

HISTORIC 30th TOYOTA JUNIOR GOLF WORLD CUP TO TEE OFF

Future stars look to follow major champs; Japan defends double titles

TOYOTA CITY, Japan (June 17, 2024) — Eleven years ago, a teenage Scottie Scheffler was part of a United States quartet that placed 11 shots behind Venezuela's boys at the Toyota Junior Golf World Cup Supported by Japan Airlines.

These days, Scheffler is the reigning Masters champion — owner of two green jackets in all — and unchallenged No. 1 in the world rankings.

Viktor Hovland made three appearances for Norway, helping contribute to a 2014 team title. He later won the U.S. Amateur, reached No. 1 in the world amateur rankings and now holds the FedExCup crown.

Rose Zhang shared medalist honors at the 2019 edition, four years before winning the Augusta National Women's Amateur and becoming the first woman in 71 years to win an LPGA event in her professional debut.

On Tuesday, the Toyota Junior Golf World Cup reaches a milestone — the start of its 30th edition, as a new generation of talent sets out in the path of Scheffler, Hovland, Zhang, nine other major champions and dozens of current tour professionals.

"It's just a really cool opportunity," said Jasmine Koo, low amateur at the LPGA's Chevron Championship who returns this week for another shot at a title that eluded her and her United States teammates in last year's thrilling duel against host Japan.

In all, 63 golfers — nine girls' teams and 12 on the boys' side — tee off Tuesday at Chukyo Golf Club outside Nagoya. Japan is defending champion in both competitions, as both teams went wire-to-wire in last year's 72-hole competition.

"Those teams had very impressive players, and I look up to them," said Mamika Shinchi, the Australian Women's Amateur titleholder who will lead Japan's girls this week. "It is an honor to be representing Japan at this event."

The format is similar to U.S. college golf, with each team counting the two best scores among its three players each day. It marks a change for the boys' competition, which previously counted three best scores among four.

"It's definitely going to be a little different this year," said Billy Davis, also back for Team USA after helping last year's quartet to a share of third place while also taking a share of third individually. "I think we're stronger than last year's team."

Initially conceived in 1990 and first played in 1992, the Toyota Junior Golf World Cup was created to serve as a global showcase for the best junior golf to offer.

"This tournament has grown over the years into fulfilling that vision," said William Kerdyk, co-founder and chairman of the tournament committee. "It is a distinct honor to represent your country in international competition, and each of our players should be commended."

The list of major champions who are Toyota Junior Golf World Cup alumni includes each of the past four Masters winners — Scheffler (twice), Jon Rahm and Hideki Matsuyama.

Others include Justin Rose, a onetime U.S. Open champion and Olympic gold medalist, plus Cameron Smith (2022 Open Championship), Henrik Stenson (2013 Open Championship), Charl Schwartzel (2011 Masters) and Louis Oosthuizen (2010 Open Championship).

Though the girls' division, launched in 2014, still seeks its first major champion, participants did capture three consecutive the Augusta National Women's Amateurs — Tsubasa Kajitani (2021), Anna Davis (2022) and Zhang.

Davis was part of Team USA alongside Koo in last year's showdown, which saw a new girls' scoring record broken each day of the tournament. Japan wound up winning by two strokes as both teams shattered the previous 72-hole scoring mark.

"There was so much momentum going on," recalled Koo, who holds the 36-hole scoring mark after opening 66-66 last year.

"I was playing amazing, then you'd see my teammates — Anna shot 7-under on the second day, and Katie (Li)

was super deep too. Our team as a whole did so well ... and we fell short of (Japan) even though we played 10-out-of-10 golf.”

Koo won the Women’s Western Amateur later that summer, then placed fourth at this year’s ANWA and 13th at the Chevron Championship. Among her teammates this year is Nikki Oh, who recently took sixth in the junior event held alongside the LPGA’s Mizuho Americas Open.

Oh also is the daughter of Ted Oh, who represented Team USA three times in the Toyota Junior Golf World Cup’s early years.

Japan, meantime, seeks a fourth title in the past five editions. Shinchu nearly added the Japan Women’s Amateur title to her Australian crown, placing second just two weeks ago. Teammate Aina Fujimoto, meantime, was third in Australia.

Between them was Amelia Harris, who heads Australia’s efforts this week alongside Sarah Hammett, runner-up at the Queen Sirikit Cup. Thailand, making its first Junior World Cup appearance, could be a factor led by Pimpisa Rubrong.

The boys’ division should be a little more wide open, with significant turnover from last year. Billy Davis will be joined by a pair of big hitters in Jackson Byrd, son of PGA Tour mainstay Jonathan Byrd, and William Jennings. Colombia, making its first boys’ appearance since 2019, also could make an impact as the only roster with three players among the top 500 of the World Amateur Golf Ranking. They’re led by South American Junior champion Samuel Gonzalez, who has eight top-10 finishes in junior events this year.

“We have a strong team,” Gonzalez said. “All the players here have really great skills, but I think the three of us play a lot of really good golf.”

Live scoring will be provided throughout the event by Golfstat, accessible online at Golfstat.com.