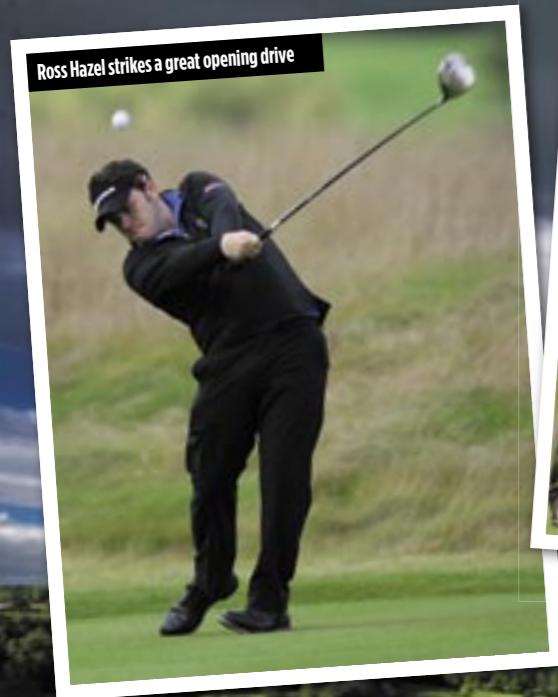


 Volkswagen Masters

Pot of gold: the 18th on the Ryder Cup Course



Champion of champions

Thirty regional finalists from all over the country gathered at the Celtic Manor Resort for the grand finale of the UK Volkswagen Masters 2007. With three places at the World Final in South Africa at stake, every competitor gave it their all.

After four months and 10 Regional Finals, the UK Volkswagen Masters 2007 champions were finally crowned at the Celtic Manor Resort in Wales. The competing finalists were given a glorious opportunity to play the brand new Ryder Cup Course, which will host the great event in 2010.


Ten qualifiers in each of three categories fought it out for a trip to the Arabella Resort in

South Africa for the World Final. There was evidence of nervous excitement everywhere as players knew they could be one round away from the trip of a lifetime. Finalists arrived from qualifying courses as varied as Woodhall Spa, Gullane and London Golf Club. And champions had qualified in weather conditions that included glorious sunshine at Western Gailes and horrendous storms at Little Aston.

This is the first time in history a course has been designed specifically for the Ryder Cup and with an abundance of risk-reward holes and some fantastic vantage points, there is no doubt that this will prove a fantastic setting for Europe and the USA to battle it out. As the Volkswagen Masters Final proved, the finishing holes promise to deliver plenty of drama when the Ryder Cup arrives. >>

The 15th: defines the risk-reward concept



 To see more images of the UK Final visit www.golf-monthly.co.uk/gallery

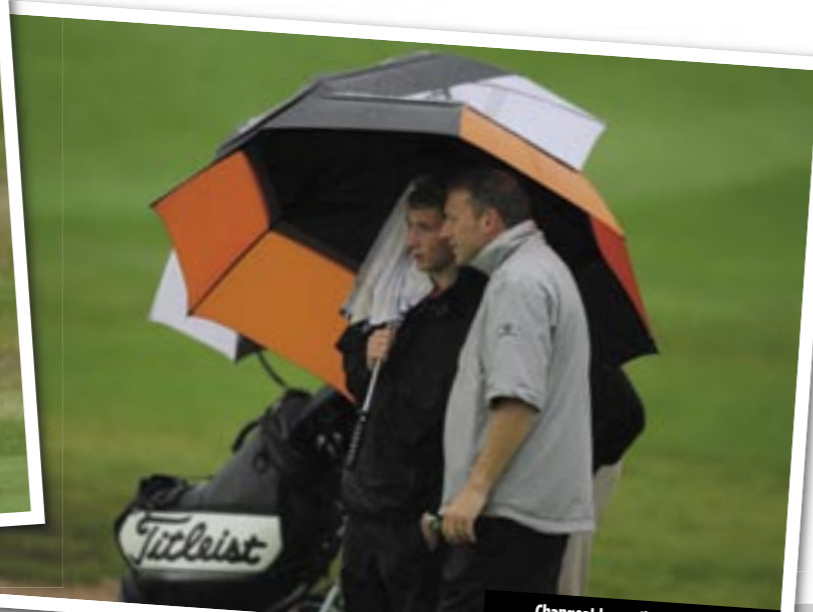
Daniel Johnson, Ross Hazel and Sam Foster celebrate with their tickets to South Africa



Group C winner Daniel Johnson strikes a pose



“I don’t think it has really sunk in yet, this is one of the very best experiences I have ever had”



Changeable conditions made it tough

The Volkswagen Masters Final began with a practice round on the brand new course and the conditions meant that competitors experienced it at its most difficult. Wind and rain made the course play its full 7,008 yards from the white tees and it was certainly set up to suit the longer hitters in the field. Players were then treated to an impressive show by 2005 World Golf Trick Shot champion Paul Barrington, followed by most as they prepared for the drama of the final the following day. Finalists and their guests stayed at the impressive, five-star Celtic Manor Resort Hotel and so did not have to leave the complex during their stay.

The morning of the final arrived and conditions had not improved. Wind and rain meant that the winners were going to have to battle to earn their place in the World Final. With water in play on nine holes and a tough crosswind, many competitors were forced to battle through the elements until the sunshine arrived during the closing stages.

It was Sam Foster from Coventry and Hearsal Golf Club who coped with conditions best in Group A. The +1 handicapper displayed some great ballstriking to shoot a 73 gross, taking the title by three from St Pierre

member John Moody. Foster, an Exeter University player, has represented England at University level, and began the day as one of the favourites. “Tee to green I was very solid today, I didn’t hole many putts but I knew that level par wouldn’t be far away and so made that my aim,” said Foster.

Ross Hazel was victorious in Group B and provided some serious drama on his way to a nett 75. The Neath Golf Club member had sensed he was in contention standing on the 18th tee but found sand with his tee-shot on the intimidating par 5 and took two to get out. He was then faced with the difficult decision of whether to lay-up short of the water hazard or take on the sloping green.

The 18-handicapper decided to attack the green but saw his ball flying towards the hazard. Disheartened, he wandered down to drop a ball, only to be informed by a photographer that his ball had skimmed across the water and reached dry land on the other side. The relieved Welshman made a 7 to take the victory and seal his ticket to South Africa. “I’m shocked and so excited, I can’t believe I have won,” said Hazel.

Group C was won by a delighted Daniel Johnson, who fought through the tough

conditions to post 28 Stableford points. The Seacroft Golf Club member had only begun playing the game again six months before he won his Regional Final at Woodhall Spa. In the end he came through to win the UK Final by just a point from Pat Smithie from Woburn. Pat had put herself into a great position but could only pick up one point in the last four holes to just miss out. Johnson could not believe he had won, having struggled with his game recently, until his girlfriend’s father gave him some pointers.

“I don’t think it has sunk in yet, this is one of the best experiences I have ever had,” he said.

Competitors had to wait for the evening’s gala dinner before the winners were finally announced. A 10-minute film of the day’s action was also shown on a big screen, much to the enjoyment of everyone involved.

The three finalists will meet again in November, when they head to South Africa to compete with other winners from around the world. They will stay at the luxury Arabella Resort, situated an hour from Cape Town. Competitors will enjoy the city’s stunning sights and the surrounding area before the battle begins to find the Volkswagen Masters world champions for 2007.