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Clerici celebrates start-to-finish victory at season opener

Ain Sokhna, Egypt - Fiorino Clerici (Switzerland) wins the Red Sea Ain Sokhna Open at the Golf Club Ain Sokhna and thus the first tournament of the new Pro Golf Tour season. With an overall score of -12, he has a one-stroke lead over Hugo Legeay-Gaucher (France) and the Germans Philipp Macionga and Linus Lang.

It has become a tradition on the Pro Golf Tour: the new season is being heralded in Egypt for the tenth time and once again the Ain Sokhna Golf Club on the west coast of the Gulf of Suez offered the ideal conditions to open the new golf year in style. 102 players had registered for the Red Sea Ain Sokhna Open 2024 and were competing for the first points for the Order of Merit. The top five in the overall standings will also receive a tour card for the Challenge Tour this year. However, there is still a long way to go until then. There are 16 tournaments in seven countries on the 2024 calendar. The season got off to a picturesque start under palm trees at the Red Sea Ain Sokhna Open final, but presumably none of the title contenders had an eye for them.

There was no sign of a quiet start to the new season. The first title fight was exciting right to the end. When the final group turned onto the second nine of their third and final round, eight players were within one stroke of each other. No one in the leading group was able to pull away early and so the decision was only made on the final hole. Swiss player Fiorino Clerici and Linus Lang from Germany were tied on 18. "It was a good match on a fair level and it was hard-fought," said Clerici after the round. In the end, the 28-year-old Swiss player benefited from a bogey by his German opponent and was therefore the lucky winner of the opening tournament of the new season.

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"It still feels a bit surreal. To start the season like this is unique and something I never dreamed of," says Clerici. He played his first tournaments on the Pro Golf Tour in 2022 and finished tied fifth at the NewGiza Pyramids Challenge, also an event in Egypt. "I like playing in warmer regions - and when you have a bit of waste area next to the fairways. I can actually play my best golf there." Clerici mostly played his best golf over the three days at Ain Sokhna Golf Club. Thanks to a 66 at the start, he led the field right from the start. His final score was twelve under par.

"The course played longer and more complicated than two years ago because it was much drier back then," said Clerici, who had nothing but praise for the condition of the course. "It was in very good condition and putting was fun." With the euphoria of his first triumph on the Pro Golf Tour behind him, Clerici wants to achieve his big goal as soon as possible. "It's full throttle again from tomorrow. I would love to win again next week, because I have now proven that I can do it. Ideally, I could even win three times this year so that I can go straight up to the Challenge Tour."

Clerici will have his next chance to prove himself from January 28 to 30, when the next event is scheduled at the Ain Sokhna Golf Club: The Red Sea Egyptian Classic. The season is a marathon, but starts with an intensive sprint that offers great opportunities for all players. Fiorino Clerici took advantage of the first one.



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