

GOLF INSIDER

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS – BEHIND THE SCENES WITH A WINNING GOLF TIPSTER

BY MATTHEW WALTON

Shared with permission, below you can read an interview with the 'Golf Insider' by Matthew Walton as updated in 2018.

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Golf Insider Q&A - Updated

Interview by Matthew Walton

It's just before 10am on a nothing sort of day in late Autumn. It's wet outside. London is starting to get on with its daily business.

As for me, this is my view...



I'm sat in the lobby of a premier-listed hotel owned by a leading chain... waiting.

And I do a lot of waiting in my line of work. Sat in coffee shops, sat in hotels, sat in restaurants.

[I shudder to think how many hours I've spent over the past 25 years that I've been in this business, sat, waiting for people.]

But it's generally worth my while as I'm there to meet interesting people, useful people. People who can help me, and you, win money.

Now the man I'm here to meet today I've met several times before, first back in June 2014. And since then he's become a highly-prized contact and very much the driving force behind a service that time and again has proven to be a thorn-in-the-side of the bookies.

Sometimes the very same bookies he himself works for!!

Because I'm waiting this morning to see the Golf Insider. A man who I first recruited back in the Summer of 2014, when he was based in London working for one of the several start-up betting operations that appeared on the scene at the time...

And he's a man who I've followed through his subsequent career moves, onwards and upwards, both at home in the UK and abroad, to his current position where he now commands a senior post in the industry, creating odds that you and I regularly refer to, and analyse.

But he remains very much "my man".

I have a hotline to him, keeping in touch constantly by phone, email, Skype and WhatsApp... to receive his own personal assessment of each week's golfing action and, more importantly, details of his own personal bets.

And over the years we've been collaborating, this working relationship has been an extremely lucrative one for both parties - for the Insider himself, as well as members of the private betting service that he helps to run.

Now I value his judgement very highly. He's a still relatively young man, in his late 30's, compared to some of the dinosaurs who dominate the betting landscape, but his state-of-the-art approach to golf betting, and the methodology around the selection and placement of his bets, is second-to-none.

Driven by his own knowledge of the sport, and his contacts within the professional game, but fundamentally underpinned by his own, bespoke model (aka his "value machine") that uses a complex set of inter-related algorithms to accurately predict the chances, and so correct value odds, of each player in the field... this is what sets him apart from the other tipsters I have come across with regards to this sport.

Because golf is a fantastic sport to bet on. One that affords backers the chance to profit from genuine winners-of-a-lifetime.

Serving up big-priced successes at 80/1, 125/1, 66/1, 50/1, 70/1... all of which have been given to members by the Insider over the years. Plus many, many more winners besides.

And when armed with the right information, that targets the "blindspots" the bookies have when it comes to the golf markets - as you'll see when you read on - it really is like betting kryptonite.

So having first met with the Insider back in June 2014, and having spoken to him many times since, and then finally sitting down to do an in-depth Q&A with him in late 2017... it was now time to meet-up again and update the story.

Understanding how and why he bets, what he seeks out and what he disregards, the way in which he treats success and failure, and why, ultimately, he makes a tidy living at golf betting (aside from his 9-to-5 day job in the trading room)... this is all part of

realising just how good he is at what he does, and why as someone who likes to bet on golf - or should be if you aren't already - you need to get on this information.

Now we talked on this occasion for two, maybe two and a half hours, and through this conversation, which was much more than a simple interrogation, I teased out of him the thoughts, opinions and ideas he has about golf betting, and betting in general.

Starting at the beginning, and plotting our way through his career in the business, it proved an interesting discussion. I got to know several new things about him and learned a whole lot more about the way his betting has developed over the years.

Read on and you'll get an understanding of why I value him so highly and if you're not already betting with him... then you should be.

So like any good story, I started right at the beginning by asking him where it all began...

Q: Can you tell me a little about your background, and what brought you to betting in the first place?

