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Junior golf tour hits St. Andrew?s this weekend

By Jake Courtepatte

An expansion into the Greater Toronto Area is bringing the best junior golfers nationwide to Aurora as part of the Maple Leaf Junior Golf Tour.

The two-day event will have golfers up to 23-years old compete at St Andrew's Golf and Country Club over Saturday and Sunday, part of a handful of tournaments added to this year's roster dubbed the ?GTA series.?

The move comes thanks to the recruitment of former Golf Canada men's Head Coach Henry Brunton as tournament director for the region, a PGA of Canada Masters Professional and the only Canadian listed among GOLF Magazine's Top 100 Teachers in America.

?It's great news for junior golfers and for the MJT that a PGA professional of the caliber of Henry Brunton has come on board to help expand the program in the province,? said MJT Tournament Director Dave Smallwood. ?We are thrilled to have his experience contribute to the quality of a program which is entering its twentieth season nationally.?

This weekend's tournament, the fifth-from-last on a grueling 60+ tournament schedule from March to October, will serve as the final stop in the GTA series and the first in tour history to reach York Region.

Sponsored by TaylorMade, hundreds of junior golfers are expected to converge on the 200-acre championship course in seven different divisions: Girls U15 and Girls 15-18, Peewee Boys (U13), Bantam Boys (13-14), Juvenile Boys (15-16), Junior Boys (17-18) as well as a Collegiate division for those individuals 19-23 years old.

Dubbing itself as ?The Road to College Golf?, the MJT is the number-one played junior golf tour in the nation. MJT alumni include top-rated players such as PGA Tour players Nick Taylor, Adam Hadwin and Roger Sloan, and LPGA Players Sue Kim, Samantha Richdale and Soo Bin Kim.

In addition, alumni include players on the Web.com Tour, PGA Tour Canada and Symetra Tour, all high-level stops in the professional golf circuit.

?We're run exclusively by PGA of Canada professionals,? said Russell Mackay, the operations manager of the MJT. ?We provide a path to develop young players for both the collegiate and professional level, while also fostering the importance of keeping the game fun.?

The Tour hosts its own National Championship in Phoenix, Arizona in November. In order to qualify, a golfer must compete in three season events, while divisional championships at this weekend's tournament all receive a direct exemption.

For more information on the Tour or to register for a tournament, visit www.maplejt.com.