

FAR HILLS, N.J., and ST. ANDREWS, Scotland (Aug. 24, 2017) – As the leading player in the 2017 World Amateur Golf Ranking™ at the close of the summer's championship season, Joaquin Niemann, of Chile, is the winner of the Mark H. McCormack Medal.

"I am very honored to receive the prestigious 2017 Mark H. McCormack medal," said Niemann, the first player from South America to win the McCormack Medal since its inception in 2007. "Thank you to the USGA and The R&A for this important award."

A 2016 Rolex Junior All-America First-Team selection, Niemann kicked off 2017 with a runner-up finish in the 3rd Latin America Amateur Championship, where he competed in a three-man playoff for the title. He also made several appearances in professional events in 2017, including the U.S. Open and the GreenBrier Classic, where he returned a 72-hole score of 5-under 275 that included a round-leading 64 in the final round. He also won three professional events in Chile, as well as the TaylorMade-adidas Golf Junior at Innisbrook and the Junior Invitational at Sage Valley Golf Club, both in April.

In last week's U.S. Amateur at The Riviera Country Club and Bel-Air Country Club, Niemann lost to NCAA individual champion and 2017 USA Walker Cup Team member Braden Thornberry in the Round of 64, 1 down. A two-time winner of the IMG Academy Junior World Championship (2015-16), Niemann advanced to the quarterfinals in the 2017 Western Amateur.

Niemann, who joins Danny Lee (2008) and Matthew Fitzpatrick (2013) as the only 18-year-olds to earn the McCormack Medal, will receive an exemption into the 2018 U.S. Open Championship at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southampton, N.Y. (June 14-17), and the 147th Open Championship at Carnoustie Golf Links in Scotland (July 19-22), provided he remains an amateur.

This R&A and United States Golf Association (USGA) award is named after Mark H. McCormack, who founded the sports marketing company IMG and was a great supporter of amateur golf.

Duncan Weir, Executive Director – Golf Development at The R&A, said, "Joaquin is a thoroughly deserving winner of the Mark H. McCormack Medal, and I wish to congratulate him on an excellent season. It's wonderful to see another talented young golfer emerge from South America to compete on the global stage, and we look forward to welcoming Joaquin to Carnoustie for The 147th Open next year."

"Joaquin Niemann has consistently returned impressive results, especially in high-profile events, and the USGA is pleased to see his steady play recognized with the McCormack Medal," said John Bodenhamer, USGA senior managing director, Championships & Governance. "We look forward to watching Joaquin succeed for many years to come."

Past winners of the McCormack Medal are: Colt Knost (USA) in 2007; Danny Lee (New Zealand) in 2008; Nick Taylor (Canada) in 2009; Peter Uihlein (USA) in 2010; Patrick Cantlay (USA) in 2011; Chris Williams (USA) in 2012; Matthew Fitzpatrick (England) in 2013; Oliver Schniederjans (USA) in 2014; Jon Rahm-Rodriguez (Spain) in 2015; and Maverick McNealy (USA) in 2016.

Last week, Leona Maguire, of Ireland, was named the winner of the Mark H. McCormack Medal for the third consecutive year as the leading player in the Women's World Amateur Golf Ranking™.

The World Amateur Golf Ranking™, which is supported by Rolex, was established in 2007 with the launch of the men's ranking which encompasses more than 2,600 counting events, ranking more than 6,000 players from 103 countries. The women's ranking was launched in 2011 and has a calendar of more than 1,400 counting events with more than 2,700 ranked players from 73 countries.

The World Amateur Golf Ranking™, which comprises a women's ranking and a men's ranking for elite amateur players, is offered by The R&A and the USGA as a global service to golf. Through incorporation and assessment worldwide of both amateur and professional events, WAGR encourages the international development of the competitive game. The ranking endeavors to be the most comprehensive and accurate ranking in golf by effectively comparing players from around the world who may never directly compete against one another. It is available to national federations and organizers of amateur and professional events and tours as a criterion for tournament field selection and for purposes of exemptions, national team selection, and orders of merit.

About The Mark H. McCormack Medal

Established in 2007, the award is named after Mark H. McCormack, the late founder of sports marketing company IMG and an avid supporter of amateur golf. The men's Mark H. McCormack Medal is awarded to the No. 1 player in the World Amateur Golf Ranking™ after the U.S. Amateur Championship or the European Amateur Championship, whichever concludes last. Since 2011, the same award is given to the player leading the women's ranking after the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship or European Ladies' Amateur Championship. Winners include:

Men: 2017: Joaquin Niemann (Chile); 2016: Maverick McNealy (USA); 2015: Jon Rahm-Rodriguez (Spain); 2014: Oliver Schniederjans (USA); 2013: Matthew Fitzpatrick (England); 2012: Chris Williams (USA); 2011: Patrick Cantlay (USA); 2010: Peter Uihlein (USA); 2009: Nick Taylor (Canada); 2008: Danny Lee (New Zealand); 2007: Colt Knost (USA)

Women: 2017, 2016, 2015: Leona Maguire (Ireland); 2014: Minjee Lee (Australia); 2013, 2012, 2011: Lydia Ko (New Zealand)

About The R&A

Based in St Andrews, The R&A runs The Open, elite amateur events, international matches and rankings. Together The R&A and the USGA govern the sport of golf worldwide, operating in separate jurisdictions but sharing a commitment to a single code for the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status and Equipment Standards. The R&A, through R&A Rules Ltd, governs the sport worldwide, outside of the United States and Mexico, on behalf of over 36 million golfers in 140 countries and with the consent of 153 organisations from amateur and professional golf.

The R&A is committed to working for golf and supports the growth of the sport internationally and the development and management of sustainable golf facilities. For more information, visit www.randa.org.

About the USGA

The USGA conducts the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open, as well as 10 national amateur championships, two state team championships and international matches, attracting players and fans from more than 160 countries. Together with The R&A, the USGA governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, equipment standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The USGA's reach is global with a working jurisdiction in the United States, its territories and Mexico, serving more than 25 million golfers and actively engaging 150 golf associations.

The USGA is one of the world's foremost authorities on research, development and support of sustainable golf course management practices. It serves as a primary steward for the game's history and invests in the development of the game through the delivery of its services and its ongoing "For the Good of the Game" grants program. Additionally, the USGA's Course Rating and Handicap systems are used on six continents in more than 50 countries.

For more information about the USGA, visit usga.org

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