



HARRINGTON AND MCILROY IN 'DUEL ON THE LOUGH'

Open Champion and New Golfing Sensation to Meet in Lough Erne Challenge

Ireland's newest golf resort – Lough Erne – is to host a special event featuring Ireland's greatest ever golfer, three times Major Champion, Padraig Harrington and 19 year old Belfast man, Rory McIlroy who has taken the world of professional golf by storm. The inaugural Lough Erne Challenge was announced today (Tuesday March 24th) at Lough Erne in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, by the Resort's owner, Jim Treacy.

The Lough Erne Challenge is a one day event to be staged on Wednesday July 22nd and will be a stroke play "head to head" between McIlroy, who is attached to Lough Erne and Harrington who, the previous week, will have attempted to secure a hat-trick of Open Championships at Turnberry in Scotland. A fund of \$300,000 will add to the competition between the established figure of Harrington and McIlroy who is widely recognised as the brightest talent to emerge in world golf since Tiger Woods. A limit of 4,000 tickets has been set for the event.

Jim Treacy said it was important that from the outset Lough Erne's qualities would be tested by the world's best. *"The fact that two of the most important and exciting figures in world golf are Irish and both of them are in the world's top 20 made it compelling to pit them against each other in this special event. We believe all golf fans and those with even a passing interest in the game will be attracted to the idea of seeing Padraig and Rory do battle. Northern Ireland golf fans in particular have been starved of this kind of opportunity for too long and we look forward to welcoming them to Lough Erne in July"*

The announcement was welcomed by Tourism Minister Arlene Foster. The Minister said: *"The development of the Lough Erne Resort is a source of great pride to all of us who come from the area. It is a striking example of what can be achieved with foresight and courage and to have an AA 5 Star Resort in Enniskillen is a huge benefit, not only to the local economy but to the whole economy of Northern Ireland.*

"The establishment of this new event is further evidence of the confidence in the future of Northern Ireland tourism. Padraig Harrington and Rory McIlroy's participation means the Lough Erne Challenge will generate significant television exposure in critical markets in Europe and across North America, putting Northern Ireland on the international map as a must visit destination for tourists and business travellers. Promoting the Lakelands area and surrounding region represents a great opportunity for the whole Northern Ireland tourism industry."



THE LOUGH ERNE
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The Lough Erne Championship course was designed by the legendary Nick Faldo. Many informed golf sources are predicting that it will quickly come to be recognised as one of the great lakeside courses in world golf. Faldo said it was exciting that his lakeside creation would be tested by two of the game's greatest exponents. *"Padraig and Rory are among the very best in the world right now and they have massive global reputations which will help attract interest in Lough Erne and Fermanagh as a whole. I believe the golf course will emerge to be a top golfing location but it is important to emphasise the extraordinary beauty of the whole area and staging this event should help to bring this message to a wider audience. I look forward to officially opening the golf course."*

Speaking at the launch, Rory McIlroy said the event would be an important part of his summer. *"The opportunity to play against Padraig on what is in some ways my home turf is exciting. He is a fantastic player – a real role model for someone like me starting out on my career. Jim Treacy has been a real support to me and I have watched the development of the Championship course at Lough Erne with great interest. It is spectacular. To play Padraig in the inaugural event will be very special."*

Padraig Harrington joined the press conference live by satellite link from Bay Hill, Orlando where he is preparing for the Arnold Palmer Invitational. He commented on the importance of the all island dimension to Irish golf and the particular value of playing at an exciting new venue in a corner of Ireland that has so much to offer. *"North West Ireland is a beautiful part of the world and while I don't know the Enniskillen area at all and have not yet seen the Lough Erne Golf Resort I am assured by those who have that it will be a wonderful addition to Ireland's golfing infrastructure. It is good to be promoting this part of the island through the establishment of this event and I hope the North's golf fans will come out to see myself and Rory compete on the shores of the Lough."*

The event will be filmed by European Tour Productions with delayed broadcast commitments already established in at least 13 countries including, Britain, the United States, South Africa and Germany.

The players will be playing for the Belleek Trophy which has been specially commissioned by Jim Treacy and will be manufactured in the world famous Belleek Pottery in Co. Fermanagh. *"The Trophy will be manufactured by one of Co. Fermanagh's longest established and most successful businesses giving further emphasis to what this County has to offer. We hope that this will become a biennial event played in different formats but always with some of the world's top golfers playing on what we hope will become one of the world's great lakeside championship courses. I am extremely excited that two of our own, Padraig and Rory are doing Lough Erne the honour of competing in its inaugural staging."*



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The event is being promoted and managed on behalf of Lough Erne Golf Resort by PLATINUM ONE Limited. Further details on the event are being finalised and will be announced in the weeks ahead.

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