A: Betting happened quite by chance, really. You read stories about professional gamblers growing up in a betting environment, with a father or favourite uncle who liked a punt, or those who backed the winner of the Derby as a schoolboy... but this wasn't me.

I grew up in the South of England, went to a decent school, followed that by going straight to university. I got a degree, like all my friends did at the time, and could easily have gone into any sort of run-of-the-mill, regular profession after that.

For sure, sport was always an interest. Playing it, watching it... but betting wasn't.

I guess I might have ended up in something like a bank, as I was always pretty good with numbers, and my degree was in this area... but, no, I can't say betting was on the radar at the time.

This came along maybe 12 months afterwards, on the back of several failed interviews for all sorts of jobs, and a bit of temping...

Anyway, a mate of mine from university had a friend who worked for a leading bookmaker, and through him I got to hear about a job opportunity.

I started working for this particular firm back in 2002, it would have been. Yes, November time [*specific details of names and dates I have to keep confidential, you understand, to maintain the Insider's privacy with regards to his current position*].

I liked it... the type of work suited my interests. And I got to work on various desks, getting exposure to a number of different sports. It was good fun. As a young guy, who liked sport, with no family, it's a great working environment to be in.

I moved from that firm a couple of years later, to another bookmaker... but there I found the career ladder led to a series of dead-ends (positions taken by guys who were going nowhere anytime soon), so I went to another firm, which also offered me the chance to work overseas.

I did that for a while, then came back to the UK, to work for a smaller firm, but at a higher grade. They subsequently got taken over. So I moved again, but because of my previous position I now got a more senior role.

So the process hasn't been in one straight line, but it's always been a step forwards, I think. And I've been lucky. I've not been out of work at any stage, and I've managed to join the right firm at pretty much the right time.

I've now been in the business for a number of years. It's the only job I've ever done, full-time, and it's what I do day-in, day-out.

Q: And why end up with golf betting? Why not horseracing or football or any other sport?

A: Well, my dad's a big golfer, a single-figure handicapper, and I've played it from an early age, and always had an interest in watching it.

And then in work, it was the sport that I liked working on the best. It didn't have the daily churn of racing, and it offered better value markets than, say, football. And other sports attracted so little money they just didn't excite me at all.

Also golf was a sport that internally had much less competition. So, ok, there were less jobs going, which is why I've moved around a bit, but when open, there are less people capable of doing them well.

And then, when given the chance, I'd run good books on the tournaments that came up.

So gradually I got more and more settled in this area and now I wouldn't leave for almost any other position. None that immediately springs to mind anyway.

Q: And your own personal betting, did this begin as soon as you started work?

A: No, not at first. I was a bit more circumspect than some of the guys I've worked with, who seemed hell-bent on losing their wages before they'd even earned them!

I guess this goes back to my familiarity with numbers. I understood from the outset about the importance of betting with your head and not your heart. And then you see the clients, how they bet, and you learn from them. Those that bet shrewdly, and patiently, and win. Those who bet with less control... or none at all!

And then the more senior I got, and as the industry moved on a bit, the more familiar I got with the quant side of things. Using models and algorithms... and once this started, and I could see the results, I began to bet more seriously myself. Small at first, but it's grown ever since.

Q: So how much do you bet now on a tournament, or each week?

A: Across all markets... hundreds. Maybe into the thousands. It all depends on what's available value-wise and the strength of the market. I bet on a fair number of

markets, not all of which we use on the service [*the reason for this is to control the volume of bets*], so my outlay gets spread quite wide.

I know you've asked me before if I could stop work and bet full-time for a living just on golf. And the answer is yes. But I like the job, and working in the industry keeps me informed as to what's going on. It keeps my brain sharp, and it definitely helps my betting.

Q: But you get your bets on ok? Members constantly tell me about their problems with getting their stakes down.

A: Tell me about it! I obviously have an inside working knowledge of the business so I use this to my benefit in getting bets on, and placing money through a number of outlets. But it is tough. Much harder than it was a few years ago.

