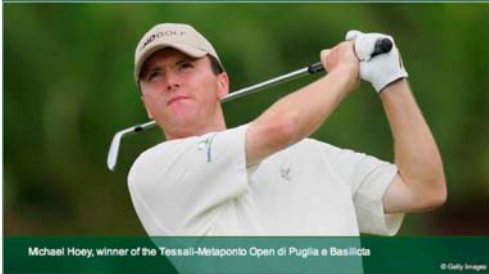


## Hoey Eyes an Optimistic Future after Laser Surgery

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Michael Hoey is looking for a swift return to The European Tour after successful laser eye surgery inspired the Northern Irishman to the second Challenge Tour success of his career at the Tessali-Metaponto Open di Puglia e Basilicata.

The 28 year old from Belfast, who defeated Welshman Liam Bond at the first hole of a sudden-death play-off at the Riva dei Tessali Golf Club in Italy on Sunday, underwent the surgical procedure in January to correct his short sightedness and has been astounded by the resulting improvement.

Before attending the London Vision Clinic at the turn of the year, the 2001 British Amateur Champion could not follow the complete flight of his golf ball, especially off the tee, but he now boasts perfect vision in both eyes as he looks to return to The European Tour via the Challenge Tour Rankings.

He said: "I got sick of asking caddies where my ball had landed to be honest. It was actually ridiculous when you consider I was playing against the best players in the world last year and I couldn't see where my ball was finishing.

"I knew about the surgery because my brother had it done, and he was the main reason I went for it because he swore by it. I went to the London Vision Clinic and saw a guy called Dan Reinstein, who is one of the best in the world in that field.

"After a week of having the surgery my eyesight was perfect. Before the surgery it was really bad, but now my vision is probably better than 20/20 and it has made an outrageous difference to me on the golf course. I feel I can read greens a lot better as well, especially at times when the light is not so good. Hopefully it will remain that good for the next ten years."

Hoey's victory in Italy, which was worth €20,800 and propelled him to eighth place on the Rankings, has left the Northern Irishman in a fantastic position to regain his European Tour card for 2008.

He is now relishing the remainder of the season as he attempts to overhaul runaway leader Edoardo Molinari of Italy for the Number One spot.

"The goal for the season is to get into the top ten of the Rankings and winning in Italy is a big step towards that," said Hoey, whose other Challenge Tour victory came at the 2005 BA CA Golf Open presented by Telekom Austria, the same season he finished eight on the final Rankings to win his place on The European Tour.

"I was getting more and more confident over the last month or so and winning again is great to keep that momentum going."