

Busy July Bears Fruit for Puerto Rico's Junior Players



San Juan, Puerto Rico (July 30, 2012) - It's been a busy July for some of Puerto Rico's best young golfers, who have literally gone halfway across the world and back to participate in prestigious international tournaments. And, even when our boys and girls haven't been able to post their best scores or bring home a trophy, these events have provided invaluable experience to aid in their growth and development as people and as players.

The month started off with a bang for **our Junior National Team, which traveled to the Dominican Republic for the Caribbean Amateur Junior Golf Championships from July 3-5, and came back with their fifth consecutive title.** It was a dominant team performance spearheaded by the Island's top female players: Diana Vélez, Yudika Rodríguez and María Torres all won their respective age groups by wide margins.

From there, it was on to even bigger stages for several of that team's members. First, starting July 10, **Sebastián Toro and Andrew Báez went up against the very best 15 to 17-year-olds from around the globe at the Junior World Golf Championships,** held at the historic Torrey Pines course in California. While both of them unfortunately missed the cut by just a few strokes, their combined score allowed Puerto Rico to place 10th among the 28 countries represented at the tournament.

"The first two days weren't to my liking, but on the third day I finished up with a great round on a fantastic course that's very different from all the courses in Puerto Rico," said Báez about his final-round 74 which included four birdies. Báez also highlighted that he and Toro finished above México and Guatemala, two teams that had previously bested Puerto Rico in qualifiers for the Junior Golf World Cup in Japan.

Just a week later, elsewhere in California, **María Torres began play at the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship.** After a tough first round at +10, Torres rallied with a second-round 78, but still fell just one stroke short of making the cut. However, the 17-year-old will soon get another crack at many of her competitors: that same week, she signed a letter of intent to attend the University of Florida, where she will play on the women's golf team under Puerto Rican assistant coach Janice Olivencia and, surely, have a successful NCAA career.

While Torres battled against the best in the United States, **two of the youngest and most promising Junior National Team players were across the pond, competing at the Junior Open Championship hosted by the legendary R&A Golf Club.** Among the boys, 15-year-old Cabo Rojo native Daniel Cabán shot a solid 236 over three rounds and finished tied for 24th place. Meanwhile, 12-year-old Valeria Pacheco also impressed with a nett score of 149 over 36 holes, which earned her the North America & Caribbean regional prize for her performance.

Puerto Rico's young golfers finished up the month of July at **the renowned Optimist International Junior Golf Championships, where they faced off against top players from over thirty countries and forty U.S. states.** Toro (Boys 16-18), Daniel Báez (Boys 10-11), Gabirel Avilés (Boys 12-13), José Cardona (Boys 14-15), Alexandra Vélez (Girls 13-14) and Gabriela Santini (Girls 15-18) all teed it up at PGA National Resort in Florida. Even when they didn't have their best days on the course, all six of them proudly and ably represented the Island and earned valuable international experience by playing challenging courses against tough competitors.

The PRGA feels extremely proud of all the players' performances in recent weeks, and looks forward to much success from these and other junior players in the months and years to come.