

BMW MASTERS 2012.

presented by Lake Malaren Golf Club Shanghai



Press Information

28th October 2012

BMW Masters: China set for golf boom.

Rio 2016 and world-class events like the BMW Masters give golf a boost in the land of the dragon.

Shanghai. For many years, China has been regarded as a sleeping giant on the golf scene. With a population of over 1.4 billion, it has produced a surprisingly small number of top-class professionals and has only a fraction of the number of golf courses per head possessed by golf's leading nations like the USA and the UK. But that is set to change. The sport is showing clear signs of growth in China, which is also visible at the current BMW Masters at Lake Malaren Golf Club Shanghai. The catalyst behind the projected boom could be the Olympic Games.

On 13th August 2009, the International Olympic Committee's executive board proposed the inclusion of golf in the Olympic Games, a decision approved by the full membership on 9th October that year. The Olympics are held in remarkably high esteem in China, as proven by the huge haul of medals that saw the hosts of the 2008 games once again top the medals table at London 2012. The proposed format – the top 15 players in the International Golf Federation rankings (regardless of nationality) and another 45 players from countries with less than two representatives in the top 15 – will surely be seen by the Chinese Olympic Committee as an opportunity to add to this impressive tally. As such, the introduction of golf to the Olympic schedule has transformed golf's status in the land of the dragon from that of a hobby and recreational activity to a 'proper' sport. ZHANG Xiaoning (Director of Multi-Ball Games Administrative Centre of General Administration of Sport, Deputy Chairman & Secretary General of China Golf Association) said: "The top class playing field in the BMW Masters will help promote the development of golf in China and attract more young athletes to pursue the sport."

Evidence of the emergence of China on the international scene came back in June 2012, when Andy Zhang (CHN) became the youngest player to compete in the U.S. Open at just 14. This change in attitude and the growing popularity of the sport has also been picked up on by the European Tour, BMW and the world's leading players, as shown by the star-studded field at this week's inaugural BMW Masters. China's most successful golf pro, Liang Wen Chong said: "Golf will be a lot more popular in China and the China Golf Association will put a lot more effort trying to train the players. Whoever represents China at golf in the 2016 Olympic Games will hopefully get a good result. Personally, I will just play my tournaments and hopefully have good results before 2016 – and it would be an honour for me to represent my country at the 2016 Olympic



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Games in Rio.” One major factor in the training of China’s new generation of stars is the China Golf Association’s “Nanshan International Golf Training Center”, which opened in May of this year and boasts a driving range, state-of-the-art gym and two top-class golf courses.

European Ryder Cup hero Nicolas Colsaerts from Belgium has a special connection to the Olympics and cannot wait to go for gold in Brazil 2016. “I have got a bit of Olympic history in my family, as my great grandfather successfully competed for Belgium at water polo in the 1920s. So it would mean a lot to me to go there as well. You don’t really get a lot of chance in our sport to represent your country. I would love to do it, also because of the unique atmosphere in the Olympic village and all the other things that come along with such great event.”

There are those who believe that the world’s top golfers may shun the Olympics, opting rather to play in the lucrative tournaments in Europe and the USA. However, the desire of huge stars like Roger Federer or the NBA basketball “Dream Team” to compete at the prestigious event pours scorn on this theory. And this is not an opinion shared by the players themselves. BMW Brand Ambassador Martin Kaymer: “The Olympics are my biggest target of all over the coming years. It just doesn’t get any better than that,” said the former world number one. “I will prepare meticulously for it, to give myself every chance of winning the very first title.”

World number five Justin Rose added: “Taking part in the Olympics would be an absolute highlight in my career. Just look at Andy Murray in tennis. For him to win the gold medal in London was a huge achievement. This was probably his career-defining achievement to date. And the same goes for a guy like me. Representing your country is a great thing at any level.”

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If you have any questions, please contact:

BMW Sport Communications

Nicole Stempinsky, Mobile: +49 151 174 177 25, E-mail: Nicole.Stempinsky@bmw.de,

Internet: www.bmw-golfsport.com



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BMW and golf – the “global golf player”.

BMW first became involved in professional golf when the BMW International Open was held for the first time in 1989. In the meantime, BMW has become a strong, highly respected, integral partner of the golfing world and 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 funds on the European Tour and a world-class field. The BMW Italian Open, one of the most iconic national championships in Europe, completes the family of European Tour events. On the PGA TOUR, the BMW Championship is one of the most important golfing 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 by providing the “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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