

# BMW Masters 2012



presented by Lake Malaren Golf Club Shanghai

Press Information  
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## **“The BMW Masters is of great strategic importance to the company in one of our largest markets.”**

An interview with Eckhard Wannieck, Head of Sponsoring, Cooperations and Product Placement at BMW.

**Mr. Wannieck, the BMW Masters sees BMW further extending its global commitment to golf. Alongside the BMW Championship on the US PGA Tour and the European Tour events (BMW PGA Championship, BMW International Open, BMW Italian Open), this is now another highlight. What persuaded you to take this step?**

Eckhard Wannieck: “As the name indicates, the BMW Masters will play an important role in our global golf strategy and is the perfect addition to our worldwide commitment. China is a key market for BMW and golf, as well as an ideal stage on which to showcase our approach to dynamics and precision. We are delighted to be able to present our customers and spectators with the strongest field assembled at any professional golf tournament in Asia and golf of the highest standard – both from a sporting and spectator experience point of view. This once again also underlines BMW’s leadership claim and especially in the realm of golf.”

**You are returning to Shanghai after the BMW Asian Open, which was held for the last time in 2008. What prompted BMW to fly its flag in China again?**

Wannieck: “The BMW brand in China is developing at a similarly dynamic rate to Chinese business. Our customers here are demanding, as well as being enthusiastic about innovation and sport. Golf is a fantastic platform to offer a unique brand experience. At the start of the new millennium, BMW was one of the first brands in the world to acknowledge and promote the growing popularity of golf in Asia by organising a professional tournament in Shanghai, the BMW Asian Open, from 2001 onwards. After 2008, BMW temporarily continued its commitment to golf in Asia on other levels, including many ‘Official Car’ sponsorships. As a global golf player, however, it was our intention to be represented with a top event on every continent. Therefore, we observed the Asian golf market closely, in order to find the ideal opportunity to set a new course. With the BMW Masters in Shanghai, we have achieved an exclusive



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framework, which will allow BMW fans in Asia to experience the BMW brand on an emotional level.”

## **What is so special about the BMW Masters?**

Wannieck: “In terms of figures: with the exception of the Majors, the World Golf Championships tournaments and the season finale in Dubai, no tournament on the European Tour has a larger prize purse than the BMW Masters. This underlines the importance of the tournament. Coming so late in the season, seven million US dollars is sufficient for someone to secure victory in the ‘Race to Dubai’ with tournaments still to play. That gives the BMW Masters enormous sporting value. This is also underlined by the impressive line-up of players: we are proud to be able to present golf fans in Asia with the best field in the whole of Asia at the inaugural BMW Masters. Four of the top five golfers in the world will tee off at the debut of the BMW Masters, as well as all but one of the European Ryder Cup team.”

## **The tournament will be held at Lake Malaren Golf Club – why did you opt for this club, which is also Presenting Partner of the BMW Masters?**

Wannieck: “After assessing various options, the decision in favour of Lake Malaren Golf Club was clear cut: the crucial factors in this decision were the championship course, which was designed by golf legend Jack Nicklaus, the excellently managed club, and a very well established facility. Lake Malaren shares exactly the same desire as BMW: to organise the best golf tournament in China. In addition, we received broad support from the local authorities: The Shanghai Sport Bureau and the Shanghai Baoshan District give us excellent support in the realisation of this project.”

## **The field is relatively small compared to other European Tour events. What is the reasoning behind this?**

Wannieck: “That is correct. Only 78 players – the majority of whom are in the top one hundred in the world rankings – will tee off. This also emphasises just how high the standard will be at the BMW Masters. This is obviously good news for golf fans in China, as is the fact that there will not be a cut, meaning all the players will be able to produce world-class golf on all four days.”



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## **Can golf fans in China look forward to seeing any home-grown players?**

Wannieck: "The further development of golf in China is very close to BMW's heart. At the BMW Masters we are cooperating with the Chinese Golf Association (CGA), who will send a contingent of 14 players. Teeing off as part of such an exclusive and strong field as the one at the BMW Masters will be an invaluable experience for the Chinese players – one that is almost on a similar level to a Major tournament."

## **There is always talk of the special atmosphere at BMW tournaments. Will this tradition be upheld at the BMW Masters?**

Wannieck: "With all our sponsorship commitments, the goal of BMW is to be creative and support the respective sport we are engaged in, providing a special experience for our target groups. In the case of our golf tournaments, this applies in particular to the players, spectators, media, partners and officials. This includes BMW's premium philosophy, which runs throughout the commitments, as well as a pleasant atmosphere. We have been particularly successful on this front in the world of golf and are proud that so many of the professional golfers appreciate this and give mention to it time and again. We enjoy a long and amicable relationship with many of the top players. This has certainly also played a major role in our golfing tradition, which now stretches back 25 years. Both our partners and the players appreciate the fact we have made a significant contribution to the further development of the sport through our sustainable and global golf strategy."

## **Looking to the future: for how long can we expect to see the BMW Masters on the golfing calendar?**

Wannieck: "As with all our sporting commitments, the BMW Masters is a long-term project. In our first year, we already have everything you could ask for: a world-class field, an outstanding golf course, strong partners, excellent sponsors – and we can sense great enthusiasm in Shanghai. We want to build on this fantastic basis."



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## What are your own personal expectations of the inaugural tournament?

Wannieck: "The first time you stage anything you are obviously always full of anticipation as to whether all the plans and targets can be implemented successfully and whether they will be well received by the visitors. The BMW Masters is of great strategic importance to the company in one of our largest markets. With this in mind, there are great expectations of the inaugural tournament. However, we have many years of experience and expertise when it comes to organising exclusive golf events, so I am confident we will meet these expectations."

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## **BMW and golf – the “Global Golf Player”.**

BMW first became involved in professional golf almost a quarter of a century ago when the BMW International Open was held for the first time in 1989. In the meantime BMW is an integral part of the golfing world. As a strong and highly regarded partner it is the only brand represented on all the major tours. BMW organises another three tournaments on the European Tour. The BMW PGA Championship at the Wentworth Club near London is known as the “Players’ Flagship” and is one of the most prestigious tournaments on the tour. When the BMW Masters (Shanghai) makes its debut this year, it will feature one of the biggest prize purses on the European Tour and a world-class field. The BMW Italian Open, one of the most iconic national championships in Europe, and completes the family of European Tour events. On the PGA TOUR, the BMW Championship is one of the most important golf events in the USA and makes up the third leg of the four FedExCup Playoff tournaments. With the organisation of these professional tournaments, numerous “Official Car” partnerships and the global amateur tournament series, the BMW Golf Cup International, BMW is the most important global player in the world of golf. The relationship with the PGA European Tour, which BMW also supports as “Official Car” at the Ryder Cup, is particularly close. Professionals around the world regard BMW very highly as a golf partner. For example, Major winner Martin Kaymer represents the company as BMW brand ambassador.



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