Joburg Open: two in a row for Schwartzel

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A Johannesburg native, Schwartzel closed with a four-under-par 67, overcoming difficulties including two bogeys mid-round, to win the tournament going away. He was happy to please the home crowd, who greeted him with shouts of "Schwartzel – King of Joburg!"

"I love playing in Johannesburg," said the champion. "I grew up here and feel right at home, so I couldn't have asked for a better place to defend a title."

'The King of Joburg'

Executive Mayor Amos Masondo, who presented the 26-year-old with his trophy, proclaimed his joy at a native winning the tournament, saying: "I am very happy the King of Joburg has prevailed." After a four-round total 19-under 265, Schwartzel became the first South African to win back-to-back titles in the Joburg Open and the third to defend a title on the European Tour, following Ernie Els and Trevor Immelman.The final day began with Schwartzel tied with fellow South Africans Garth Mulroy, who finished second on 15-under after a 71, and Thomas Aiken, who was third on 14-under after a 72.

Short game

Despite the two being better off the tee, their short game could not match that of Schwartzel. The world number 32 played solidly on the front nine but struggled to hit a fairway on the back nine. However his superb short game ensured his title defence remained on track.

"I started off well, which was tough in the rain. In any tournament, when you're tied with someone, it's important to get off to a good start. My first nine holes put a lot of pressure on them, so I got my nose ahead. I just tried to find a way to stay ahead," he explained.

"I was swinging well until my bogey on the ninth. Then I lost my rhythm and couldn't get it back. I had to dig deep and really trust my short game. My mind was in the right place and that pulled me through."

Sixth European tour title

Sunday's Joburg Open win is Schwartzel's sixth European Tour title; it earned him a purse of €206 000 (about R1.9-million)."That's what you need to do to win. You won't always hit the ball well but you need to find a way to get the lowest score," he said.The Joburg Open is one of four events co-sanctioned by the Sunshine and European Tours, the others being the Alfred Dunhill Championship, the South African Open, and the Africa Open.

Race to Dubai rankings

As a result of his victory, Schwartzel has climbed to the summit of the European Tour's Race to Dubai rankings. With the four South African events starting the season, South Africans feature strongly. Schwartzel is first with earnings of €374 850, while Africa Open winner Louis Oosthuizen is in second spot on €227 700. Spain's Pablo Martin, who successfully defended his title at the Alfred Dunhill Championship occupies third spot on €160 786. South African Open winner Ernie Els is in fourth on €158 500. Thomas Aiken follows, fractionally behind, on €158 424. Retief Goosen is in sixth on €115 000.

LEADERBOARD

Charl Schwartzel (-19) 68, 61, 69, 67, 265
Garth Mulroy (-15) 65, 64, 69, 71, 269
Thomas Aiken (-14) 64, 66, 68, 72, 270
Jamie Elson (-13) 65, 64, 71, 71, 271
Jean-Baptiste Gonnet (-12) 67, 66, 67, 72, 272
Scott Jamieson (-11) 70, 66, 72, 65, 273
Tjaart van Der Walt (-10) 69, 68, 70, 67, 274
George Coetzee (-10) 70, 65, 70, 69, 274
James Kingston (-10) 68, 62, 73, 71, 274
Allen Versfeld (-10) 66, 66, 70, 72, 274
Oscar Floren (-10) 68, 68, 66, 72, 274

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