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## How to bet on Golf

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Golf is one of the more unique sports that regularly graces our screens, though it's also one of our favourites for finding value. Though it may take some more research and analysis than most other sports out there, the returns can be monumental.

A key difference between a golf event rather than football, rugby or tennis, for example, is the fact that the whole field is pitted against each other from the off, with (in most cases) no individual matchups, meaning the tournament outright is the key betting market, and individual prices tend to hold some serious weight. It's extremely rare that you'll see a player go off at anything lower than 4/1, especially in the bigger events, with many top players often lodged in the 30-50/1 bracket depending on their form.

The PGA Tour and European Tour provide continuous betting opportunities throughout the year, the field tends to be limited in the majority of these, which opens the door to some underdogs coming through to claim trophy. While these can provide ample opportunity for some big returns, it's best to stick to the Majors and some of the biggest tour events, such as the BMW PGA Championship and the Players Championship. While there are multiple different strategies to betting on golf, including an array of in-play possibilities due to the long nature of the sport, the outright market is where we'll focus the majority of this piece.

### **Outright (E/W)**

The outright market is far and away the most popular Golf betting market, and the one we particularly prefer to stick to at Form Labs as it's where the majority of the value lies. Indeed, all four major winners last year were priced up at 14/1 or longer, with Shane Lowry providing the biggest ROI when he won the Open as a 70/1 shot, and Gary Woodland seeing some serious returns too at 60/1. While the market leaders will give a good indication of where your analysis might lead you, there are always a few that will fit the mould further down the pecking order. The most important factors to look at are: The course and how a player's underlying statistics fit to it, a player's form and the playing conditions.

### **Course**

The course is one of the most influencing factors on the outcome of the tournament as a player's game tends to be suited to a specific course type. For instance, Steve Stricker who's known for his more tactical play and less club head speed tends to do well around the links courses. Averaging 2.274 strokes gained on the rest of the field on such courses since 2014, he's the 20<sup>th</sup> best performer on such courses as of May last year and so it can be worth keeping an eye on those with good links pedigree.

Once this has been established, it's well worth having a look at player records on the specific course that the tournament is held at. A good example of this is the Arnold Palmer Invitational, where there are always a few familiar names in and around the top of the leaderboard come the end of the weekend. Rory McIlroy, it's no surprise, is a regular with Top 10 finishes here, while Sungjae Im relishes this competition. Though none are as prolific as Marc Leishman on this course, who has finished 1<sup>st</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> in his three previous tournaments at Bay Hill prior to 2020. His game is a perfect fit for the course, though sat at a whopping 50/1 with some bookies, and his 2<sup>nd</sup> place this year finish would have yielded a good pay-out for each way backers.

The best way to find if a player is a fit for a course is to look at previous winners and where they've excelled with regard to: areas of strokes gained, scrambling, putting and driving accuracy as well as driving distance, to name a few. This will give a greater understanding of which players fit the bill and can inform your bet much better.

### **Form**

Alongside a bit of luck, momentum is really important in golf. Too often attention is paid to the winners, though the difference between 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in golf can come down to just one of the 72 holes played over the weekend, and underlying statistics can give a better indication of form for those players who are regularly in the mix at the end of each tournament. Nothing encapsulates this better than Jordan Spieth's collapse on the 12<sup>th</sup> at Augusta back in 2016, where he shot a four-over-par which ultimately cost him back-to-back Masters. While mentally that would have an effect, his form was still there for the world to see and he came back to win a PGA Tour event just the next month.

Golf is a game of such fine margins, meaning if, for instance, a player doesn't feel right with his putting, that could be the difference between a Top 10 finish and a missed cut. It's imperative to look at a player's all-round game and their underlying stats in those aspects to determine whether they're in form or not, and not go blindly off their wins.

### **Conditions**

Finally, the playing conditions will have a huge impact on who comes out on top at the end of a week. Links courses often throw up some breezy weather, in which players whose driving accuracy tends to be relatively poor could struggle. That said, such courses tend to be more open and leave more room for error which could nullify the effect of the wind, so it's good to cross-reference the conditions in relation to the course to determine what's required.

Climate can also have a big impact around the greens. Links courses will have greens that go with the lie of the land and require a more accurate read as opposed to some of the dryer, artificial greens that tend to be more predictable.

### **In-Play**

The vast majority of the market liquidity is on the final days of competitions. This is because a field has already been formed and there's a much smaller sample of players to choose from, making predictions much easier. Here it's important to look at a player's nerve heading into the final day, especially at the Majors. The final round of the Open last year at Royal Portrush saw Shane Lowry take on Tommy Fleetwood. Lowry led by a single shot going into the round, though with four years experience on his challenger, and the home crowd getting right behind him all the way, it's unsurprising that ended up four shots clear of Fleetwood and took home the Claret jug.

A final market to look at the leader by round markets, the most popular being Day One. If a player seems to fit the mould of your analysis, though question marks are raised over their resolve and ability to get over the line, it may be worth looking at how they tend to get the ball rolling. The first round leaderboard always throws up some surprising names that you wouldn't normally associate with being up there, though these players tend to offer a lot of value, and a good pick on a player who's known for being fast out the gates can reap the rewards.