

Junior links champions hosted at Magna Golf Club



By Jake Courtepatte

Before the best in the world at the senior level arrived to tee off at the Magna Golf Club this week, the top Canadian young guns were on hand at the course last weekend for the Future Links Junior Skills Challenge.

Thirty-one of the best golfers across four age groups took part in a driving, chipping, and putting competition to take home the annual prize, which included a champions package from sponsor Titleist.

The Future Links, driven by Acura Junior Skills experience is a celebration of skill development facilitated by coaches at over 140 facilities across Canada, said Adam Hunter, senior manager of junior programs at Golf Canada. We are extremely happy with another excellent National Event and want to thank our sponsors for helping make this dream a reality.

Notable among the eight winners were Liam McLaren of Georgina, who won the boys eight and under division, and Alissa Xu from Richmond Hill, who took home the girls 12 to 14 prize.

It's a busy few weeks for the Magna club, who this weekend host the CP Canadian Women's Open, one of the flagship tournaments of the LPGA. Reigning champion Brooke Henderson, from Smith's Falls, ON, is set to make a splash and draw large crowds of fans.

TSN golf analyst Bob Weeks, who will be in the Aurora area all week to cover the event, expects big things from one of the game's fastest rising stars.

It's a friendly golf course, and it

should benefit her," said Weeks from the course. "Especially off the tee. There's a lot of room to hit the golf ball; there's supposed to be some rain this week, but once the tournament starts the temperatures are going to be fairly nice. The conditions should be fairly calm."

Weeks called the field of competitors "world-class", citing names like Jin Young Ko, Lexi Thompson, and of course Henderson, who will be followed by what has become known as the "Brooke Brigade."

"I've got to think scores will be low," said Weeks. "When you've got a golf course in perfect condition, that's been watered to death, with mild, sunny temperatures, and generous fairways, I've got to think these scores are going to be low at this year's national championship. I can't see it not being a shootout, and hopefully Brooke's a part of it."

She won by four strokes in the 2018 iteration of the tournament in Regina, Saskatchewan, taking home over \$330,000 for her efforts and the hearts of those Canadians she had not already stole.

"She proved last year that she could handle the pressure," said Weeks. "She's the face of golf in the country, and now the face of the tournament. Who knows, maybe she can defend, or at least get herself in the mix and give herself a chance to defend."

Already the most successful Canadian golfer ever with nine career victories at the age of 21, all eyes will be on Henderson when she takes to Magna this week.

"To be that young, and that good, is tough," said Weeks. "But she's so evolved in terms of maturity."

Henderson is one of fifteen Canadians to take part in the tournament, including Lorie Kane, who is making her record-setting 29th appearance.