You and I have spoken before about getting on, and you know some of the methods I use. They're not very different to what any of the members could do - I bet with many different firms, through other channels, and other people. Yes, I can call in a few favours here and there - which also helps. But I just approach it more as part of my job, than maybe just a hobby... so I'm on it all the time.

My advice to backers would be to use as many outlets as they can, search out value on the exchanges and do be prepared to put in a little bit of leg-work, as it does pay off.

Q: And do you bet on other sports?

A: Not that much. Obviously working where I do there's information going around on a daily basis about some horse, or a football team, or a tennis player. And some of it's good, but some of it's wide of the mark.

And I've got mates on other desks who every now and again word me up about this and that. Usually racing, that's where the bulk of the information is.

But I don't really have the time to spend studying the other sports, so I stick to the serious betting on golf. It makes me the most money after all. And it's that discipline which I've always tried to keep... it's amazing how many clients you see clean up on one sport, and then give it all back on something else.

Q: That's interesting, so from what you know, how would you rate betting on golf compared to other sports like horseracing, football or tennis?

A: 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.

I mean, 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 like the *Top 20's*.

When it comes to the Majors, bookies fall over themselves to offer the best prices. Not only are they offering enhanced prices, but the each-way terms are also increased to 7 or 8 places, sometimes 10! This gives punters a huge edge as the bookies are pretty much betting to a busted book... so punters armed with a sensible staking plan, and good information, can take full advantage.

Another reason why winning money on golf is easier is the fact that most companies still only have one or two people who have to look after the whole golfing product. This means compilers simply don't have time to spend hours on each individual market and often price markets on-the-fly, without taking the greatest care and attention. I've seen this many times.

Football and tennis are 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 I think you'll definitely struggle to make any significant profit.

So like you asked before, the main problem golf punters face is getting their bets on.

Golf is still a fairly niche sport when it comes to betting, and most people who bet on it outside of the Majors tend to know their stuff, or at least are following the advice of someone who does!

Therefore some firms will flag you, or even close your account, after just a few bets if they think these bets to be shrewd or informed.

It's a constant struggle to open new accounts and get bets on, however it's one worth sticking with as the profits are there to be had.

Q: So in general terms, on a scale of 1-10, how clued-up do you think the bookies are when it comes to pricing up golf markets?

A: Like I mentioned above, most firms only have a small team of golf traders who are expected to cover a wide range of tournaments and markets so the pool of expertise is sometimes limited. Some firms have very knowledgeable golf traders, guys who I'd listen to myself, while others simply don't.

I don't know for sure, but I'm certain some firms wait for others to price up markets before getting the tracing paper out and copying prices.

The majority of odds compilers are well-informed because simply they have to be! When you're in a team of two or even a one man band (like myself) you have to be good at what you do otherwise you'll be picked off all the time.

However, even the best will make mistakes as there are so many markets to price up and so little time that mistakes get made. These aren't by any means obvious mistakes but subtle ones that other shrewd punters latch onto.

On a scale of 1-10, I'd rate the bookies overall ability at pricing golf markets at 7.

Q: Which markets should punters focus on in terms of value, and making money? And which ones should they avoid?

A: I believe all markets offer punters value if the information 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 often 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.

2/3-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* rarely 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 getting on 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 shot. 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 don't like betting on *2/3 balls* at the weekend because weekend golf, and especially Sundays, can do funny things to golfers so would advise swerving on these days.

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.

Q: What tournaments are the best to bet on and why... Majors, WGC, European or PGA Tour or even Seniors, LPGA and the Web.com Tour?

A: You could ask 10 people this question and they could all come up with different answers. This is purely a case of personal preference.

I prefer betting on events when all the players are from the same Tour so when it comes to running my golf model all the stats are equal and available on all the players. It helps when they have played the venue numerous times so there is plenty of course form.

I prefer the events from about April to October as these are mainly played in mainland Europe with strong European Tour fields. As I've previously stated you can't go wrong backing *Tournament Winner* selections at the Majors because of the enhancement offers.

