



FINDING THE GEMS

A tour that continues to go from strength to strength has just staged its flagship event

BY GARY LEMKE

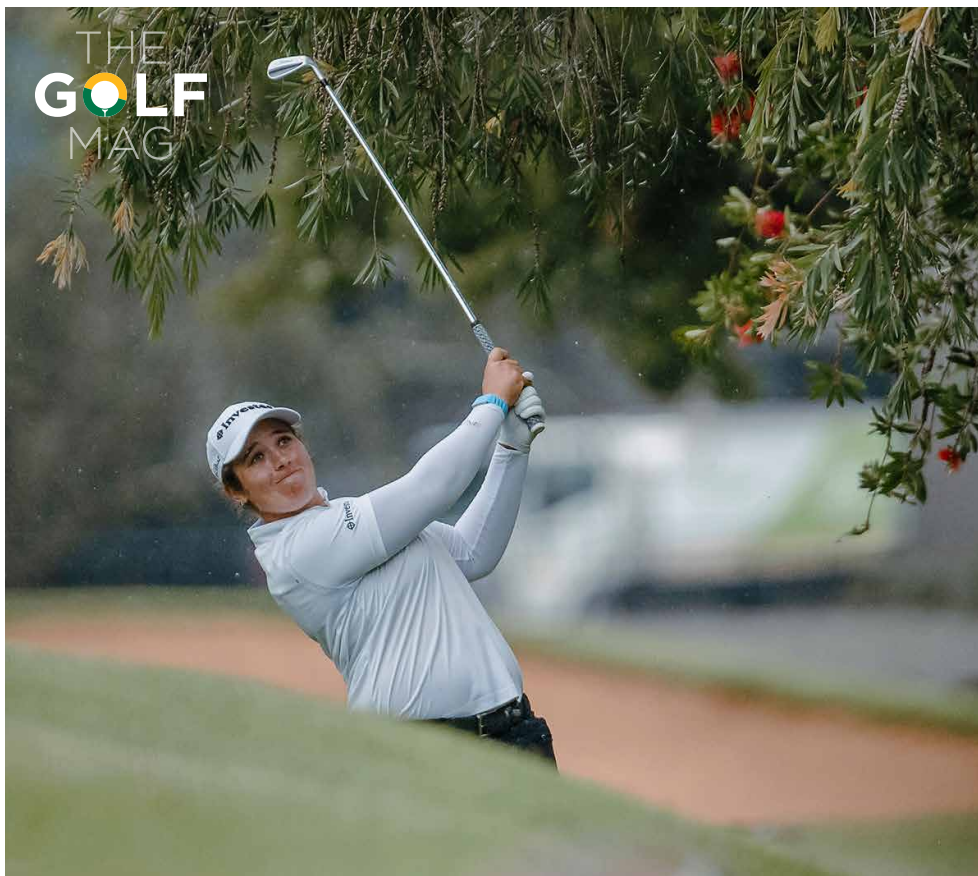
From the moment 26-year-old Chante van Zyl found the fairway with her tee shot at Humewood Golf Club, and so opened the 2026 Sunshine Ladies Tour season, we knew the competition to make cuts and win tournaments would demand the very best of players.

In many ways it was 'us' against 'them' – South Africans taking on the internationals. That's the way it played out and after eight of the nine events on the calendar, the tally read: Internationals 5 South Africans 3.

Few countries in the world stage as many professional women's events as you find in South Africa, and as was a common theme, golfers spoke about the 'perfect preparation' the South African circuit offers those going on to the Ladies European Tour season.

Germany's Celina Sattelkau went on to draw first blood, winning that SuperSport Ladies Challenge at Humewood, and a week later she was at it again, this time at Fancourt where she captured the NTT DATA Ladies Pro-Am brought to you by Standard Bank. Two from two, a perfect start and the latter, a 36-hole event, underlined by the fact she was the only player to shoot under 70 on those two days.

Ultimately, Sattelkau was the only player to win more than once in those eight tournaments heading into the MCB Ladies Classic. There were also wins from Danielle du Toit (above), Esme Hamilton, Agathae Lasne, Lois Lau, Nadia van der Westhuizen (bottom image) and Gabrielle Venter (below) as the Sunshine Tour roadshow stopped off in Gqeberha, George, Cape Town and Johannesburg.



