

47th edition of the Hassan II Trophy
and 26th edition of the Lalla Meryem Cup

Two records for national golf!

- Three Moroccans make the cut at the Lalla Meriem Cup: Inès Laklalech, Maha Haddioui and Sofia Cherif Essakali.
- Sofia Cherif Essakali is the youngest player, aged 13, to make the cut for her first appearance at a European Women's Tour event.
- Stephen Ames charts a steady course for the men, Maja Stark takes first place for the women.

Rabat, February 10, 2023: Forever the premieres! Inès Laklalech, Maha Haddioui and Sofia Cherif Essakali all three pass the cut: Performance, confirmation and future.



Moroccan golf can take greater pride of this 26th edition of the Lalla Meryem Cup. Three national golfers have achieved the unmatched feat of zooming to the top beyond the cut. Each of the three representatives of the Kingdom is a true pioneer. Inès Laklalech, who in 2022 became the first to win a tournament on the LET, significantly improved her score to finish the second round in 40th place with a score of 74 shots (+5 in total). She has rubbed shoulders with the many young golfers' idol, Maha Haddioui, who was the first Moroccan golfer to play on the LET. Sofia Cherif Essakali , aged just 13, also passes the cut for her first participation in an event of the European Women's Tour. Another record.

The Moroccan trio brings together the prestigious present and the promising future. Sofia will certainly have great stories to tell on Monday for her return to class. But first, we have to end this weekend on a strong positive note.

On the Red course, Stephen Ames maintains his leadership position at the 47th edition of the Hassan II Trophy, after a great start on Thursday. On Friday for the second round, the Canadian handed in a card of 70 strokes, or 3 under par, bringing his total to -9, three strokes ahead of the competition. A lead that could have been greater had it not been for the two bogeys conceded by Ames on holes 2 and 14. "I am very happy with my day, said the Trinidad and



Tobago native. It was long and tedious, 5 hours and 10 minutes. So it was much more an exercise in patience than anything else.” But Ames' determination to seek a third PGA Tour Champions title appears intact, as does the process. “I will try to keep doing the same. Continuing to have the same thoughts I've had for 4 days, which is good. Have the same focus. »

Behind Ames, comes the Australian Mark Hensby who moved up to second place, thanks to the best performance of the day. A resounding score of 67 shots (6 under par), including an eagle on 17. Hensby, however, keeps his feet firmly on the ground. "On each hole, you really have to hit the right place and you really don't know what can happen," says the man who had seriously considered retiring, before changing his mind shortly before the start of the season. Hensby shares second place with Englishman Paul Broadhurst (70 shots, 3 under par) who brings his total to -6. The only other card under the 70 strokes mark recorded on Friday went to Swede Robert Karlsson (69 strokes, 4 under par).

The Red course, renowned for its hardness and bewitching landscape, was therefore no exception to the rule. Speaking on his experience on the Red course, legend Jim Furyk with his 17 professional titles said: “The course has changed a lot and it has become much more difficult. Each course has



its own characteristics, but this one reminds me a bit of California, in the United States. The route is very beautiful. The bunkers are dramatic with its high sidewalls and the greens are very, very challenging. They are very tough.” You heard it from the legend!

On the Blue course, a Swede can outshine another. Maja Stark took the lead, scoring an excellent 67 strokes (6 under par) at the end of the second round of the 26th edition of the Lalla Meryem Cup. Hardly 23 years old, the winner of 5 titles on the Ladies European Tour did not concede any shots above par, she rather got 6 birdies which bring her total to -8. But Stark, who finished second at the end of the Race to Costa del Sol 2022, is not fully satisfied. “The start of the day was long. I could have made more putts on the first nine holes. I think I made longer putts at the end of a stress-free day,” Stark said.

Ranking second, Aditi Ashok kept up the pace, with a card of 71 strokes (-2). Victorious in the first event of the season on the LET, Ashok will try to make up for the strokes she has behind Stark. Leader on Thursday evening, Sweden's Linnea Ström conceded 5 bogeys on Friday and fell to rank third. Yet another proof that the Royal Golf Dar Es Salam course can be merciless.

The 47th edition of the Hassan II Trophy and the 26th edition of the Lalla Meryem Cup mark the return of very





high level golf in Morocco. Placed this year under the theme "Return of the Champions", the two competitions are organized in the same venue and at the same time, perpetuating their unique trait and attracting the interest of the whole world, through a TV broadcast to the four corners of the planet.

