



## **World-class golf swings into city with World City Championship presented by Hong Kong Golf Club**

**[Hong Kong, 21 March 2023]:** After three years away from the international golfing calendar, Hong Kong returns with the World City Championship presented by Hong Kong Golf Club (WCC), which will focus a global spotlight on the state of the game locally – and in Asia – as the best players from the region - and its rising stars - are set to take on Fanling from 23-26 March 2023.

As well as the tournament headliners – European legends Ian Poulter and Henrik Stenson – this week’s WCC field features well-established Asian stars in Order of Merit winners Kiradech Aphibarnrat, Thailand’s first player on The PGA Tour, his compatriot Jazz Janewattanond, and a pair of former Hong Kong Open winners from Australia in Wade Ormsby and Scott Hend.

There are also the region’s promising young talents, including freshly-minted Asian Tour card-carrying Hong Kong professionals Taichi Kho and Matthew Cheung, and decorated amateurs Ratchanon “TK” Chantanuwat of Thailand, already a winner on the Asian Tour, and China’s Ding Wenyi, the current US Junior Amateur champion.

Kho, who today was announced as an official Hong Kong Golf Club ambassador, has got his pro career off to a solid start since making the switch from the amateur ranks last month, having figured prominently at the recent International Series Thailand before finishing in a tie for 34th, as well as ending last week’s DGC Open in a tie for 59th.

The 46-year-old Stenson’s connections with the region date back more than 20 years as across the course of his career the Swede has been a global ambassador for the sport. But The WCC will be his first taste of the game, Hong Kong Golf Club-style, and the 2016 Open champion arrives keen to check up on developments in Asia.

“We’ve seen the growth, we’ve seen the improvement, and you see it on every Tour around the world - you see names popping up, strong players coming out of Asia,” said Stenson. “You see the amateurs getting the opportunity to play at Augusta and [talent has] just been kind of drip feeding from Asia for a long, long time.”

The 47-year-old Poulter has long been a Fanling fixture and wrote his name in the history books with a record-setting 22-under-par final score when he captured the Hong Kong Open in 2010. Like Stenson, the Englishman has throughout his career helped champion the game across Asia – while continuing to be one of the most popular visitors among golf fans everywhere he goes.

“In Hong Kong there has always been fantastic support,” said Poulter. “The local level of support has always been fantastic. I’m definitely excited about the opportunity to come back. Every time we play in Asia, we see new, incredible golf talent coming through. So I’m expecting to see some youngsters. I’m old enough to be their father - but hopefully I’m older and wiser enough to still keep them at bay for a bit longer.”

As well as the US\$1 million purse that’s up for grabs, the WCC offers players a chance to play themselves into the 151<sup>st</sup> Open Championship, which will be staged at Royal Liverpool Golf Club in



July, as it has been selected as one of the three Asian tournaments that make up The R&A's Open Qualifying Series (OQS).

"This is a big thing for the Asian Tour, for Hong Kong to have," said Poulter. We can go there, we can play a golf course I know and hopefully we can go and qualify for the Open Championship at the same time."

For Stenson, a trip out to the historic New Territories layout has long been on the agenda. Finally he gets to fulfill a desire to check the Hong Kong Golf Club out for himself.

"When I'm thinking about golf in Asia, there's a couple of courses that come to mind and, obviously, Hong Kong and Fanling is one of them," said the Swede. "I'm really looking forward to coming in there and also to seeing some of the local talent.

At the press conference following a special ferry tour of the city's magnificent harbour, Hong Kong Golf Club Captain Andy Kwok welcomed the players and the return of international golf to the city:

"The Club is thrilled to welcome back world-class golfers and spectators to the fairways of Fanling after such a long break. There has been really great interest in the tournament, which is reflected in the extremely large number of fans who have already registered for tickets, so this is all very encouraging. We have a wonderful field of competitors, including a great mix of household names and really talented local players, and many fun-filled, off-course activities for spectators to enjoy, so we are all set for four days of fantastic action," said Mr Kwok.

It is the start of an active season of international competition at Fanling. In addition to hosting the inaugural WCC, the Club will also stage the Aramco Team Series Hong Kong, a premier Ladies European Tour event, in October, whilst the 62<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Hong Kong Open, Hong Kong's oldest professional sporting event, makes a welcome return in November.

The World City Championship presented by Hong Kong Golf Club is proud of being an "M" Mark event that helps enhance the image of Hong Kong as Asia's sports events capital. The "M" Mark awarded by the Major Sports Events Committee, symbolising an intense, spectacular and signature event in the territory sports calendar.

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