



The Road to MKO Success

Since 2019 when the Magical Kenya Open became part of the European Tour circuit (now DP World Tour), this year's tournament had the highest number of Kenyans represented. 13 Golf pros and 5 Amateurs teed it up at Muthaiga Golf Club on Thursday 20th February. While none of them played over the weekend, we applaud their gallant efforts, fighting it out with some of the world's best golfers.

15-year-old Shashwat Harish was among the key highlights from the just concluded event. Of the 18 Kenyans he finished second, tied at +4 with National team captain John Lejirma. Notably, on Saturday 22nd February, the Magical Kenya Open featured a unique competition within the competition; *Beat the Pro challenge* in which 20 juniors competed against the pros in getting the ball closest to the hole on the signature 13th hole. Three of them, Kanana Muthomi, Kevin Anyien and Mitansh Thacker managed to do so successfully and through the kind support of Absa Bank, earned themselves KES. 50,000 each in their bank accounts.

Jacques Kruyswijk the winner of the 2025 MKO acknowledged the presence and enthusiasm of the junior players throughout the tournament. These up-and-coming players are a testament to the long-term efforts of the Kenya Golf Union through the Junior Golf Foundation in enhancing inclusivity of the youngsters in the game. Kruyswijk won Kenya Shillings 55,000,000 from the total purse of Kenya Shillings 330,000,000.

In 2023, we began the High Performance Program (HPP) which is a pathway program designed to develop well-trained top notch golfers from a young age. The current cohort of players has 10 male and 8 female players between 12 and 24 years of age. Two of the three players that beat the Pro on Saturday are part of this program.

The players receive training from highly accomplished national and international coaches and are required to regularly record and submit specific statistics and data points on all aspects of their game. Besides the technical aspects, the HPP also focuses on psychological strength and preparedness, nutrition, strength and conditioning as well as general sporting discipline. This will result in developing complete sportspersons by the time the players get to the Pro ranks. Needless to say, getting them there will take time and as a golfing fraternity, we need to be

patient before we can reap the results of this initiative that is supported by the R&A and NCBA Bank. When the alumni of this program tee it up in future editions of MKO, the question will no longer be whether they will make the cut, the question will be how many of them can contend to win.

Before then, KGU and the Kenya Open Golf Limited (KOGL) will continue to provide our Pro golfers and elite amateurs the opportunities and preparation to perform at the optimal level at MKO and any other high-level tournaments they find themselves in. The Safari Tour will resume soon and we urge you to look out for the launch of the next season. In the meantime, let us continue applauding and encouraging our elite and pro golfers as they make progress towards getting better.

We welcome more corporate organizations to partner with the Union and the broader golfing fraternity in the golf development initiatives and tournaments that will expose our elite amateurs and Pros to intense competition. The future for Kenyan golf can only be brighter.

David Ndungu – Chairman, Kenya Golf Union

25th February 2025