

Sports

# Home winner at last as amazing Grace triumphs at Sun City

**‘This is really the one I wanted to win. I grew up watching it’**

SUN CITY: Branden Grace's record-breaking round of 62 at the British Open has been overtaken for his best memory of 2017. South Africa's Grace won the Nedbank Golf Challenge by one shot after finishing 11-under par yesterday, making a 30-foot birdie putt on No. 16 to edge in front and become the first home winner at Sun City in a decade.

Grace's long putt at the par 3 put him one ahead of playing partner Scott Jamieson and two clear of Victor Dubuisson, who was also part of the final group. Grace made pars on the last two, tapping in on No. 18 for a 66 and his eighth European Tour title, and first since January 2016.

The Nedbank Challenge holds major-like prestige for South Africans, and Sun City hadn't seen a local player win since Trevor Immelman in 2007. On clinching victory, Grace raised his arms, closed his eyes, and leaned back as he was sprayed with champagne by fellow South African players Louis Oosthuizen and Darren Fichardt.

There was also a big hug from Gary Player. "I think this was probably the loudest applause I've ever received coming up the 18th hole," said the 29-year-old Grace, who grew up a couple hours' drive away in Pretoria. "It's awesome. This is really the one I wanted to win. I grew up watching it."

Scotland's Jamieson, the overnight leader, finished second at 10 under after a final-round 70. France's

Dubuisson also finished with a 70 and a shot further back in third. There were repercussions for the European Tour's Race to Dubai title following the penultimate tournament of the season.

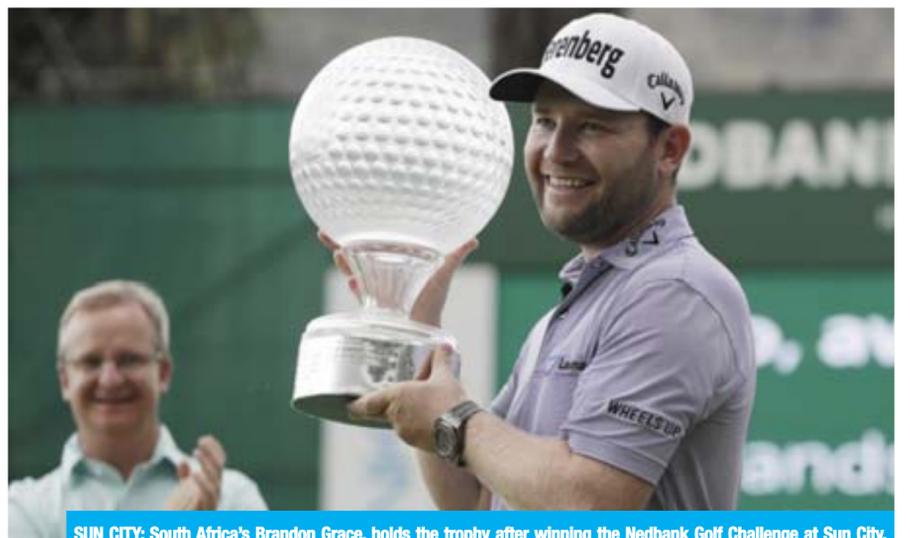
Race to Dubai leader Tommy Fleetwood carded a 1-under 71 to finish 3 under and in a tie for 10th at Sun City, where a win would have sealed the season title for the Englishman. It means the Race to Dubai will be a three-player race in Dubai at the season-ending World Tour Championship next weekend, when Fleetwood tries to hold on from Justin Rose and Sergio Garcia.

Despite becoming the first man to shoot a 62 at a major when he went 8 under at Royal Birkdale in July,

Grace said 2017 had been "a tough year." He had a tough day on Friday, too, carding 75. He was back in the frame with a third-round 68, but still started Sunday three shots behind Jamieson. Grace was sublime tee to green in the final round, hitting all 18 greens in regulation. He went bogey-free and made six birdies, but there could have been more if not for the putter letting him

down. That was until No. 16.

"I just knew I had to stay patient and had to take my chances when they came," he said. "I missed a couple of short ones but the big key was 16." Grace, Jamieson and Dubuisson arrived at the tee on No. 15 all tied for the lead at 10 under and ready to take their battle down the final stretch at Gary Player Country Club.



