

## AIB Irish Seniors Open, in association with Greenstar and Fáilte Ireland

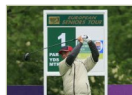
PGA National Ireland  
Co. Kildare, Ireland



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### Short game steers Rocca to glory at PGA National

03 Jun 2007



Costantino Rocca  
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Italian Ryder Cup star Costantino Rocca celebrated his first win as a Senior golfer when he closed with a final round of one under par 71 to capture the AIB Irish Seniors Open, in association with Greenstar and Fáilte Ireland, at the PGA National Ireland golf course.

Rocca, playing in only his third event on the European Seniors Tour, coped best in the rain-plagued final round thanks to a wonderful short game display for a winning 54 hole total of five under par 211.

England's Kevin Spurgeon and Spain's Juan Quiros shared second spot two strokes back after returning level par 72s, each winning a cheque for €38,250, while overnight leader Stewart Ginn of Australia three-putted from six feet at the 17th for a 76 that left last year's runner-up on two under par alongside American Doug Johnson (74).

After collecting the stunning Waterford crystal trophy and a winner's cheque for €67,500, which helped to move him second on the Order of Merit, Rocca acknowledged that Ireland had been good to him.

The last of his five European Tour victories came at the West of Ireland Golf Classic in 1999, when he defeated Padraig Harrington by two shots at Galway Bay Golf & Country Club, and eight years later he was delighted to back in the winner's enclosure on another Christy O'Connor Jnr-designed course at Palmerstown House.

"I am very pleased to win so early in my Seniors career and obviously it has been a long time since my last Tour victory. This tournament is very special. I love the people here in Ireland and they gave me good support," said Rocca, who chipped in twice during the week and made a number of good up-and-downs.

The final day had not started well for Rocca, who was struggling off the tee in heavy rain, and he bogeyed the fifth hole to drop back to three under.

He would birdie the ninth to turn in level par 36 before producing a stroke of magic at the 11th which proved crucial to the final outcome.

Having found water off the tee, Rocca then missed the green short right with his third shot and was staring a bogey in the face while Ginn, his playing partner, was set to make birdie.

A two-stroke swing at that stage would have probably been the end of Rocca's hopes, but the 1996 PGA Championship winner conjured a wonderful chip from the top of the bank that found the bottom of the cup. "I think that was the key," he said.

However, he would go on to produce two more wonderful par saves on the back nine as Ginn faltered. First he got up-and-down from a bunker 20 yards short of the 13th green and then two-putted from 50 yards short of the pin at the 18th.

In fact, his first effort from off the huge 18th green was reminiscent of the putt he holed to force a play-off with John Daly in The Open Championship at St Andrews in 1995 – a comparison recognised by Rocca, who said: "At that moment I did remember the long putt I had in The Open at St Andrews and I hit another nice one. I am very happy. The game was not bad, but the short game was very good."

Ginn, though, was left to rue another Sunday where he failed to turn his undoubted ability into a maiden victory in Europe.

"It was not hard luck, just bad golf, as simple as that. Wrong clubs, wrong time and I paid the penalty. Very disappointed but that's the game. Got to get up next week and go do it again. At 58, you'd think you'd have learned something by now but I just hit two bad clubs.

"I was greedy at eight, where I hit it in the water at the back to make a double bogey, and then hit bad third shot into 16, that really was the key. Eight was a four iron but I should have hit five iron to make sure I didn't go too long, but I got greedy. And then I hit a wedge at 16, just hit a poor shot. If I had a chance there at least I'm on his tail," said Ginn, who has now finished inside the top four places in six of his last seven appearances.

There was joy for Ireland's Adrian Morrow, on ten over par, who collected the JB Carr Memorial Trophy for the leading amateur in the field. Coincidentally, Sunday marked the three year anniversary of the death of Carr, recognised as the greatest amateur golfer of his era and the first Irishman to be elected as captain of The Royal & Ancient Golf Club.

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