain Golf Management for creating this new event on the PGTI Tour and we know that India's top players and members of the PGTI are excited to participate in the tournament, rooting for their team to end on top."

Speaking about their association with Golf, Mr. Jacob John, Brand Head, Louis Philippe, commented, "Louis Philippe is pleased to be associated with this stand-out event in Indian golf. Golf is a game that symbolises style, sophistication and success, characteristics that are

reflected in our brand.” He further added that, “We encourage sports fans across the nation to support their city teams and recognise the outstanding quality of pro golfers India continues to produce. Young players like Mr. Anirban Lahiri, who has made his mark on the international scene along with other youngsters, all in their early twenties, such as Mr. Himmat Rai, Mr. Gaganjeet Bhullar, and most recently Delhi’s Mr. Chiragh Kumar, who finished second in the \$1.25 million Indian Open. All perfect examples that Indian golf is in safe hands for the future, making it a sport that Louis Philippe foresees a long term association with.”

Star golfer Mr. Anirban Lahiri, present at the announcement, said, “As professional tour players we don’t get many opportunities to play team formats and it does add an entirely new exciting dimension to the game. I played on an Asian Games team for India, in Doha, where we won the silver medal and the pressure is entirely different. In fact on the global golf platform, the most appealing events for fans and players alike are the few team events like the Ryder Cup (USA vs Europe); the President’s Cup (USA vs Rest of World outside Europe), Royal Trophy (Asia vs Europe) and Dynasty Cup (Asia vs Japan). We enjoy playing in team events and fans are extremely excited to watch and cheer for their teams. I will be a proud member of team Bangalore, if I do make the cut! And I also know my fellow pros are gearing up to do their best for their city teams also.”

Mr. Rishi Narain, former Asiad gold medalist and founder of Rishi Narain Golf Management, who has conceived and promoted the event, said, “We would like to thank the team of Louis Philippe for embracing the Pro Team Golf concept and are looking forward to producing an event with unparalleled fan appeal on the domestic golf scene. Our aim is to establish India’s immensely talented golf pros as genuine superstars in the eyes of sports fans across India. They deserve the recognition and fan following considering their consistent international victories over the past 15 years. Among Indian sportsmen, golfers outperform almost every other Indian sportsman consistently. Indian pro golfers face intense competition against players from over 100 countries every time they compete overseas and with winner’s prizes regularly crossing Rs.1 crore on the international circuit, the quality of players and intensity of competition our golfers face every week is far greater than in most other sports. We hope the “Louis Philippe Cup” will create true superstars out of our pro golfers and connect fans with their home team players like never before. We thank the PGTI and the players for their wholehearted support of this concept and the KGA for agreeing to give us such a high quality venue to launch the first edition of the tournament.”

President of KGA, Mr. K. Chandra Prakash, averred, “KGA is happy to be hosting this inaugural event, which will be the richest men’s pro event ever held in Bangalore, and have a great roster of India’s top pros participating. We are happy that Louis Philippe and PGTI have selected KGA as the venue and hope that Mr. Anirban and his fellow team members will bring home the inaugural Louis Philippe Cup trophy home to Bangalore. On our part, we will ensure world-class playing conditions for India’s elite professionals and will work hard at maintaining our reputation as the “No. 1 ranked golf course in India” for 2010 at the Asian Golf Awards in Bangkok.”

The unique format of the five-day event to be held in Bangalore next March features one day

of celebrity pro-am followed by two days (36 holes) strokeplay in which all eight teams will compete. The four teams with the best total team scores over 36 holes will advance to the semi-finals. In the semi-finals the format of the game changes to knock out and individual matchplay. The one-on-one matches between the three players on each team will earn each team one point for a win and zero for a loss. No match will be halved as tied matches after 18 holes will advance to sudden-death playoff. The two winning semi-final teams will play the finals on the final day on three individual matches.”

As India’s richest golf tournament, the winning team takes home Rs.36 lakhs to be shared among the three players, the second team gets Rs.24 lakhs, while the bronze medalists get a purse of Rs.18 lakhs, the team placed fourth will receive Rs.12 lakhs in prize money, while teams placed fifth to eighth placed teams will each receive Rs 6 lakhs.

Providing fans avenues for involvement, each participating city will also field a team of three amateur club golfers, who will be selected by local clubs on the basis of club qualifying tournaments. The three club amateurs will play alongside the professionals during the first two official rounds of strokeplay in the Louis Philippe Cup. The three amateur scores will be added to the pros scores to determine a “Louis Philippe Pro-Am Trophy”, which will be presented after the first 36 holes of the tournament. However, the amateur scores will not be counted in determining the four top teams advancing to the semi-finals. Mr. Padamjit Sandhu, PGTI Director, opined, “Amateurs playing along with pros in big golf tournaments is a highly recognised practice the world over. On the European Tour, this is a feature of the annual GBP 5 million Alfred Dunhill Cup and on the USPGA Tour this is the format of the \$7 million Pebble Beach Pro-Am. In India this format of play was also popular through the DLF Masters.”

Mr. Jacob John, Brand Head, Louis Philippe, stated, “Fan involvement is a key element of the Louis Philippe Cup, and through this event we wanted to build a platform where true golf fans have a chance to play alongside the pros, a possibility and format that can only be adapted in a sport such as golf, where the club golfer’s performance does not affect the score and performance of the pro.”

“As professionals we welcome the chance to play along with amateurs, our biggest fans. It is a great experience to guide them, mentor and coach them during the game. And their appreciation is very apparent when they see instant results in their shot selection, strategy and their ability in reading the greens. Also our rhythm rubs off on their swings and they often perform better. It is a great idea for the Louis Philippe Cup to provide club golfers a chance to be on the city team along with us. It’s an experience, I hope, they will always remember and cherish”, averred Bangalore’s star professional Mr. Anirban Lahiri. Mr. Chandra Prakash, president of KGA, added, “The chance for a club golfer to represent his city on the national stage and playing on the same platform as star pros from his city is a unique experience and I am sure KGA members will be excited about this opportunity.”