SUN CITY: South Africa's Brandon Grace, holds the trophy after winning the Nedbank Golf Challenge at Sun City, South Africa, yesterday. — AP

Dubuisson dropped back with a bogey there. Jamieson then sliced his tee shot at No. 16 way right and the ball disappeared among the hospitality tents only to bounce back into view and settle behind a bunker. His chip over the trap lipped out of the cup,

nearly giving him a spectacular birdie. Grace drilled his long putt into the middle of the hole, though, and reacted with a low fist pump and a shout of joy. He said he and his pregnant wife found out on Wednesday that they were expecting a boy. — AP

“ I just knew I had to stay patient ”



## Justin Rose wins 2017 Turkish Airlines Open

KUWAIT: Justin Rose claimed victory at the Turkish Airlines Open 2017 yesterday, with a final round of 65 leaving him 18 under par for the tournament, which was played in front of record crowds.

The close fought competition was decided on the 72nd hole where Rose, the gold medallist at last year's Olympics, pulled clear with a fine birdie leaving him a shot ahead of Nicolas Colsaerts and Dylan Frittelli at the Regnum Carya Golf and Spa Resort for his second win in two weeks.

Rose's win was not the end of the drama for the huge crowds, with Turkish Airlines taking to the skies to present the Englishman, who won the 2012 Turkish Airlines World Final and last week's WGC-HSBC Champions, with the trophy.

Hoverboard world record holder

Alexandru Duru flew in to hand the trophy over and his appearance from the Belek skies provided a fitting end to another remarkable week at the Turkish Airlines Open.

The Turkish Airlines Open is part of the European Tour's Rolex Series - a selection of eight premier events on the European Tour, each with a prize fund of at least \$7 million. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlut Cavusoglu said: "Welcome to my hometown Antalya and to my country. This is the fifth year of this tournament and without Turkish Airlines it would not have happened. Thanks to this event, golf is growing in this country and is more popular than ever." Minister of Youth and Sports, Osman Askin Bak said: "Today we have reached the end of another successful Turkish Airlines Open. Our support to this event will continue until 2023 which is the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic. I also extend my thanks to Turkish Airlines."

Turkish Airlines' Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee, M. Ilker Ayci, said: "Flying to more countries than any other airline and attaching our name to the finest tournaments in the world, Turkish Airlines is once again proud to have displayed our high service quality and our hallmark hospitality through this tourna-



ment to a global audience. Moreover, Turkish Airlines Open has earned Antalya, and Belek in particular, a place in the itinerary of many players as a top golf destination, thanks to the tournament's wide reach across the world. We were also delighted to surprise everyone with Alexandru Duru flying in to deliver the trophy today. Turkish Airlines remains committed to growing golf globally, through both our sponsorship of this event and organisation of the Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup Amateur series, which gives almost 8,000 amateurs a chance to tee off

at some of the world's best golf courses."

Winner of the Turkish Airlines Open 2017 Rose said: "It's been great to be back in Antalya. I really love it here. I've had a great week and really enjoyed playing this course. It was lots of fun. Before I have won with two putts on the last green and it was unique to make a putt that really counted on the last hole."

It is the fifth time that Turkish Airlines has sponsored the tournament, which took place between 2-5 November 2017. The airline's agreement with the European Tour last one more year.

## William Byron wins Phoenix as Xfinity Series field is set

AVONDALE: A rag-tag pit crew led William Byron to his fourth victory of the season. He also was one of the four drivers to qualify Saturday for next week's Xfinity Series championship finale. The Byron, Justin Allgaier, and Elliott Sadler - all from JR Motorsports - and Daniel Hemric took the four spots in all-Chevrolet race for the Xfinity Series championship.

Byron wrapped up his spot on points during Saturday's race at Phoenix Raceway. With nothing to lose, he used the final pit stop to take two tires in an effort to gain track position and win the race. He got out first, behind a crew that was assembled on the fly.

JR Motorsports, the team owned by Dale Earnhardt Jr., his sister, Kelley, and Rick Hendrick, found themselves scrambling Saturday morning when a mechanical issue forced a plane carrying its pit crews to make an emergency landing on its way from North Carolina.

The plane landed in Arkansas, and even though Hendrick Motorsports sent a plane to retrieve the crew members, they did not arrive at Phoenix in time for the race. So, Byron, Sadler and Allgaier were missing regular

pit crew members. Dale Earnhardt Jr. said after the race he was "freaking out" when he learned about the crew situation. All four berths in next Saturday night's race at Homestead-Miami Speedway were on the line in Phoenix. It made for an enjoyable race for the final spot between Hemric and Cole Custer, as the two battled for position in the closing laps. Custer was fourth and Hemric fifth, and if they stayed that way, Hemric had the spot. But Christopher Bell chased Hemric, who couldn't afford to give up a position between Custer.

Bell used a three-wide pass on the outside to get by both drivers, and Hemric eventually passed Custer and finished fifth. Custer faded to seventh, and praised his first-year Stewart-Haas Racing team. "I knew we needed to beat him, but I guess we needed a buffer in between us to beat him," Custer said. "I think we made the best of our day with what we had, but, overall, we're still not in the championship four. But for a first-year team we came a long way."

