

The Frenchman claimed the second European Tour victory of his career at the Madeira Island Open in March

You seriously injured your knee in a skiing accident in 2003 and have only just re-established a proper schedule – did you worry about making a full recovery? The accident was actually in 1995 and the pain started properly in 2001 – 2003 was probably the lowest point. At that time, the thought did occur to me, but in 2004 I found a great physio – Jean-Jacques Rivet based at the Four Seasons Provence – after my second operation and he made me believe that I could return on tour. It was difficult in 2005 since I needed to rely on invitations. So, thanks to all those European Tour promoters who supported me.

You turn 40 at the end of May – where do you see your career heading in the next 10 years?

Following my win, I feel a new lease of life... so I am excited about the next decade. Look at [Eduardo] Romero and [Mark] O'Meara in their 40s!

You won the Madeira Island Open despite double-bogeying the last. Did you worry about making a treble at any point?

Not at all. It was under control all the way. I had a terrible lie for my third beside the green and just knocked it forward. I knew that I would have three to win. So I took them all! Nothing flash and I just got the job done.

Have your goals for the season now changed?

Not really. I want to put myself in a position to win golf tournaments and I do want to play the Ryder Cup again. Hopefully this year. If not in 2008 or the future.

Even when you're up against it you always seem very calm on the course. What's your golfing philosophy?

"Smell the roses on the way round," as Bobby Jones once said... I have had some difficult moments on and off the course along the way. But I love playing golf.

What was the greatest lesson you took from Carnoustie?

I gave it my best shot and I had no problem accepting the outcome. However, life is about learning from past actions.

Is there a new generation of French tour golfers coming through to support the likes of you, Thomas Levet, Jean-Francois Remesy and Gregory Havret?

Yes. There are already some great young golfers on tour like [Raphaël] Jacquelin and [Francois] Delamontagne. The next generation is not far behind them. Us Frenchies are in good shape!

Who were your golfing heroes growing up?

Trevino, Seve, Nicklaus and [1969 French Open champ] Jean Garaialde.

You're known as a wine connoisseur. Can you recommend us an interesting new wine to try?

No. Stick to the French classics! Latour, Cheval Blanc, Ausone, Margaux, Pichon.

SPOTLIGHT



JEAN VAN DE VELDE

The European Tour Golfer of the Month for March