

Velinder team wins 24th ABGR-Amex Golf Tournament

CHITO P. MANUEL | ARAB NEWS STAFF | **Published** — Sunday 30 April 2017



The Sponsors' representatives at the awards ceremony



Players before the start of the tournament (Photo by Noel A. Alipoyo)



Champion team from left; Sunil George, Thomas Joakim Velinder, Carl Berrojo, Ronald Stermer

RIYADH: The 24th edition of the ABGR-Amex Golf Tournament was held at Dirab Golf & Country Club over the weekend, and in many ways it looked like a dress rehearsal for the silver anniversary of the blue riband event.

From two hole-in-one prizes of Ford Mustang and F-150 SUV to giveaways galore and to the arrangements – food stalls and all -- the two-day clambake that ended Friday was everything every golf enthusiast could ask for.

The golf was excellent and, with the weather cooperating, scores went unbelievably low in this Texas Scramble format competition where handicapping was supplied by a software developed by leaderboard.com.

Winning the tournament, one of the longest running and most high-profile for the expatriate community, was the quartet of Thomas Joakim Velinder, Sunil George, Carl Berrojo and Ronald Stermer.

They won on countback from two other teams on net score of 49 from a gross of 63 and 14 handicap.

The team of Abdulrahman Al-Othman, Abdulrahman Harakati, Thomas Merkel and Brendan McCann also tallied 49 (65-16) as did Shawn McCormack, Eilish Byrne, Tarek Amine and Rodney Simonetti who returned a gross 63 with 14 handicap.

To break the ties backnine scores were compared with Velinder's team on 31, Al-Othman's on 32 and McCormack's on 34.

The fourth position one stroke back on 50 went to the foursome of Christopher Devlin, Jonathan Mortell, Robert Taylor and Pia Engborg.

Playing exceedingly well as a team, Velinder, George, Berrojo and Stermer carded nines of 32-31 in an immaculate round that saw them plunk in nine birdies, five of them coming home.

Al-Othman's group also enjoyed a spotless round of 33-32 with seven birdies in all.

After hitting the turn in an amazing 29, McCormack and Co. were not done yet and eagled the par-5 13. They then birdied No. 16 before a bogey on 18 for their only dropped shot gave them an inward score of 34.

The skill prizes for the longest drive for men and ladies went to Stuart Halliday and Paromita Mukherjee, who also won the closest to the pin (ladies), while Patrick Kennedy took home the closest to the pin (men) prize.

The tournament that attracted 135 golfers enjoyed massive corporate support led by title sponsor American Express. Wadi Qortuba is the diamond sponsor, Sabic platinum sponsor and Gama Dental Clinic gold sponsor. The silver sponsors are Pannesma Co. Ltd., Atheeb Intergraph Saudi, Dirab Golf & Country Club, Hyatt Regency, UPS and Vinnell Arabia. Boeing, FedEx, Kingdom Brokerage and Exxon Mobil make up the bronze sponsors while the hole sponsors are AlNakhla, ASNAF Al-Jazeera Trading Co. Ltd., Mawarid Food Company and SOSI.

“It is such an honor to be able to host members of the community, industry members and supporters of the organization in our annual golf tournament,” said Dan Cagle, chairman of the American Business Group of Riyadh, which has over 450 members representing American companies across all industry sectors as well as Saudi companies with American affiliations actively promoting the importation of American goods and services to the Kingdom.

“We are so lucky to be able to play such an outstanding golf course in the area and work with the incredible staff of Dirab. A huge thank you goes to everyone involved in making this such a successful tournament,” added Cagle.

Merkel is chair of the ABGR Golf Committee. The members/volunteers are: George Baaklini, Mary Barnes, Fareedd Betris, Claire Bridge, Mace Crowe, Bouchaib El Jadiani, John Gibbs, Jim “Gato” Hetherington, Brad Jones, Mohamed Loubani, Barbara Merkel, Ronda Saeed, Tarik Solomon and Amanda Tafunai.