

RYDER CUP veteran Philip Price returns to The Legend golf course at Belle Mare Plage this week determined to erase the memory of a dramatic defeat in last year's Mauritius Open.

The 41-year-old Welshman appeared to have victory sealed when he arrived at the closing hole of the 54-hole tournament with a two-stroke lead over closest rival Van Phillips.

But while Englishman Phillips produced a superb birdie finish, Price inexplicably four-putted the final green and a stunned Phillips was presented with the title.

On Friday, the rivalry between the two men resumes in the 14<sup>th</sup> Mauritius Golf Open and the presence of long-time contender Christian Cevaer, from France, will add spice to the contest.

Cevaer, a regular visitor for the championship, was the third member of the final group, having started the day on level terms with Phillips and Price before slipping back into fifth place.

There will, however, be no lack of challengers for this prestigious title and main sponsors Air Mauritius and Hugo Boss will be delighted with the quality of the field.

Previous winner Phil Golding has been in good form after securing his European Tour card in the gruelling Qualifying School in Spain a month ago.

Golding, 45, arrives in Mauritius fresh from a top 40 finish in the Alfred Dunhill Championship in South Africa last week.

Welshman Jamie Donaldson is back on the European Tour circuit after an outstanding season on the Challenge Tour in which the 32-year-old finished fourth in the Order of Merit after a win in Guatemala and six top-four finishes.

Peter Baker, who was Ryder Cup captain Ian Woosnam's right-hand in 2006, has joined Golding and Donaldson in winning back his European Tour card, claiming two successes on this year's Challenge Tour and finishing 12<sup>th</sup> in the end-of-season standings.

With such a competitive field for this year's Mauritius Golf Open, the tournament has all the ingredients for another thriller and, as Phillips proved last year, nothing can be guaranteed until the final putt is sunk.

The ladies' event has also provoked a good deal of interest and there has been much speculation as to who will be the main threat to Lora Fairclough's defence of the title she won 12 months ago in a nail-biting play-off.

A victory speech must have been far from the Solheim Cup player's thoughts when Italian Veronica Zorzi lined up a short putt for victory on the final green

But Zorzi missed and Fairclough seized her opportunity at the first play-off hole with an immaculate birdie.

Zorzi is not playing this year but there will be a dual Italian challenge from Isabella Maconi and Barbara Paruscio.

One name that has been mentioned as a possible contender is Lynn Kenny, the 27-year-old Scottish lass with an endearing personality who had two top 10 placings on the Ladies' European Tour earlier this year.

There will be strong Scottish interest, too, in the Seniors Tour section, where Bill Longmuir, a winner on the tour in May, heads the list.

Longmuir finished 13<sup>th</sup> in this year's Seniors Tour order-of-merit, just a few places ahead of Italy's Guiseppe Cali, who is in the line-up again this year.

Irishman Denis O'Sullivan, who had an excellent tournament in 2006 to finish joint eighth overall, England's Glenn Ralph and Kevin Spurgeon, Martin Gray of Scotland, and Frenchman Gery Watine all finished in the European Seniors Tour top 50 this year and will be bidding to finish 2007 in style.

By Neil Webber