

HOW TO BET ON GOLF

INTERVIEW WITH THE 'GOLF INSIDER'

ASKING THE QUESTIONS: SBC EDITOR, PETER LING

Welcome to the latest in a series of special features we are publishing at SBC, dedicated to understanding how to bet on a range of relatively, lesser-known sports.

In this article, we are tackling the sport of golf, which continues to be a major growth area in the betting world offering profitable options for the shrewd punter to take advantage of.

To explore how to bet on the sport in-depth, I interviewed golf betting expert, the 'Golf Insider' on everything from how golf works, the different markets and tournaments on offer, the bookmakers to use and much more besides. You can read the full interview below.

The Golf Insider is a renowned expert on the sport having made a significant profit from his SBC-[recommended tipping service](#) since 2014. **Over the course of 1989 tips between 2014 and 2019 he has made an overall 15.14% ROI from a mixture of outright and 2/3 ball tips.** You can read more about these markets and some of the reasons they can be profitable if tackled correctly in the following interview.

If interested in the Golf Insider service, as an SBC member you can enjoy a **60-day trial** plus a **10% discount** on the cost of membership. Further details can be found at the [Golf Insider page](#).

SBC: You have a fantastic track record dating back several years betting on golf. How did you first get involved betting on the sport?

Golf Insider: I started betting when I was a teenager, backing all types of bets in all types of markets. Golf always featured as it was a sport I liked playing and watching, but when it came to betting it was the one that afforded me the most success.

Over the years I've continued betting and through various positions in the betting industry, both in the UK and abroad, I've refined my strategy and improved its performance.

These days work is a bit of a busman's holiday for me as I get to work full-time on something I like doing anyway. I still bet on other sports, but not nearly to the same level as golf.

SBC: What would you say is the main appeal for you about betting on golf?

GI: Betting on golf in my opinion, and from what I've learned from working in the industry, is definitely one of the more profitable sports to bet on for a number of reasons.

Firstly, unlike sports such as football and tennis, golf prices significantly differ from firm to firm especially early in the week before the market has properly formed. This means there is often huge value to be had on *Tournament Winner* bets and to some extent side markets such as *Top 20's*.

When it comes to the Majors, bookies are falling over themselves to offer the most competitive prices. Not only are they offering enhanced prices, but the place terms are also increased to 7, 8 or even 10 places. This gives the punter a huge edge as the bookies are betting "overbroke" so punters armed with a sensible staking plan can really take advantage of these generous terms.

Another reason why winning money on golf is easier than most other sports is the fact that most companies only have one or two-man teams who have to look after the whole golfing product. This means compilers don't always have time to spend hours on each individual market and therefore will often price markets "willy nilly" without always taking the greatest care and attention.

Football and tennis will always be harder to make money on because the prices on matches are so accurate due to the weight of money from syndicates and big Asian firms. These prices will never differ significantly from firm to firm as all bookies follow the Asian lines. You may get on the right side of a football move once in a while and beat the price, but in the long run you'll struggle to make any significant profit.

SBC: Let's discuss how the golfing schedule works throughout a typical year. How many tournaments are there each week and when do they start?

GI: Professional golf is played worldwide over a wrap-around season which runs from one year to the next. Bar a couple of weeks around Christmas/New Year, it's a 365-days-a-year sport.

The two biggest circuits, or "golf tours", where the world's best players spend most of their time, are the *European Tour* and the *PGA Tour* in America.

The *European Tour* actually stages events all over the world (Asia, Africa, Australia and even South America) but the majority of its tournaments during the year are held in Europe.

The *PGA Tour* stays almost exclusively within the United States and events are held all over the country... California to Florida, Hawaii to New York.

There are also joint tournaments which the tours "co-sanction" like the four Majors (the *US Masters*, *US Open*, the *Open Championship* and the *US PGA*) and then various other events which are held with other, smaller tours in Australia, South Africa and Asia.

99% of golf tournaments are played over four days. They start on Thursday and finish on Sunday - very occasionally they go Wednesday to Saturday, or Friday to Monday. Each one is played over 72 holes, made up of four rounds of 18 holes, each round played on a separate day.

