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FORMER CHAMPIONS SCHEDULED TO PLAY AT AT&T CHAMPIONS CLASSIC

Defending Champion Tom Kite Headlines Field at Valencia Country Club March 12-18

SANTA CLARITA, Calif. – Defending champion and two-time event winner Tom Kite heads the list of former champions who are among the early entries for the 18th annual AT&T Champions Classic golf tournament March 12-18 at Valencia Country Club.

Kite, a 5-shot winner over Gil Morgan in 2006, is one of four men in this year's field to have won the PGA Tour's Champions Tour event on this 6,940-yard, par 72 course, which is considered one of the most difficult on the tour.

His initial win here came in a playoff with Tom Watson in 2002. Des Smyth of Ireland got his first Champions Tour win in 2005, Morgan added a victory in 2004, and Tom Purtzer took the crown in 2003, in the only event to be shortened – to 36 holes – due to rain.

Kite, who had gone winless on the tour in 2005, used the \$240,000 he got for last year's championship as the springboard to a fourth-place finish on the money list, with more than \$1.6 million in earnings. He also added a win in the Boeing Greater Seattle Classic later in the year.

A crowd favorite, Kite started the final round of last year's AT&T Champions Classic with a one stroke lead thanks to a tournament record 8-under-par 64 on Saturday. He was four shots up on the field after six holes on the final day and never led by fewer than five shots over the final nine holes. His 5-stroke margin of victory was the largest in the history of the tournament.

Morgan's runner-up effort was his fourth finish in the top three in the past five years, and it would be an understatement to say his game is suited to this Robert Trent Jones-designed course. Morgan finished third in 2002 and was second the next year before notching his third win in 2004, and the \$140,800 he won here last year made him the first player to surpass the \$1 million mark in all-time earnings in the tournament.

The holder of a Doctor of Optometry degree, Morgan demonstrated his mastery of Valencia Country Club en route to his 2004 title. He played the first two rounds in 11-under and went into the final round with a 3-shot lead. Peter Jacobsen and Craig Stadler pulled within two shots after eight holes, but Morgan birdied the 9th, 10th and 11th to build a 5-shot advantage and finished two strokes ahead of Larry Nelson.

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AT&T Champions Classic 2-2-2-2

That was Morgan's fifth title in the Los Angeles area and the fourth course on which he had won, and it made up for 2003, when he had an apparent victory stolen by Purtzer on the final hole.

Purtzer, who had a hole-in-one in the first round of that year's tournament, teed off on the final hole two strokes behind Morgan. A few minutes later Purtzer was celebrating a dramatic 1-shot win after rolling in an eagle putt measured at 58 feet, 3 inches.

It was Purtzer's first title on the Champions Tour.

Two years later, in 2005, Smyth got his first win with similar dramatics. The Irishman started the final day six strokes behind leader Keith Fergus. While Fergus struggled, Smyth put together a round of 4-under-par 68 and got the win when D.A. Weibring and Mark McNulty both missed chances to force a playoff on the final hole.

Kite's Classic title in 2002 came in a playoff. He birdied the 54th hole to tie Tom Watson and force the playoff, then won it with a par on the second extra hole.

Scheduled to join the quartet of Valencia winners in the 78-player field are past Los Angeles area Champions Tour winners Raymond Floyd (1992), Dale Douglass ('93), John Bland ('95) and Joe Inman, who won three in a row from 1998 to 2000.

In addition, eight of the top 10 on the 2006 money list are expected to be among those in pursuit of a share of the \$1.6 million purse when tournament play gets under way March 16. A check for \$240,000 awaits the eventual champion.

Tickets for this year's 54-hole stroke-play event are available to purchase online at www.attchampionsclassic.com with a variety of ticket packages available or by calling 661-260-1897. Tom Kite is the defending champion and tournament play for the 2007 event is scheduled to start on Friday, March 16.

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