

Lagoutte lands Finnair Masters by two shots

VIRGINIE Lagoutte of France fired a final round four-under-par 67 to seal her second Ladies European Tour victory at the Finnair Masters in Finland. The 27-year-old from Montpellier defeated Sweden's Elin Ohlsson by two shots on 10-under-par 203 at Helsinki Golf Club — the oldest course in Finland — and claimed a €30,000 first prize.

Gwladys Nocera and Kris Lindstrom of the United States tied for third on five-under-par 208.

Lagoutte previously won the 2005 KLM Ladies Open after a play-off but admitted that her second victory felt more deserving.

Hers was the sixth French victory of 2006 on the Ladies European Tour after Nocera and Stephanie Arricau won five times this year between them.

"The first win wasn't the same. I played very well today so I'm very happy," she said. "I am really pleased because this win should mean that I can play in the Evian Masters again next year."

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"I could never relax today because Elin was putting so well from the 13th hole and chasing me all the way," Lagoutte said.

Lagoutte began the day on six-un-

der-par with a one-stroke lead over Mianne Bagger and playing partners Ohlsson and Lindstrom. She had an excellent final round with six birdies and two bogeys. She quickly moved three strokes clear on eight-under-par after birdies at the fourth and the sixth.

She bogeyed the par-three eighth where she found the greenside bunker with her tee shot and two putted, but sank a long putt at the par-four 10th hole to move to eight-under-par, gaining a two-stroke lead over Lynn Brooky of New Zealand, who had back-to-back birdies at the 10th and 11th.

Brooky double bogeyed the 12th to move back to four-under and off the leader board while Lagoutte three-putted the par-three 11th.

Lagoutte birdied the 13th and 14th holes to go to nine-under with a three-stroke lead over her playing partners. Then Ohlsson bombed a second successive putt for birdie to move within two of the leader.

At the par-five 17th, Lagoutte two-putted from 40 feet for birdie to move to ten-under. Ohlsson chipped and putted from the back of the green to move to eight-under and remained two shots behind in outright second.

horse riding, later revealed that her fiancé Sebastien Clement, who was caddying for her, was more nervous than she was over the course of play. "He was very stressed, but I was not!" she said.

Lagoutte is one of a generation of young French players who has displayed an abundance of talent this year and she attributes the French dominance to the team player mentality.

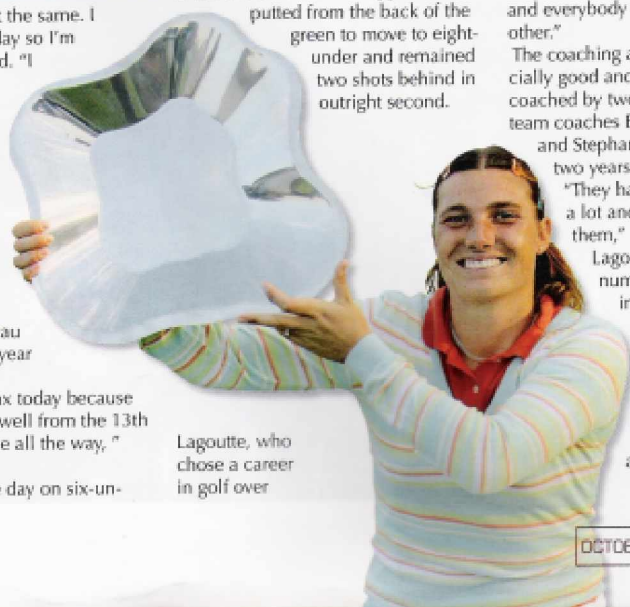
Virginie Lagoutte is one of a generation of young French players who has displayed an abundance of talent this year and she attributes the French dominance to the team player mentality.

"The French are playing better and better and its boys and girls," she said. "I think it's because it's a group thing and everybody is just helping each other."

The coaching appears to be especially good and Lagoutte has been coached by two of the French national team coaches Benoit du Colombier and Stephan Mourgue for the last two years.

"They have been helping me a lot and I am very proud of them," she said.

Lagoutte admitted to using a number of secret weapons in her arsenal today: a pink flamingo driver head cover which matches her driver shaft and glove and her faithful yellow ball marker in the shape of a teddy bear.



Lagoutte, who chose a career in golf over