Ryan Blaney led 147 of the 200 laps but finished second. He took four tires on the late pit stop and had to drive his way back to the front. Although he was disappointed, he understood the bigger picture for him is Sunday when he races for a shot at the Cup championship.

Blaney starts from the pole. "I didn't think our Cup car was very good today, which was kind of a letdown a little bit," Blaney said. "It was a frustrating day. We weren't great in race trim all weekend. Even when we unloaded on Friday we weren't great in race trim."

"Obviously, qualifying trim went well, but race trim we've just struggled a lot. We've been struggling to find



AVONDALE: William Byron, driver of the #9 Liberty University Chevrolet, celebrates after winning the NASCAR Xfinity Series Ticket Galaxy 200 at Phoenix International Raceway in Avondale, Arizona. — AP

speed and anything we've done hasn't really changed the balance up very much, which is probably the most frustrating part. We change everything and I can't really feel any difference and it's still just slow." — AP

## Defending champ Paul Goydos opens lead in Phoenix

PHOENIX: Defending champion Paul Goydos took a one-stroke lead Saturday in the PGA Tour Champions' season-ending Charles Schwab Cup Championship. Goydos shot a 5-under 66 to reach 12-under 130 at Phoenix Country Club, the tree-lined course hosting its first tour event since the Phoenix Open left for TPC Scottsdale in 1988. "This golf course doesn't hide where it wants you to hit the ball," Goydos said. "You kind of follow the line of the trees and you'll be OK. I mean, you need to drive it good." Lee Janzen was second after a 67. The two-time U.S. Open champion birdied the par-5 18th playing alongside Goydos in the final group.

"Even on good shots today sometimes it was a challenge," Janzen said. "I expect a challenge. I think even if I was in complete control of my golf game in all regards I should expect a challenge because that's just the way golf is. But right now, I'm expecting a little bit more of a challenge because I'm not super confident with how I'm swinging. I hit some wild shots, but I just keep hoping I have a swing and some sort of opening and I'll figure out a way to get it near the green and make a par." Goydos made a 7-footer for birdie on the par-4 16th, then missed a 6-foot try on 18.

"I get in there, I want to hit a fast one, I looked at the hole and all I saw was the sun," Goydos said. "I should have backed away and I didn't. ... You talk about the difference between a Langer or a Watson or a Woods or a Spieth and a Goydos is that I was too quick there. I should have stopped." Bernhard Langer, trying to sweep the three playoff events and win the Charles Schwab Cup season points title for the fourth straight year and fifth overall, was tied for 22nd at 3 under after a 68.

Kevin Sutherland and former Arizona State player Billy Mayfair were 10 under. Sutherland eagled the 18th for a 63, the best round of the week. Mayfair shot 65. Goydos won last year at Desert Mountain in Scottsdale, about 35 miles northeast of the new venue just north of downtown Phoenix. He's trying to join Mike Hill (1990-91), Jim Thorpe (2006-07) and John Cook (2009-10) as the only players to win the season finale in consecutive years. The two-time PGA Tour winner took the 3M Championship in Minnesota in August - shooting a tour season-best 60 in the second round - for his fifth senior title. Janzen won his lone senior title in 2015. Sutherland hit a 4-iron from 231 yards to 5 feet to set up the closing eagle. "That was the best 4-iron I've hit in a while," Sutherland said. Winless on the senior tour, Sutherland entered the week fifth in the Charles Schwab Cup

season points standings, the last spot where the player has to only win the tournament to top the yearlong competition. "I played good, got myself back in the tournament," Sutherland said. "But you're going to have to go out and probably shoot something similar to that tomorrow." The only player to shoot 59 in senior tour history, the 53-year-old Sutherland has 14 top-10 finishes this season, finishing second three times and third twice. His lone PGA Tour victory came in 2002 at La Costa in the Accenture Match Play Championship.

"I can't change what happened yesterday, what's happened in the past, so I just keep moving forward," Sutherland said. "I can't change what happened at a tournament earlier this year, so I'm not going to dwell on that at all tomorrow. It will have no effect."

Scott McCarron is second in the season standings, followed by Kenny Perry, Miguel Angel Jimenez and Sutherland. McCarron was tied for eighth at 8 under after a 66. Perry was tied for 17th at under after a 66, and Jimenez was tied for 34th at 1 over after a 69.

"I had a lot of really good putts that just didn't go in," McCarron said. "They're right on the edge all day long. So it was one of those days that could have been really, really low. But I've got a chance tomorrow. I've got one round left, and if you had told me at the start of the year you have one round left to win the Schwab Cup, I'd would say what a wonderful opportunity." — AP