

# FUTURE STARS READY FOR 29<sup>th</sup> TOYOTA JUNIOR GOLF WORLD CUP

Attention on strong girls' division headlined by Saki Baba, Anna Davis



TOYOTA CITY, Japan (June 19, 2023) — In three decades since its inception, the Toyota Junior Golf World Cup Supported by Japan Airlines has long established a reputation for showcasing golf's stars of the future.

Perhaps never before, though, has there been such anticipation for what a handful of entrants have accomplished in the not-so-distant past.

The spotlight figures to shine brightest on the girls' division when the event tees off Tuesday for its 29th edition, where two of golf's fastest-rising stars come together at Chukyo Golf Club for just the third time in what should be many encounters.

Japan's Saki Baba arrives as the reigning U.S. Women's Amateur champion, following a dominant final last summer at Chambers Bay. Across the way: Californian Anna Davis, winner of the Augusta National Women's Amateur 14 months ago.

Baba currently holds the No. 2 spot in the women's World Amateur Golf Rankings; Davis stands at No. 4.

"I've been in the same field as (Baba), but have not played with her," said Davis, who also teed it up in two LPGA majors last year. "Hopefully I'll get to play with her this week. It should be fun."

In all, 72 golfers — eight girls' teams and 12 on the boys' side — tee off Tuesday as a new generation of talent sets out on a path where 10 major champions and dozens of current tour professionals have walked before.

“I know girls who are winning on the tours have been a part of this,” said Baba. “I’d like to be able to do the same thing.”

The list of major champions who are Toyota Junior Golf World Cup alumni features each of the past three Masters winners — Hideki Matsuyama, Scottie Scheffler and reigning champion Jon Rahm. It also includes Cameron Smith, the Open Championship titleholder.

Others include Justin Rose, a former U.S. Open champion and Olympic gold medalist, along with Danny Willett (2016 Masters), Henrik Stenson (2013 Open Championship), Charl Schwartzel (2011 Masters) and Louis Oosthuizen (2010 Open Championship).

On the girls' side, two recent participants also have won the Augusta National Women's Amateur — Japan's Tsubasa Kajitani (2021) and American Rose Zhang (2023), who also made history 2 ½ weeks ago when she became the first player in 71 years to win an LPGA event in her professional debut.

“(Zhang) told me it's all very exciting,” said Davis, who had the chance to talk about the overseas experience during a round together earlier this year.

“She said not to worry so much about the golf; just be sure to take in everything about Japan and how fun it is.”

Said William Kerdyk, chairman of the tournament committee: “For a lot of these players, the first time they've really played international golf is when they come to Japan to play in this tournament. We've seen many players who have used this event as a steppingstone for future success.”

Canada is the defending boys' champion in the 72-hole team competition, while Spain will have to hold off formidable Japan and United States squads to repeat as girls' champions.

The format is similar to U.S. college golf, with each boys' team counting the three best scores among its four players each day. For the girls, each team will count the two best scores among three.

Canada finds itself in a rare position for its title defense, with three players from last year's winning squad back for more.

"Yeah, we're excited," said Ethan Wilson, who returns alongside Cooper Humphreys and Eric Zhao. "It's been good vibes coming into the week. Alex (Zhang) is coming in as the one new guy, and he's a great player. We're looking forward to getting him out there."

England, back for the first time since 2009, looks to have a solid squad led by Dylan Shaw-Radford, winner of the Carris Trophy and Henry Cooper

Junior Masters last year. Tyler Weaver is England's reigning U18 Stroke Play champion.

"This one's a bit more special because it's the whole world," said Shaw-Radford. "We haven't come here for over a decade, so even getting here was amazing."

Team USA is led by P.J. Maybank, a Michigan native who recently won the prestigious Azalea Invitational in South Carolina by a stunning 11 shots.

But the greater focus is likely to center on the girls, and not only on Baba and Davis.

Japan seeks a third women's title in the past four editions. Joining Baba on the roster are Yuna Araki, ranked No. 6 in the WAGR and winner of the Australian Women's Master of the Amateurs, and newly crowned Japan Women's Amateur champion Saori Iijima.

“I feel the togetherness of the team is very, very strong,” Baba said, “so we should be able to play a very steady week of golf together.”

Davis, meantime, has a strong U.S. teammate in Katie Li, second at the Dixie Women’s Amateur in January and fourth in the Mizuho Americas Open junior division, where Davis was second.

Live scoring will be provided throughout the event by Golfstat, accessible online at [Golfstat.com](http://Golfstat.com).

This week marks the final destination of a process that begins with nearly 70 national teams entered in regional qualifiers across six continents.

More information about the Toyota Junior Golf World Cup Supported by Japan Airlines can be found online at [WJGTC.org](http://WJGTC.org), including a video library that includes interviews with former World Cup participants.