

BMW Masters 2012



presented by Lake Malaren Golf Club Shanghai

Media Information
23rd April 2012

BMW Masters: Stage set for golf champions.

From October 2012, Shanghai will host a new world-class tournament. World number one McIlroy, set to play for a prize purse of seven million dollars. British Open Champion, Clarke, hits symbolic first ball.

Beijing. As of this season, BMW will present the golfing world with another highlight – the BMW Masters. Led by world number one Rory McIlroy, the sport's top stars will assemble at Shanghai's Lake Malaren Golf Club from 25th to 28th October, where they will fight it out for a share of the seven million dollar prize purse. Dr. Ian Robertson, Member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, Marketing and Sales, made the announcement at the Beijing Auto Show on Monday afternoon.

"As the name indicates, the BMW Masters will play a particularly significant role in BMW's commitment to the sport as a 'Global Golf Player'," said Robertson, introducing the concept of the tournament. "The BMW Masters is another highlight in our sustainable global golf strategy. China is a key market for BMW and golf is the ideal stage, on which to present our claim of dynamics and precision. We are delighted to be able to offer our customers and spectators from throughout Asia a top-class event – both in terms of the sport on offer and the overall visitor experience."

The BMW Masters will take its place on the European Tour calendar and, after the Majors, World Golf Championships and the season finale in Dubai, will be the most lucrative event on the Tour. The exclusive field will consist of about 78 players, the majority of whom feature in the top 100 in the world ranking list. The remaining start places will be taken four players invited directly by the organisers and a 14-man contingent from the Chinese Golf Association (CGA), with whom BMW is cooperating on the organisation of the tournament.

"I am already looking forward to teeing off at the new tournament," said McIlroy. The world number one is not only the reigning US Open Champion, but also won last year's Lake Malaren Shanghai Masters, which is now being replaced by the BMW Masters. "Thanks to the involvement of BMW, the tournament will now be one of the very best events in the world. That obviously makes it all the more exciting to defend my title there."

BMW Masters 2012



presented by **Lake Malaren Golf Club Shanghai**

Reigning British Open Champion Darren Clarke symbolically teed off from the BMW stand using an explosive golden ball. McIlroy's fellow Northern Irishman Clarke was the last man to win the BMW Asian Open in 2008. As such he will, to a certain degree, line up as defending champion in Lake Malaren.

Clarke recalled his emotional success back in 2008. "I still have very vivid memories of what was a great tournament," said the 43 year old Major Champion, who was a two-time winner in the 2011 season. Clarke's past history at the event means he is particularly pleased to see BMW returning to China. "I cannot praise the BMW's commitment to golf highly enough. For years BMW has demonstrated around the world just how close the game is to the brand's heart. Golf would be in a far worse state without the involvement of BMW. We professionals all really appreciate what the company is doing for the game."

As far back as the start of the millennium, BMW was one of the first brands in the world to promote and encourage the growing enthusiasm for the sport in Asia. In 2001 the company responded to the growth in popularity by organising a professional tournament: the BMW Asian Open, which was also held in Shanghai. After 2008, BMW temporarily focussed its commitment to Asian golf on other areas, including many "Official Car" sponsorships.

George O'Grady, Chief Executive of the European Tour, also took to what was for him a rather unusual platform – the Beijing Auto Show – to express his delight at the new BMW commitment. He said: "We are proud of many partnerships we enjoy across the world of golf, but one of the most enduring is with BMW for whom this tournament represents the third title sponsorship on The European Tour in 2012, and the 45th in total over the past 23 years since the first BMW International Open in Munich in 1989.

"BMW is renowned for its commitment to innovation and exceptional standards of excellence in promoting professional golf tournaments, and the visit to Lake Malaren Golf Club in Shanghai in October will once again underline that fact. Additionally, the European Tour has always been made to feel so welcome by the China Golf Association with whom we also have a strong committed partnership."

Dr. Ian Robertson, George O'Grady, Zhang Xiao-ning and Shi Jian, Chairman of SRE Group, parent company of Lake Malaren Golf Club Shanghai, were greeted by a round of applause as they signed the tournament contract, thus finalising the long-term agreement between BMW, the European Tour and the CGA.

BMW Masters 2012



presented by Lake Malaren Golf Club Shanghai

Zhang Xiao-ning thanked BMW for its involvements in all areas. "We admire the outstanding vision and shrewd market investment of BMW Group. The BMW Masters will play a positive role in promoting the popularization and development of the world and China golf games, as well as taking the competitiveness of golf to a new level. At the same time, I hope all the contestants to present the charisma of golf for the fans giving their best performances."

The BMW Masters will be played on a course designed by golfing legend Jack Nicklaus, which received rave reviews when it was used for a major tournament for the first time last year.

As well as the BMW Masters, BMW's long-term commitment to the European Tour also includes the role of organiser at the series' flagship event, the BMW PGA Championship, and the BMW International Open. In the USA, BMW stages one of the most important play-off tournaments on the PGA TOUR, in the form of the BMW Championship. In addition, the company also supports the sport of golf with over 20 "Official Car" partnerships, its involvement in the Ryder Cup, and the organisation of the world's largest amateur series – the BMW Golf Cup International.

For media enquiries please contact:

BMW Group
Corporate Communications/BMW Sports Communications
Nicole Stempinsky
80788 München
Tel. +49-89-382-51584
Fax: +49-89-382-28567
mailto: Nicole.Stempinsky@bmw.de
www.press.bmwgroup-sport.com