



# MCB Tour Championship 2014

*A fitting end to the European Senior Tour's season in idyllic Mauritius.* BY DAVID J WHYTE

**T**hrough the year, the Constance Belle Mare Plage Resort & Villas is a picture of serenity and beauty that honeymooners and families alike have enjoyed. Like a blossoming flower, guests tread up its entrance stairs with excitement and behold a whole new world where love always grows as you delve deeper and deeper into the consciousness that this sprawling property with 92 Prestige Rooms, 96 Junior Suites, 6 Deluxe Suites, 20 distinctive Villas and a Presidential Villa offers.

But come December and the excitement level increases a hundred fold. The humdrum of couples strolling along its soft white sands replaced with the baritone noise of golfers filling the rooms, restaurants, bars and definitely, both Legends and Links courses. This signals the arrival of the 4th MCB Tour Championship, sponsored by Mauritius Commercial Bank and held here at the Constance Belle Mare Plage Legends course.

This was to be a week-long engagement that not only professionals from the European Senior Tour would be busy with, but also guests and sponsors who will take part in three Pro-Ams throughout the period, namely, The Air Mauritius Trophy, The Constance Belle Mare Plage Pro-Am, and the MCB Pro-Am on the final day of competition itself. With 300 days of sunshine and average daily temperatures of 25°C and 35°C, Mauritius is golfing heaven as much as a tourist's delight, and especially so during this busy summer week December.





While participants mostly enjoy the friendly competitions and beachside prize giving parties late evenings, the atmosphere belies the fierce run to bag the final big prize of the European Senior Tour season. Colin Montgomerie had, in coming to this isle, already won the tour's Order of Merit with his scintillating, record-breaking performances throughout the year, but there are still lots to play for from the rest.

This, especially holds true to defending champion Paul Wesselingh, a 53-year-old Liverpoolian who, just 12 months earlier, won the Merit Order and the championship here at this very site. And he did it in style too, with a 5-stroke victory founded upon a glorious approach from the 18th fairway on the final day that landed just 5-feet for eagle. This third to last shot of the Tour's season would also become its 'Shot of The Year'. And then the very next stroke by missing his eagle putt, would in his personal opinion be the "absolute worst shot of the year."

"I'm still gutted about missing that shot... if there were also a worst putt of the year, I would've won that as well!" said the affable Englishman after achieving his lifelong dream and beating a well-stacked tour that includes the likes of eight-time European Tour Order of Merit winner Colin Montgomerie, ex-Masters champion

Bernhard Langer, and ex-Ryder Cupper Barry Lane. It wasn't that long ago that he watched them play while ploughing through the ho-hum of driving range instruction in his earlier years.

Now, with experience under his belt and the believe that he could battle alongside the finest over-50s in the continent, Paul Wesselingh is ready to defend his title at the MCB Tour Championships, if not the John Jacobs trophy. And defend he did, in a reverse of the previous year's victory, albeit just as spectacular and memorable.

After two days battling it out on the Legends course, Wesselingh and South African David Frost head into the final day with just a stroke separating them at 6-under and 7-under respectively. First day leader and compatriot Barry Lane, battled a virus and a bad back to sit at 4-under-par. All three had been previous winners at



**OPENING SPREAD:** Constance Belle Mare Plage, a beachside paradise

**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Paul Wesselingh getting up and down; Scottish professional Andrew Oldcorn looking to sink his putt; Ex-Masters champion Ian Woosnam tees off; Aerial view of the Constance Belle Mare Plage Legends Course; The Legends course in full splendour; Wesselingh and Barry Lane exchanging fist bumps; Wesselingh celebrates after a hard-fought victory; Colin Montgomerie receiving the John Jacobs Trophy.



**MCB TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP**  
Dec 12 – 14, 2014  
Constance Belle Mare  
Plage Legends Course  
Poste de Flacq Mauritius



## INTERESTING FACTS

- ▶ It's been 20 years since the Legends course held its first professional event, the Mauritius Golf Open 1994.
- ▶ Then winner Mike McLean's record win margin of 14-strokes still stands today. His winning score? A mere 5-under-par.
- ▶ Barry Lane played this tournament in 1995 for the first time, together with Lee Westwood and David Carter.
- ▶ In 2003, Ian Poulter, Graeme McDowell, Simon Khan, Robert Rock, Constantino Rocca and David Lynn arrived to add huge European Tour sheen on the event.
- ▶ 2009 represents a new chapter for the Legends course with the arrival of the European Senior Tour in the form of the first Mauritius Commercial Bank Open won by Kevin Spurgeon.
- ▶ David Frost wins the MCB Open in 2010.
- ▶ In 2011, the event has been upgraded to become the MCB Tour Championship and was won by American Ryder Cup captain Tom Lehman.
- ▶ David Frost wins again in 2012.
- ▶ Paul Wesselingh signals his arrival on the senior tour by winning the 2013 MCB Tour Championship with a 'Shot of the Year' finish.



TOP, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The champion with the local crew; Wesselingh looking confident; Spaniard Miguel Angel Martin finished top-20 in this tournament; Cesar Monasterio from Argentina finished tied-7th; Wesselingh at the pre-dinner cocktail prize presentation.

BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Wesselingh happily posing with the MCB Tour Championship Trophy; All the winners, Wesselingh with the amateur champions.

If dramatic scripts were written in life, and it always has, this was one that would rank high on Hollywood's list. First, Lane and Wesselingh traded birdies to return to the 18th tee. Then, they did it again on the second. At the third, Wesselingh pulled his approach left, nearly into the water hazard residing just before the greenside bunker. Lane had flown his just short of the green. The rules official was called. Some muttering amongst the crowd and Wesselingh took a drop! Did he lose a stroke there? Was it out of bounds?

He then proceeded to flop one onto the green and sank the putt. Lane had already made birdie then so we thought it was game over. Apparently not. That second from Wesselingh was not caught within an O.B. marker but rather, a G.U.R area, which means he gets a free drop for his third! Incredible.

By the time the duo birdied the fourth playoff green, they were fist bumping each other, fueled by adrenalin, respect and the adulation of the crowd. They would both birdie a fifth time with the clock already showing 6 past. These guys had been out there playing the 18th hole for 2 hours! If this had gone on, they would have had to settle for a Monday morning showdown. But it was thankfully not to be. Whether by destiny or simply the physical toil exacted on these 50-somethings, the sixth playoff would seal the deal; Wesselingh ended the day (night?) with a par to pip Lane's one and only bogey of the day.

"I'd rather not have to do it through a play-off, but to beat Bernhard Langer and now Barry Lane, both Ryder Cup players and great players, is fantastic," said the happy two-time MCB Tour champion. With this hard fought victory comes another good news – he had finished the season in sixth place on the Order of Merit and with that, guaranteed his spot in the US Senior Open 2015. 🏆

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this event and course. A battle is certainly forming.

By the time the final group had arrived at the 18th green, Lane already held the clubhouse lead at 9-under-par having shot a career back nine with five birdies after a steady bogey-free front half. Frost, who was leading at the start of the day, fell back with two bogeys against three birdies, needing

another at the par 5 18th to tie with Lane. But Wesselingh was really the one in the driving seat. Sitting at 10-under-par with that historic 18th to play, the championship could have been won there and then. But instead, he carded a bogey on his last, and with Frost failing to birdie, Paul Wesselingh and Barry Lane both entered what was to be the start of a very long walk to the title.

