

Media Release: Sunday March 1, 2009



PRESNELL WINS MOONAH CLASSIC

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Moonah Classic, Moonah Links, Fingal, Victoria
February 26 – March 1, 2009

Victorian Alistair Presnell birdied the final hole Sunday to beat Peter O'Malley by one stroke and win the Moonah Classic, the second stop on the 2009 Nationwide Tour schedule. 29 year old Presnell shot a final round 4-under 68 to finish at 9-under 279, one better than O'Malley, who was in group behind Presnell and missed a 15-footer birdie putt to tie.

Michael Sim (70) made it a 1-2-3 sweep for the Aussies at Moonah Links, while Americans Skip Kendall (70) and Daniel Summerhays (72) shared fourth place with Australians Terry Pilkadaris, (70) and Adam Bland (71).

Third-round leader Miguel Carballo of Argentina stumbled to a 6-over-par 78 and finished T13. Carballo began the day with a two-shot lead but had his game in reverse. The first- and second-round co-leader wouldn't make a birdie all afternoon until tapping in a short one on the closing par-5.

Forty three year old O'Malley held the lead for much of the final afternoon. Birdies at 1, 7, 8 and 10 put him at 10-under and in control but Presnell refused to fold under the pressure.

Presnell closed to within one of O'Malley with a birdie at No. 12. He salvaged bogey and saved the tournament at No. 16 after driving his tee shot into a bunker. His second shot came out heavy and wound up in another fairway bunker. After pitching out to 40 yards, Presnell's fourth wound up about six feet away. He canned that putt to stay within range of the leader. He followed that up with a spectacular save from well off the green at the par-3, 17th kept him at 8-under and set the stage for some drama at the 636-yard closing par-5.

By the time Presnell had reached his tee shot in the 18th fairway, O'Malley was three-putting the 17 to lose the lead and drop into a tie.

Presnell pitched his third to within 15 feet and faced that putt for the outright lead.

"I was struggling to get a read on it but I hit it exactly how I wanted. I just wanted to get the speed right," he said. "When it went in, it was more of a relief than anything. I was glad I glad I didn't have to step over a 3 ½-footer for par."

O'Malley was then forced to can a similar putt to force a playoff.

"I was trying to die it in from the right side," he said. "I probably hit it a little too hard. Tee to green for the first 12 was pretty good. I really didn't do anything wrong. "

The final two groups were too far back to change the results, giving Presnell the winner's check for \$108,000. He moved to the top of the Australasian Tour Order of Merit earning a two year exemption and full membership on the Nationwide Tour this year and next.

"These four weeks were about it for me," said Presnell, who finished 5th at the Cellarbrations Victorian PGA Championship three weeks ago and T52 at the Johnnie Walker Classic last week. "If I couldn't get anything done to make enough for another trip over to the States I might have had to call my old boss and see if I could get my old job back as an air conditioning apprentice."

Presnell and mates Aaron Townsend and Chris Gaunt toured the States last summer, trying their hand at four Monday Qualifiers for the Nationwide Tour. Presnell failed to make the field in any of the four.

"Last year we spent a month in a van," said Presnell of the experience. "I wasn't living the dream, I was chasing it."

Sunday's clutch putt changed all that.

"America is where I'd love to get to," he said. "I'm really looking forward to it. It certainly wasn't on the plans at the start of the year. The money is great but the win opens a big door for me."

The Nationwide Tour moves to New Zealand for the next two weeks, starting with the HSBC New Zealand PGA Championship at the Clearwater Resort in Christchurch. This will be the eighth year that the Tour has visited the Clearwater course, where Peter O'Malley won in 2002 and 2005. David Smail, who tied for eighth this week, was runner-up to Darren Stiles at Clearwater in 2008.

For more information on the Moonah Classic go to www.pga.org.au

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