

Rolex Series gives added boost to Dubai Duty Free Irish Open Hosted by the Rory Foundation

By **Hibah Noor** on June, 20 2017 | Retailers



The Dubai Duty Free Irish Open Hosted by the Rory Foundation is set to go from strength to strength with a global, star-studded cast signed up to participate at Portstewart Golf Club in Londonderry, Northern Ireland from July 6-9.

Led by tournament host and defending champion Rory McIlroy, the 27th event out of 47 in the European Tour's Race to Dubai will see the four-time Major winner joined by former US Open winner Justin Rose, leading Japanese star Hideki Matsuyama, Spanish sensation Jon Rahm, 2016 Masters

winner Danny Willett, Northern Irish Major champions Darren Clarke and Graeme McDowell and Ireland's three-time Major champion Padraig Harrington.

Add to the mix the likes of Ryder Cup stars Thomas Pieters, Rafa Cabrera Bello, Andy Sullivan, Matt Fitzpatrick and Chris Wood and with an increased prize fund of US\$7million (up more than Euro 4 million from 2016) as part of the prestigious new Rolex Series, this year's Dubai Duty Free Irish Open Hosted by the Rory Foundation will be the biggest in the tournament's long and storied history.

Colm McLoughlin, Executive Vice Chairman and CEO of Dubai Duty Free, said: "We are very pleased with how this tournament has progressed over the past couple of years. We are delighted that it is now part of the Rolex Series with a vastly increased prize fund and with a new date on the calendar. As part of the Rolex Series and of course the Race to Dubai, the tournament will have extended broadcasting hours this year, which is something important to us as title sponsors in the promotion of our brand.

"The line-up of players is terrific and of course Rory's continued involvement, both as the defending champion and through the Rory Foundation, has had a hugely positive impact on the growth of this tournament.

"We are looking forward to a fantastic week of golf at Portstewart Golf Club, which is a stunning course, and given the enthusiasm of the Northern Irish golf fans we can expect a great turnout of spectators."

McIlroy added: "It goes without saying that I'm pretty excited about the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open this year. Since I got involved in hosting the tournament through my Foundation and we created this partnership with Dubai Duty Free and the European Tour, the Irish Open has really grown into one of the best weeks on the European Tour schedule. I think everyone in golf knows how special a relationship I have with Dubai, so to have Dubai Duty Free as the title sponsor of the Irish Open is a nice extension of that.

"This year the tournament has gone up another level with a new date, a new strategy to play the tournament on a links course in the build-up to the Open Championship, and an increased prize fund of \$7 million. All of those factors have enabled us to attract players like Justin Rose, Hideki Matsuyama and Jon Rahm to Portstewart this year and I think we are set for an incredible week."

The Irish Open winners' list reads like a Who's Who of some of the finest and most well-loved players to ever pick up a club. Spaniard Seve Ballesteros claimed three titles in the space of four years in the mid-1980s; his trademark charisma washing over the galleries with every appearance in Ireland. Nick Faldo won the title three years in a row from 1991; Colin Montgomerie has also won it three times while Bernhard Langer, Ian Woosnam and Sam Torrance have claimed glory twice each. The names of Ireland's leading lights feature heavily on the trophy with Christy O'Connor Jnr, John O'Leary, Padraig Harrington and Shane Lowry all delighting the home fans with victories over the years.

Nick Tarratt, Director European Tour International Dubai Office said: "The 2017 edition of the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open hosted by the Rory Foundation will be another highlight of the 2017 Race to Dubai. A strong field, increased prize fund as part of the Rolex Series plus a quality venue all augers well for a successful tournament.

"It is the first of three weeks of links golf on the European Tour, being followed by the Aberdeen Asset

Management Scottish Open and then The Open at Royal Birkdale. We understand there is a genuine buzz around Northern Ireland for this event with ticket sales expected to be at record levels. The Dubai presence through the title sponsor Dubai Duty Free, Emirates as Official Airline and being event number 27 of 47 tournaments on the Race to Dubai highlights the presence of Dubai on this international golf tournament. We wish everyone involved a great week at Portstewart.”

Fans looking to secure their place already at Portstewart GC next month have the opportunity to book their tickets now by going to <http://tickets.europeantour.com> or www.dubaidutyfreeirishopen.com

Fans can also follow the latest tournament updates via the associated Twitter accounts:
@EuropeanTour @DDFIrishOpen @RoryFoundation @DubaiDutyFree