Typically the schedule is... Round 1 (Thursday), Round 2 (Friday), Round 3 (Saturday) and Round 4 (Sunday).

Sometimes bad weather will affect a tournament. Poor conditions can make them run over into an extra day, or they can be shortened, and reduced down to just two or three rounds. But the vast majority go the full distance of 72 holes.

SBC: How about the Majors? For the uninitiated, can you explain what they are, why they are so special and when they take place?

GI: Each year the standout tournaments on the golfing calendar are the four blue-riband events which carry the most prestige, prize-money and ranking points. These are known as the "Majors".

They are contested by the world's top players (as determined by their world ranking, position on the money list, past performance record, and those golfers who come through pre-qualifying)... so it's the best of the best at any given time.

There are four Majors held each year, three in the USA and one in the UK.

These are the events where the most money is wagered, and where the biggest winners can be landed. And, crucially, from the perspective of punters it's a time when the layers fall over themselves to offer fantastic each-way terms (sometimes running to 7, 8 or even 10 places), price up markets like they never normally do, and provide the betting public with their best chance of making a profit. Basically, the Majors are loss-leaders for bookmakers.

SBC: In any given week you can often find 6-7 tournaments of various quality taking place, yet usually you advise bets in just 1 to 2 tournaments. Why do you do that and what is the difference between the various tournaments on offer?

GI: For my work I price up a whole range of tournaments each week. The main focus is always the PGA Tour and European Tours, because these are where most money is wagered, but there are also markets to compile for other tours - Web.com, Seniors/Champions, LPGA, Challenge Tour etc.

My personal preference is for the main professional tours as this is where the most data is available, and where liquidity is best. It forms the basis of my own betting and this in turn drives the *Golf Insider* service where I share my Tournament Winner and 3-ball bets, plus a few others (Round 1 Leader, Top 20) at the Majors.

The other events generally concern tournaments where liquidity is poor, or where the market is centred on just a handful of players, or those which can't be researched well enough as some tours don't publish the kind of data I need to accurately price up the markets I'm interested in.

SBC: Your main focus and that of most golf punters is the outright market where you are backing one golfer against a large field. What are the pros and cons of outright betting?

GI: Well for starters I don't back just one golfer. Typically, I will back 4-5 in the outrights before each tournament. And in a field of 150+ backing this number of players make perfect sense.

Because by backing a greater number of players you spread your edge over a wider percentage of the market and so give yourself a better chance of landing a winner. The advantage is that you hit the target more often and so smooth out the peaks and troughs which would be more pronounced if you only backed the one golfer.

So, presuming you back the right players, if you have a value edge, the more often you use it, the more success you will enjoy.

The downside to this approach is that you can have weeks where all 5 golfers fail to place, and this can be frustrating and test your nerve a bit if it continues. But if the method is sound then over the long run the value will deliver you a profit. This is what you need to remember.

SBC: How do you cope with the low strike-rate that you can endure when backing big priced golfers? For many punters, the idea of going a few months without a big winner can be a tough pill to swallow. What is your advice for those interested in golf betting but worried about this?

GI: As I said above, if your strategy is correct and there's value in your bets, there's no reason why you won't be able to maintain a profit. This is always the thing to remember, more so when a bad run comes along.

But you're right, losing runs happen from time to time. It has to when you're backing at these kind of odds each week. At these times, provided you're confident with your methods you have to back yourself to come through it.

The low strike rate you have to accept when backing golfers in the outright market. Bets at 100/1 don't win everyday. When they do that's great, but having a solid staking plan and a big enough betting bank, this should see you through. Plus a bit of patience!

And this is my advice to anyone who has an issue with betting like this, remember the kind of bets you're placing, appreciate that they're not all going to win, and understand that you'll have weeks where your bets don't even make the cut. Because that's what happens when you're backing at big prices.

As someone told me once, the bigger the prices of the bets, the longer you need to bet them in order to get a true idea of their quality.

SBC: Usually I find that backing each way generates a lower overall profit than if backing all bets to win, yet many punters prefer this due to the fact each way betting makes a tipster easier to follow. Is this why you advise so many of your bets each way?