One of the headline acts was Cassandra Alexander (main image), who had risen to No.40 in the world by the time the season's headline act, the Investec SA Women's Open, came to Royal Cape Golf Club, the oldest in the country and a fitting venue to test the skills, and patience, of the finest around.

Alexander undoubtedly is star material. She might not have grabbed a trophy, but featured in two playoffs – at Humewood and Randpark (Firethorn) – but missed the cut by one at the SA Women's Open when going from 'safe' after 14 holes to 'gone' after dropping three shots on holes 15-17.

However, there's a swagger about South Africa's No.1. Four shots behind the leader heading into the final round of the Joburg Ladies Open, where she fired a 66 before succumbing in a playoff (she made a bogey six on the closing hole in regulation play), Alexander said: 'I was so young in 2021 (when she won this same event), and a little chubby. But this tournament has grown so much, and I've grown so much playing it. It's nice to look back and see how far I've come.'

Indeed she has, and she's by no means the finished article which makes what's still to come particularly exciting.

There was a common theme, from the international contingent to the locals, of how the Sunshine Ladies Tour has grown and what an important role in the game's growth and development it is providing.



2025/26 SEASON WINNERS

2

Celina Sattelkau

(SuperSport Ladies Challenge, NTT Data Ladies Pro-Am)

1

Danielle du Toit

(Standard Bank Ladies Open)

1

Esme Hamilton

(Investec SA Women's Open)

1

Agathae Lasne

(Joburg Ladies Open)

1

Lois Lau

(Jabra Ladies Classic)

1

Nadia van der Westhuizen

(ABSA Ladies Invitational)

1

Gabrielle Venter

(Platinum Ladies Open)



'I love playing on the Sunshine Ladies Tour. I love the people, the environment, the country, the culture and especially the food. This is also where I started my professional career in 2020,' said Czech Kristyna Napoleaova.

South Africa's Kaiyuree Moodley was another to highlight how the Sunshine Ladies Tour prepares local professionals for the upcoming Ladies European Tour co-sanctioned tournaments and the rest of that season.

'It's fantastic having the Sunshine Ladies Tour events just before the Ladies European Tour and even including the co-sanctioned events. I think that is just great practice. When we play in Europe, it's also summertime and here we are enjoying the sunlight, the heat as well, so climate-wise it definitely helps. But also having that competitive spirit starting in February before the international campaign is great,' she said.

More endorsement came from Kaylah Williams, who turned professional at the end of 2025, after playing college golf in America.

'I played at Florida University for four years where I was captain during my last year. Being a professional golfer is tough. All of a sudden playing for cuts and for money. It's pressure, but I love it because I am doing a sport that I love.'

And where better to play than in South Africa on some of the best courses that you'll find.

When it came to the flagship event, the Investec SA Women's Open, only four locals made the cut at Royal Cape where hitting the fairways



BY THE NUMBERS

Lowest rounds:

62 Louisa Carlbom

(Platinum Ladies Open),

63 Madelene Stavnar

(Platinum Ladies Open),

Esme Hamilton (Investec SA Women's Open)

Lowest winning scores (to par):

-19 Agathae Lasne (Joburg Ladies Open),

-17 Nadia van der Westhuizen (ABSA Ladies Invitational)

Playoff winners:

3 – Celina Sattelkau

(SuperSport Ladies Challenge), Lois Lau (Jabra Ladies Classic), Agathae Lasne (Joburg Ladies Open)

Biggest winning margin:

7 strokes – Nadia van der Westhuizen (ABSA Ladies Invitational)

*Excludes MCB Ladies Classic



was half the battle won. The Thursday and Friday were played in hot autumn sunshine, before the wind and the rain made for a difficult weekend. Caitlyn Macnab, playing her first national Open as a professional, flew the buffeted South African flag the highest, finishing two-over for the tournament, but showing enough to suggest there's a lot to come from her.

There was also a glimpse into the future from 15-year-old Lisa Coetzer who was the only amateur to make the cut and, despite a testing weekend, she played all 72 holes and that will stand her in good stead as she goes forward.