Each event has its positives and negatives when it comes to betting its knowing what these are that will help when it comes to making a long term profit.

Q: And something I asked you to think about before we met today. Have you any players that readers can keep an eye out for during the coming year? Those outside the usual suspects, that is.

A: Yes, I have given this some thought. But I don't want to give away too many trade secrets!

Of course, I expect the big names to dominate, there's a lot of quality players at the top of the game right now and the cream does tend to rise to the top, especially at the Majors and big WGC events.

However there are plenty of tournaments to go round... and there's always a big payday waiting at one of them with a guy that's maybe not won before, or who is a bit of an unknown with some of the layers. That's the beauty of golf betting.

And more importantly, often with these guys you're going to see the odd slip from the compilers, the occasional bad price, and that's going to mean value in the market. Not every trader will be across each and every player (and some of the guys I've worked with had almost no idea once the top 50 players were priced up).

Knowing these kind of players, and backing at these kind of odds, is what makes the winning punters win... digging out the value and not always backing the well-known, and often over-bet, name player... and there's certain ones who you'd lay all day long.

So I've got you three guys off each tour, in Europe and on the PGA. They're all improving players, all hugely talented, all of them should be prices when they play.

To start off, these three are all on the European Tour...



Victor Perez - "The 27-year-old is a bit older than most who graduate to the main European Tour, but great things are expected of the Frenchman after he secured his card for 2019.

Perez is a previous two-time winner on the Challenge Tour, and has already posted several high finishes among better quality opposition on the main tour, the latest of these being the Hong Kong Open (3rd) late in 2018. So he's clearly ready to make the step up.

A great driver of the ball, long off the tee, and with a decent touch on the greens, there's absolutely no reason why Perez can't record a maiden win in his rookie year on the circuit. Remember the name."



Marcus Kinhult – “He’s been on my radar for quite some time now, and we first backed the young Swede back in January 2016 (South African Open), and then again in August 2018 (Nordea Masters).

Kinhult is yet to win on tour (*all the guys mentioned here are maidens i.e. without a main tour win to their name*) but he’s posted several eye-catching finishes in 2018, most notably in the Qatar Masters (3rd), French Open (5th) and the Portugal Masters (4th).

He’s not that long off the tee by modern standards (around 295 yards), but he’s a very tidy player on and around the greens. A developing talent, Kinhult is very much one to watch.”



Lucas Herbert - “I think it’s two, or maybe three times that we’ve backed the Aussie on the service... and whilst he’s yet to reach the winners circle, it’s only a matter of time before he lands his first title.

He’s long off the tee, at 310+ yards, and his solid iron play is reflected in his consistently high ranking for Greens-In-Regulation. And to complete a very polished all-round game, Herbert’s putting stats aren’t too shabby either!

He posted a number of Top 10’s throughout 2018 and in a book he’s one that I always like to be on the right side of. A definite talent and cast-iron future winner. Has to be on the short-list.”

And then over in the States, on the PGA Tour I’d recommend...



Beau Hossler - “I’ve backed this guy several times already, and put him up on the service before... and I just can’t see him not winning at some point during 2019, he’s too good and has come too close to not land one.

He’s 300+ yards off the tee, a solid iron player and his putting is steady enough on the greens. And at just 23, I can only see Hossler’s game getting better, and as he gets more experienced then it’s just a matter of time before he converts and lands a first PGA title.

His price will reflect the fact that he’s on the radar of a few golf watchers, but he’ll still be value until he makes the grade. I’ve no doubts that Hossler will win in 2019, no doubts at all.”



Sam Burns - "A winner on the Web.com Tour, Burns is a player who I've noted several times over the past 12-18 months, and I think he'll start to make his mark this year once his game gets more consistent.

He's shown flashes of talent already at the Honda Classic (8th), and the Sanderson Farms (3rd)... but a number of missed cuts show that he's still not fully established on the main tour. But that's ok as his odds will be that much juicier as a result.