GI: Personally, I mix and match things depending on the odds, the number of bets I'm having in a tournament, and also the profile of the players I'm looking at.

So, my own betting is slightly different to the *Golf Insider* service, where the idea is to provide a service which has a steady number of bets and a less volatile performance. Still making a profit of course, but not advising members "all or nothing" bets every week where you either back a 150/1 winner or end up empty handed. There's nothing worse than seeing a player get touched off into 3rd or 4th place, or lose a play-off, and get nothing for it.

I agree that the numbers say long-term you'll make a bigger profit if you back all the bets win only, but this type of betting doesn't suit everyone. And I understand this. So, as you say betting each-way does make the service easier to follow.

SBC: What other tips do you have about getting the right 'golf betting mindset'?

GI: Betting on golf is no different to betting on any other sport. So, it's the simple things which also apply to football or racing, or betting on anything really. Proper form study, a good grasp of value, sensible staking and a consistent strategy. And try to tell yourself that when bets lose not to get too upset!

My own software does a lot of the work for me on the pricing and staking side of things. So, it's then a case of placing the bets and trusting the system.

SBC: Another area of expertise are your 2-ball and 3-ball bets, where again you have a very profitable record long-term. How does these bets work and why do you bet in these markets?

GI: During the first 2 days (or rounds) of a golf tournament, the field is split into mini-groups of 3 players, known as 3-balls.

Now to avoid a big queue on the 1st tee when the event starts, and to allow for more TV coverage, these groups begin their rounds roughly 10-12 minutes apart. This means when you look at a tournament's Round 1 3-balls, you'll see start times next to each 3-ball (10:15, 10:27 etc).

With a 3-ball, you're placing a bet on which of the 3 golfers in the group will shoot the lowest score over the 18 holes played on that day (i.e. one completed round). And as for 2-ball bets, the same basic principle applies but here you're usually looking at bets taking place after the halfway cut, when there are less players competing, and so the groups are reduced from 3 to 2 players.

Through my work as an odds-compiler, working alongside the quant team, I developed an algorithm (what I call my "value machine") that produces accurate pricing models for these groups. More accurate, I believe, than my competitors.

And it's this model which provides the basis for my prices, and it also underpins my own personal betting as well.

2-balls and 3-balls are one of my favourite betting mediums and one of my most profitable. The value here is not on the marquee 3-balls but the lesser 3-balls with some of the relatively unknown players. These 3-balls don't always show on Oddschecker which is a huge advantage for people like me, as I don't have to worry about prices disappearing.

The reason why the value is here is because compilers often don't know these players well and price up the 3-ball thinking that nobody will bother betting this "betting fodder" and therefore whack up any old prices.

I also like betting 3-balls in Round 2 once I can see how the players have all fared on Day 1. I'll look at the stats which often gives a great indication how each player has played that day. *Player A* won his 3-ball yet he only hit 55% Greens-In-Regulation, whereas *Player B* hit 80% Greens-In-Regulation but lost by 1. This tells me that one player was in control of his golf ball and holed nothing and the other was hitting it all over the place but holing every putt he looked at. Yet in Round 2 the bookies have *Player A* as the 4/6 favourite.

In this situation I'd be having a bet on *Player B* at 5/4 as I believe *Player A* will not be able to sustain his level on the greens etc.

I'm less keen on 2-ball or 3-ball bets in the final rounds of a tournament, because weekend golf, especially on Sundays, can do funny things to golfers so I would generally advise swerving these days.

SBC: Are there any other golf betting markets you recommend punters take a look at?

GI: I believe all markets offer punters value if the situation is right.

For example *Tournament Winner* betting is definitely best during the four Majors as prices and place terms are enhanced.

Top 20 betting is most effective when the event has less than the usual 150 runners. Firms forget to slightly reduce the *Top 20* prices to take this into account and therefore the value is often enhanced. *Top 20* has become more and more popular over the last 18 months because there's nothing worse than tipping up a 300/1 shot who finishes 13th. You've called it right in terms of this player having a good week but you've ended up losing money as you only bet him each way! Some firms offer crazy prices in this market (Stan James especially) which means there is always value to be had.

