

A SUMMER OF HOT GOLF

By Karen Harding

Never before have so many topline players headed to our shores to play over several events and across several states. Whether your interest be men's, women's, senior or amateur events, there is enough on offer over the Australasian summer season to please anyone and everyone.

It all kicked off last weekend at Lake Karrinyup in Perth with the ISPS Handa Australian Senior Open, always an excellent opportunity to see many of yesterday's great players in action.

This week it's over to The Lakes in Sydney for the Emirates Australian Open. Defending champion and 2006 U.S. Open winner Geoff Ogilvy will line up against a stellar field that includes Adam Scott, Jason Day, Robert Allenby, Aaron Baddeley, Matt Kuchar, Dustin Johnson, Bill Haas, Nick Watney, Hunter Mahan, Bubba Watson and Presidents Cup captains Greg Norman and Fred Couples. Oh, and a guy named Tiger Woods will be there too. Woods hasn't played this event since he tied for fifth in 1996 and is on record as saying he would like to get his name on the Stonehaven Cup, to go with the 14 majors he owns.

Turning up the heat, we go down to Royal Melbourne the following week for the Presidents Cup, where the International team will try to repeat its lone win against the U.S., at the 1998 Cup also at Royal Melbourne. Back then, the Americans did not handle the heat, Melbourne's northerlies, Mackenzie's bunkers or the opposition. This time they come prepared.

The Australian PGA Championship at the Hyatt Regency Coolom in Queensland is next up. The PGA has a proud history and this year boasts drawcards Y.E. Yang and current British Open champion and crowd favourite Darren Clarke, as well as Norman, Day and Watson. Clarke is hoping to become the first Irishman to win while Yang, who famously took the 2009 U.S. PGA Championship over Woods, will be looking to add a PGA trophy of a different kind to his cabinet.

A short break before it's back to the Victoria Golf Club in Melbourne for the J B Were Masters, won last year in exciting fashion by hometown favourite Stuart Appleby over a couple of Aussies and a fast finishing Woods, whose last six holes alone justified his appearance fee. World number one Luke Donald and the colourful and charismatic Ian Poulter will be joined by Italian teenage sensation Matteo Manassero, who earlier this year became the youngest winner on the European Tour, aged just 17.

In early January, it's time to re-visit Royal Melbourne for the Master of the Amateurs. This is a World Amateur Golf Ranking Counting Event as well as a national ranking event and showcases many of the best amateurs in world golf. Previous winners include Brendan Jones, Jason Day and Mark Anderson, who knocked off Rickie Fowler in 2009. An event not to be missed, for the opportunity to see the stars of the future.

The season winds up in fine style with the ISPS Handa Women's Australian Open. World number one Yani Tseng is on a hat-trick for this event, having won the last two at Commonwealth. In 2012 the event moves to Royal Melbourne, the first time the composite course will host a women's

professional tournament and giving our iconic course the distinction of hosting each of the best men's, women's and amateurs' event on the calendar. Since 2000 the Open has been co-sanctioned with the Ladies European Tour, giving it a crack field each year. In 2012, 15 of the world's top 20 players will compete for a \$A1.05 million purse. Being co-sanctioned with the LPGA from next year, while still retaining a strong European Tour presence, cements its standing as the premier golfing event over the Australasian summer. It will be a fantastic climax to a summer of very hot golf.