

## STORM PREVAILS AS 10 QUALIFY FOR THE OPEN AT IFQ EUROPE

Written by TMAC GOLF  
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Graeme Storm coasted to a place in the 2011 Open Championship at Royal St George's as he won International Final Qualifying Europe for the second time in three years at Sunningdale. The 33-year-old from Hartlepool produced rounds of 65 and 62 over the Old and New courses for a 12-under-par 127, taking the first of 10 qualifying places on offer at Sandwich. At the end of a long day, the start of which was delayed by 90 minutes because of heavy rain, Storm, the 2007 French Open winner, emerged with a three-shot victory over Sweden's Alexander Noren.

"The delay certainly helped me, because when I teed-off the rain had stopped and the conditions were perfect," admitted Storm, who won IFQ at Sunningdale in 2009. "It's fantastic to qualify. I've not played St George's since the Amateur Championship was there in 1997, so it will be nice to go back."

Noren, fresh from his victory in Sunday's Wales Open at Celtic Manor, secured a double success, as he set up a third Open appearance with rounds of 66 and 64 for a 130.

"I came here on a great high, but I said to my caddie that I needed to just focus for one more day and then we could celebrate the win," he said. "I was always going to be happy whatever happened today but now I can really enjoy all of this."

Frenchman Thomas Levet, joint runner-up in the 2002 Open at Muirfield, continued his rich vein of qualifying form as he progressed in a share of third on 131 after a 65 and a 66. The former Scottish Open winner booked a place in the US Open at nearby Walton Heath last week, and he completed a good seven days with another purposeful display.

"I've got through to The Open and the US Open at qualifying; there's not many guys do that," smiled Levet.

Scotsman Peter Whiteford, seventh in the BMW PGA championship and eighth in the Wales Open over the past week, secured his first start in a Major after a 67 and a 64 left him in a tie for third on 131. English youngster Gary Boyd, who played in the 2008 Open at Royal Birkdale, also came through on 131.

Spain's Alejandro Canizares, who was tied-fourth heading into the final round of last year's Open at St Andrews but fell away into a tie for 27th with a closing 77, ensured a swift return with a 67 and a 65 for 132.

He was joined on that mark by France's Gregory Bourdy and the English duo of Richard McEvoy and former European Open winner Kenneth Ferrie.

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“I actually came through a seven-man play-off in this event for the 2005 Open at St Andrews and then won the European Open the following week at the K Club,” said Ferrie. “That was my best ever year and hopefully getting through here can kick-start my season again.”

In a five-man play-off to decide the final place, George Coetzee emerged with the coveted 10th and final berth. The South African, along with Brett Rumford, Soren Kjeldsen, Pablo Larrazabal and Mark Tullo, had all finished on six under par. As Kjeldsen, Rumford and Tullo were eliminated, Coetzee finally prevailed with a birdie-two on the sixth extra hole, to deny Spain’s Larrazabal.