Top Nationality and *72-hole* match bets are also good betting markets if there are certain players you want to side with or get against.

SBC: Most golf tournaments are 4-days long, which open up the possibility of trading. What advice do you have for those interested in trading their golf bets on the exchanges?

GI: I don't do much trading myself. Most times I prefer to stick with my bets win or lose. And I've done some figures in the past which show me that on my bets that's the best way to operate.

But a bit like backing win only as opposed to each-way there can be times when it makes sense to close out a position and take a profit. As I said above, I'll look at the profile of the player and a guy I've backed at 150/1 who's known to choke a bit, I'll maybe take out some insurance if he's well-placed and too short IMO in the win market.

The danger is you can become over cautious if you're not careful and hedge everything that you see shorten, and if you do this you're giving back a lot of the value that you had on your side to begin with. Trading can work. And there's plenty out there who do it. But if your bets are sound to begin with you might not need to go there.

SBC: Speaking of exchanges, how easy is it to place your golf bets on them and how do the odds on offer there compare to those from bookmakers?

GI: Betting on the exchanges is fine and I'll place some of my bets there instead of with regular firms.

Liquidity isn't always there on the bigger priced golfers, that's the main issue for me, but sometimes you can nick an extra few clicks as the markets are less regulated than with the fixed-odds firms.

It'd be great for the punters if there was better choice and more money to bet, and maybe this will come over time.

SBC: Which exchanges would you therefore recommend for golf betting?

GI: Betfair. They still have the edge in terms of prices and market depth.

SBC: How does the issue of account restrictions and closures impact golf punters? My experience tells me you are perhaps less likely to have a bookmaker account restricted if backing golf winners – would you agree?

GI: Not necessarily. As I said above, golf is seen as a niche sport when it comes to betting and most punters who regularly bet outside of the Majors are viewed as either being clued-up or are maybe following something like the *Golf Insider*.

So even if we're talking small stakes bets, this can still lead to accounts being reviewed and possibly restricted in some way.

But it will vary from firm to firm. Some "red flag" customers not just for their golf bets but for their overall trading history, some will act quickly and others will leave well alone.

The best thing is to have multiple accounts, move money around and don't just win off one bookie all the time. They don't like this!

SBC: Good advice – I always recommend punters spread their bets and winnings around, regardless of the sports and markets they bet on. Taking this a step further, which bookmakers would you recommend for golf betting?

GI: This is very much a personal choice. Different firms have different operating styles in terms of customer accounts which means hard and fast rules are difficult to apply. My best advice would be to bet smart, really. Mix up your bets, change firms and use every means possible to get your bets on.

I've lost count of the number of accounts I've had with firms. But more choice makes for a better chance to secure the best prices. And over the long-term that effort is worth it.

SBC: In terms of learning more about golf betting, what resources (websites, magazines, podcasts etc..) would you recommend?

GI: For stats I would start with the official website for each of the main tours, that's the PGA Tour and the European Tour. The US site is excellent for data as well as comment and provides all the information you could wish for.

The European site by comparison isn't as good, which is a shame. They did try to launch an updated version last year in time for the PGA, their flagship event, but it was hit by quite a few teething issues and they've now gone back to the more basic version. Hopefully it'll get a re-launch sometime soon.

Added to this I follow all sorts of golf-related websites, Twitter accounts (especially for players I'm looking at) and various golf commentators and tipsters who offer their opinions. Some I respect, others I don't, but it all helps in the process.

In the final analysis I will always go back to my own figures and workings, and the players who my "value machine" has highlighted, but extra information sources can add some extra dimension (players who are injured, for example) or tip-off those who are likely to be market-movers.

SBC: Finally, where can punters follow each golf tournament in terms of TV feeds, streams, live scores etc..?

GI: These days you can follow the action pretty much 24/7. Whether you go down the route of satellite television, both general sports channels (like *Sky Sports*) or dedicated media (for example, the *Golf Channel*). Then there's the tour's official websites which also provide live and recorded content. Plus other streaming services on bookmakers' sites or wherever.

There's no shortage of coverage these days, which is great for golf punters as there's nothing better than watching your bets win!

My thanks to the Golf Insider for this interview.

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