

Dubai Duty Free Irish Open to be played at Galgorm Castle Golf Club



Originally scheduled to take place at Mount Juliet Estate in County Kilkenny in May and postponed due to coronavirus, the DDF Irish Open will now place in Northern Ireland, marking a new chapter in the tournament's history

The European Tour announced the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open will be played in Northern Ireland for the fourth time since 2012, when the Galgorm Castle Golf Club hosts this year's tournament from September 24-27. The tournament was originally scheduled to take place at Mount Juliet Estate in County Kilkenny from May 28-31. However, it was postponed on March 30 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

With the event moving to the date vacated by the rescheduling of the 2020 Ryder Cup to 2021, it will be the first time the County Antrim venue will host the island of Ireland's national Open.

With three-time major champion, Padraig Harrington, captaining Europe in the contest at Whistling Straits, the 2020 Ryder Cup would have been a celebration of Irish Golf. While this will happen next September, the 2020 Dubai Duty Free Irish Open at Galgorm will mark a new chapter in the tournament's history.

With quarantine restrictions for travelers into the Republic of Ireland ongoing and the ban on mass gatherings still in place, the European Tour made the decision to move the tournament to Northern Ireland. As a result, the tournament will be subject to similar guidelines as the current "UK Swing" events such as being played behind closed doors. Providing all health guidelines in place at that time can be met, planning remains ongoing for the competition to return to Mount Juliet in 2021.

Following the changes of the date and venue, the 2020 Dubai Duty Free Irish Open will have a prize fund of €1.25 million and therefore will not be part of the Rolex Series. In due course, the European

Tour will announce a full plan for the Rolex Series.

Considering the modification, the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open will continue to drive Ireland's status as a future Ryder Cup host country, the synergy even stronger given the fact that now, the centenary of The Ryder Cup and the centenary of the Irish Open both fall in 2027.

"The Dubai Duty Free Irish Open is an integral part of the European Tour's schedule and despite the obvious challenges of staging any event in the current circumstances, we felt it was important to continue with the tournament providing we could do so safely.

We did that, first and foremost with the support of Colm McLoughlin and everyone involved with our title sponsor Dubai Duty Free who once again showed commitment and understanding of the current global situation and proved what a wonderful partner of the European Tour they are. We also did it with the support of the Northern Ireland Executive who deserve our sincere thanks.

With the ongoing restrictions in the Republic of Ireland, we opted to move the tournament to Northern Ireland and are extremely grateful to Gary Henry and everyone at Galgorm Castle Golf Club for stepping up to host us.

I also want to thank Damien Gaffney and everyone at Mount Juliet, our original venue. Everyone at the Kilkenny course was ready to host the tournament this year until circumstances outside their control made that an impossibility. Hopefully, things will be different next year to allow us to return" says Keith Pelley, Chief Executive of European Tour.

"We have been working closely with the European Tour over the past several months to find a way of staging the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open this year. The priority of course has been to stage an event that strictly follows all government protocols in light of Covid-19 and to ensure the safety of players and all those involved in the event.

We are pleased that the Galgorm Castle Golf Club in County Antrim has been selected as a suitable venue, with the Galgorm Spa & Golf Resort as the official accommodation. Without a doubt, the tournament will be different this year but we think that the players and fans are going to enjoy this return to world-class golf on the Island of Ireland," comments Colm McLoughlin, Executive Vice Chairman and CEO of Dubai Duty Free.

"We are delighted to be the host venue for the 2020 Dubai Duty Free Irish Open. This outstanding tournament is steeped in history and we look forward to welcoming some of the best players in the world to Galgorm Castle Golf Club.

To host the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open is an historic moment and wonderful opportunity to showcase the world-class facilities at Galgorm and demonstrates that Northern Ireland is open for business. The Northern Ireland Open, supported by The R&A on the European Challenge Tour will also be played at Galgorm at the start of September and so the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open will be another welcome boost to the local economy," adds Gary Henry, Managing Director of Galgorm Castle Golf Club.

Since 2013, Galgorm Castle Golf Club has hosted the Northern Ireland Open on the European Challenge Tour including last year's innovative tournament - the ISPS Handa World Invitational Men|Women, which was presented by Modest! Golf Management and featured both a men's and women's competition.

Despite hosting the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open from September 24-27, the County Antrim venue will continue its involvement with the Challenge Tour, by also hosting the Northern Ireland Open hosted by The R&A from September 3-6.

The Dubai Duty Free Irish Open at Galgorm Castle Golf Club is the fourth time the tournament has been played in Northern Ireland since 2012, when Royal Portrush became the first course north of the Irish border to host the tournament since 1953.