

2012 PRGA Championships, presented by Johnnie Walker



San Juan, Puerto Rico (Monday, June 4, 2012) - The best golfers on the Island are already well into their preparation for the **PRGA Championships**, Puerto Rico's de facto national championship tournament, which will be held this weekend on Trump International Golf Club in Río Grande.

This event draws together the most talented local golfers, including professionals like **Miguel Suárez**, **Max Alverio**, and defending champion **Rafael Campos**. But the most hard-fought competition might be among the elite Puerto Rican amateurs who will share the stage with the pros in the Championship Flight category, and who will surely put on a great show throughout their four rounds of play.

That was certainly the case last year, when **Robert Calvesbert** and **Erick Morales** had an exciting duel that the former eventually won, by just one stroke, to become the amateur champ. It's something neither player has forgotten, and that has both of them anxious to return to the tournament and walk up to the first tee in Río Grande.

"Coming back home and playing in the national championship, that's something you wait for all year," said Calvesbert, a Mississippi State student who competes in the NCAA. ***"And, as the defending champ, I've been waiting for it even more eagerly."***

Calvesbert, who hails from Guaynabo, said that he doesn't feel any extra pressure from being the defending champion; if anything, it's just the opposite. ***"I feel calmer because I know I've done it before and I can do it again. When you win and break the ice... you feel comfortable with winning and you get used to it."***

Morales, on the other hand, is surely getting tired of coming up short, not just in 2011 but on several

occasions. ***“I’ve always been really close to winning; I’ve been the runner-up a bunch of times. So I’m coming into this tournament with a big desire [to win],”*** he said.

Both golfers have been hard at work in their preparation for the PRGA Championship, though they’ve gone about it in very different ways. Calvesbert has had a packed tournament schedule that recently included the St. Kitts open; in fact, this weekend will be the first time he’s played in Puerto Rico since last year’s tournament. Meanwhile, Morales, who lives and works on the Island full-time, has added some intense gym work to his weekend practice rounds, in order to strengthen his conditioning before the event.

We’ll soon find out if all that preparation bears fruit on Trump International’s Championship Course, which will once again host the tournament after it was held last year at Palmas Athletic Club. The course will surely be a challenge for all the players, but especially for Calvesbert. ***“Personally, it’s going to be tough for me because I’ve had some bad experiences there,”*** he said, recalling a tournament a few years back in which a bad shot cost him a two-stroke lead in the final hole. ***“I really want to get that out of my system there,”*** he added.

Tough as it may be, Calvesbert said he’s excited about playing at Trump, which is considered by most the best golf course in Puerto Rico. Morales expressed much of the same: ***“I think it’s good because it’s the course where the Puerto Rico Open is played, and you can compare yourself to the Open players. There you can kind of see what you can do [compared with] what the (PGA) Tour players do.”***

The players will have another big reason to think about the Puerto Rico Open this weekend: as in previous years, the winner will receive an exemption to play at next year’s PGA Tour event. It’s an experience that both Calvesbert and Morales have had before, and that both are anxious to repeat. ***“In our sport, everyone dreams of that big stage that is the PGA Tour. It was an amazing experience that I can’t even put into words, and the incentive of winning that spot is a huge motivator,”*** said Morales.

To get it, one of them will have to beat, not just the other, but a whole field of distinguished amateurs that includes Alfred Colón, José Rodríguez, Frederick Thon and Sebastián Toro, among others. It’s a group that Morales described as ***“tremendous players.”*** Says Calvesbert: ***“We’re all good friends. We know each other’s games and we know that, at any given time, any one of us can come up with a really good score.”***

Golf fans will have a chance to follow these and many other talented Puerto Rican golfers starting Thursday, when the first round kicks off at 9:00 a.m.