It's probably going to be one of the weaker tournaments where Burns gets his best chance of success, but barely 22-years-old, time is on his side and he'll only get better."



Sungjae Im - "This guy is meant to be the next big thing, and he's already a marked man in terms of the layers... his record on the Web.com Tour suggesting that he could be very good indeed.

He won the Money List in 2018, winning twice and posting three 2nd places... and he's already posted a 4th place in the Safeway Open on the main PGA Tour. And the frightening thing to note is that this guy is only 20! So we're going to see a lot of him over the coming years.

The South Korean started playing at Nine Bridges (host course of the CJ Cup) and that kind of pedigree marks him out as a real prospect. Probably the best advice I can give about him is to catch him early!"

Q: So we've touched on the idea of value a couple of times, and I've always been a firm believer that it's the only way to make a long-term profit in terms of betting. What are your thoughts on the importance of getting the right price about your bets?

A: In terms of compiling a book, or making a bet... it's everything. You have to know what's the right price, and what's the wrong price.

Ok, you might not get this right every single time, and I get picked off myself every now and again. But if you get it right the majority of the time then your chance of success, or edge as you call it, is hugely increased.

I know you've done some figures yourself about the Tournament Winner bets advised since the service started. And looking at them, every single bet advised (1,665 in total), the average price is almost bang-on 80/1.

Now these odds would equate to an average finishing position of somewhere around the 46-49 mark (in a regular tournament field).

Well, the bets advised finish up, on average, placing inside the Top 40.

So what this means is that over 1,665 bets, going back over a number of years, the bets are regularly beating the odds. And that's value.

We all know every bet isn't going to win... despite what some of my customers (and your members) seem to think! But this is the value principle that my pricing up, and my betting, is based on. And it's why I know I can beat the book when I'm betting for myself, and for your members.

Value is always bandied about as the key to betting successfully, and it really is.

Q: But the key is being able to determine what exactly this value is?

A: Of course. And that's what my pricing model is all about. What my research helps me with, and the guys I know on tour, when they give me the odd bit of news too.

What I've found in the years that I've been in the business is that value is becoming better to judge, not exactly easier, but more data means more accurate assessments can be made.

Back when I started it was more old school, a bit less automated, but now a value book is operated on much more consistent, and accurate, level.

Q: Which makes winning harder?

A: Sadly! But with hard work and the right information you can still win. And that's what the figures show year on year.

Q: Thanks for your time today. Just to wrap things up, can you give one nugget of general advice you could give the average punter to improve their betting... one of your "tricks of the trade".

A: The main bit of advice I'd give to the average punter is to be patient, and don't go chasing losses.

With golf you have to play the long game as average *Tournament Winner* prices are in excess of 33/1.

So you're not going to back winners every week, or even every month... but I promise you that by the end of the year you'll be in profit if you stick to your staking plan.

Not chasing losses is easier said than done because even the most disciplined punters chase once in a while, but minimising these impulse bets is crucial to a long-term profit.

When it comes to *Tournament Winner* bets for normal tour events the earlier you bet the more value there is to be had. Monday afternoon/evening is when it's best to strike not Wednesday afternoon when the all the value has been hoovered up by the judges.

The best three accounts to have when it comes to golf betting are *BetVictor* (BVC), *Paddy Power* (PPW) and *Stan James/Unibet* (SJA/UNI).

If possible place your bets in shops as you're much more likely to go undetected, but I appreciate this is not always possible.

The best way to go undetected is to bet later in the evening from about 8pm onwards as most golf compilers will have gone home and won't be monitoring the ticker (the

program that shows all the bets that are struck). This way you can slip under the radar.

Obviously they check all big winning bets so if you back a winner they'll probably start to monitor you more closely but that's just a fact of life.

But stick at it and I can guarantee you that golf betting is one of the best ways to beat the bookies. And that's me saying it!!

MW: Great stuff. Thanks very much for your time today.

Interview ends 12:23pm.

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