

Women golfers set to tee off

Some of the biggest hitters in women's golf are set to tee off Friday for the inaugural Women's World Cup of Golf here at the scenic Fancourt club's The Links course, with some 20 countries competing for top honours.

Two former world No. 1s, numerous winners of major European and American titles as well as a healthy dose of youth will battle it out on the scenic southern Cape course, described by both Tiger Woods and Ernie Els as "one of the most difficult" they have ever played.

Former world No. 1 Karrie Webb and Rachel Hetherington will represent Australia while big-hitting Englishwoman Laura Davies, another former top spot holder, links with British Open champion Karen Stupples.

They will line up against formidable teams from France, Japan, Korea, Sweden and the United States.

Also competing is New Zealand, represented by Gina Scott and Lynette Brooky.

Representing France in the competition, which will take a Betterball format on Friday, Four-somes on Saturday and Singles on Sunday, will be Patricia Meunier-Lebouc and Stephanie Arricau.

Meunier-Lebouc turned professional 12 years ago and lists victories in the French Open, Austrian Open, Irish Open, English Open and European Cup, while Arricau, who joined the paid ranks in 1999, enjoyed a big 2004, winning the French and Spanish open.

Japan's 19-year-old prodigy Ai Miyazato won five tournaments as a rookie, plus 16 top 10 finishes in her country. She's partnered with Kitada.

Golf in Korea has grown tremendously in strength, with the 20 so-called "Seoul Sisters" campaigning in the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour.

Jeong Jang is one of these and who together with the multi-

TEAMS

Teams (a denotes amateur): Karrie Webb, Rachel Hetherington (AUS); Natasha Fink, Tina Schneeberger (AUT); Lorie Kane, Dawn Coe-Jones (CAN); Laura Davies, Karen Stupples (ENG); Minea Blomqvist, Rikka Hakkatainen (FIN); Stephanie Arricau, Patricia Meunier-Lebouc (FRA); Martina Eberl, Elisabeth Esterl (GER); Diana Luna, Giulia Sergas (ITA); Ai Miyazato, Riu Kitada (JPN); Jeong Jang, Boe Bae Song (KOR); Siew-Ai Lim (MAS); Lorena Ochoa, Alejandra Martin Del Campo (a) (MEX); Gina Scott, Lynette Brooky (NZL); Jennifer Rosales, Dorothy Delasin (PHL); Catriona Mathew, Janice Moodie (SCO); Laurette Maritz, Ashleigh Simon (a) (RSA); Ana Belen Sanchez, Paula Marti (SPA); Carin Koch, Sophie Gustafson (SWE); Meg Mallon, Beth Daniel (USA); Becky Brewerton, Becky Morgan (WAL).

talented Boe Bae Song will present a formidable challenge.

Sophie Gustafson, a 14-title winner and Carin Koch will carry Sweden's hopes this weekend sharing a wealth of experience between them.

But the most experienced team is Hall of Fame player Beth Daniel, 48, with 33 LPGA victories to her credit, and Meg Mallon, 41, who won three times in the United States last year, including the US and Canadian Open in successive weeks.

In contrast, South Africa's Ashleigh Simon, one of two amateur players in the cup is only 14, and partnered with Laurette Maritz, 41, brings a mixture of youth and experience.

The LPGA in the United States and the Ladies European Tour (LET) have both attempted to stage World Cups in the past, but ultimately they both failed because the tournaments were not seen as fully representative of women's golf worldwide.

Gary Player-designed The Links has played host to successful President's Cups and for this tournament have been shortened by a 1100m off the ladies' tees, with a less severe rough. —AFP



Golf safari: Lynette Brooky carries New Zealand hopes at the inaugural Women's World Cup of Golf in South Africa.

Photo: Sunday Star-Times