

COMEBACK KING

Having overcome a series of injuries and a spell on the sidelines, this dedicated pro has reached a level where he's again regularly in winning contention

BY MICHAEL VLISMAS



It's hard to believe Hennie du Plessis has even been away from the game, never mind for 18 months.

This summer, the son of a tobacco farmer lit up the Sunshine Tour and DP World Tour with a run of performances that took him straight into the top three on the Tour's Courier Guy Order of Merit and the top 10 on the DP World Tour's Race to Dubai Rankings.

He's done so after making a return from injury, surgery, and further injury, and also becoming a father.

One of his best performances before his enforced sabbatical was tied third in the NTT Data Pro-Am brought to you by Standard Bank in 2024. He returned to the Sunshine Tour in October 2025, and bookended this period by winning his first tournament back – the BluLabel Unlimited Challenge at the Gary Player Country Club at Sun City.

It was a profound statement of Du Plessis' undeniable talent. But it was an even stronger statement in terms of his approach to a major setback in his life, which began with a wrist injury after hitting a shot out of the rough.

'You know, it was very unfortunate. I was doing all the right things to rehab after surgery, and then the left wrist got inflammation and an irritation of the joint,' he said.

Through an absolute military dedication to his rehab process, Du Plessis has returned an even stronger force than before.



'I really took my time coming back from the injury and surgery. I was probably healthy again after 15 months, and then I spent three months training and practising very hard. I didn't stop going to the gym'



In his first 11 tournaments back on the Sunshine Tour and DP World Tour since October 2025, he has a victory, two runners-up finishes, one third-place finish, a further two top-five finishes, and three top-20 finishers.

'I really took my time coming back from the injury and surgery. I was probably healthy again after 15 months, and then I spent three months training and practising very hard. I didn't stop going to the gym. I worked with Garth Milne (golf fitness specialist). I think it's important, especially when you're out for so long, that you still keep yourself busy. In that time we had a baby and I had time to spend with him, which if I was playing a full schedule overseas wouldn't have been possible. But I also tried to stay fit, and I worked on my short game,' he said.

The victory at Sun City was a significant one for Du Plessis as it confirmed the work he'd been doing, while also being his first win as a father.

'I think that's why golf seems a little bit easier now. It's harder to be a parent, I can tell you that. I'm only joking. But I put in the work to get back there. That was sort of a warm-up event to see where my game was at, and I'm very happy with the way I played, especially coming down the stretch. I had a few fumbles on the back nine that week and my caddie Zack (Rasego) just spoke to me and told me to stay focused and slow everything down. I started seeing and hitting better shots and made a few clutch putts. I think my game was a little bit better than the last time I played.'



FAST FACTS

Turned professional in 2015 and joined the Sunshine Tour after finishing number one at Q-School.

In 2016 he recorded five top-five finishes

Reached a highest world ranking of 122 in 2022

Shot a course record 63 and won \$100 000 for doing so at the 2026 Investec SA Open at Stellenbosch Golf Club. Had 10 birdies and three bogeys in the round

Has won R14-million on the Sunshine Tour, with R2.24m coming at the 2023 Jonsson Workwear Open and R1.77m at the 2026 Investec SA Open





It showed as he contended in the Investec South African Open and battled Casey Jarvis for the lead on the final day at Stellenbosch Golf Club before finishing second to add to his third-place finish in this championship in 2021.

'I think I played well on that final day at the SA Open. I shot 69, and if you shoot under par in a final round it should get you close to the number.'

He came close again a week later in the Joburg Open which he led by three shots going into the back nine on the final day, before stumbling with two bogeys and a double bogey in five holes on his way to finishing fourth.

But if ever that was a blueprint on how to make a successful comeback from injury, Du Plessis has it.

'I've been playing well for a while now. I suppose when you're on that wave you need to ride it for as long as you can.'



20 BEST PERFORMANCES

2016

Zambia Open (3rd)

2017

Vodacom Origins Of Golf – Sishen (1st)

2019

Limpopo Championship (3rd), Sun Wild Coast Sun Challenge (T2nd)

2020

SA Open (T6th), Limpopo Championship (T3rd)

2021

SA Open (3rd), Limpopo Championship (T2nd), Joburg Open (7th)

2022

Limpopo Championship (2nd), ISPS Handa Championship in Spain (T3rd), Catalunya Championship (T6th), Mygolflife Open (T6th)

2023

Jonsson Workwear Championship (T2nd), BMW PGA Championship (T10th), Nedbank Golf Challenge (T6th)

2025

Blu Label Unlimited Challenge (1st)

2026

Investec SA Open (T2nd), Kenya Open (3rd), Joburg Open (4th)