

ILLINOIS GOLFER

THE OPENING 9

Thursday,
June 30, 2022

Deere, Tour stand ground in 2022 Golf War



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

BATTLEGROUND SILVIS Bathed in Wednesday's sunshine, TPC Deere Run is back in full tournament dress, from the luxury suites to the Gator parked in the lake adjacent to the 18th green, for the 51st John Deere Classic.

REPORTING FROM SILVIS, ILLINOIS

1 Early risers have an advantage on the PGA Tour. The first tee times for today's opening round of the 51st John Deere Classic are at 6:45 a.m. If you're there, say hi to **Emiliano Grillo** for us.

The reason for commencing the proceedings during the milkman's run is numbers. The Deere is a full-field tournament, 156 players duking it out for a total of \$7.1 million, with the winner raking in \$1,278,000, good money if you can get it. That dough might not change a winner's life, but it will change his tax bracket.

The survivors of the 36-hole cut will play another 36 over the weekend to decide who gets what, as has been the case in most every top-tier stroke-play tournament since about the turn of the last century.

In contrast, the LIV Golf tournament beginning later Thursday at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains, Ore., near Portland, will feature 48 players, a small field, but many of them names more familiar than the gaggle at TPC Deere Run. Names with nicknames like **Lefty, DJ, Brooksie** and **Boom-Boom**. They will carve up a purse of \$25 million, \$20 million for individual exploits and \$5

million for a team shindig, and take only three days to do so. In London at the LIV inaugural, **Charl Schwarzel** scored \$4.75 million, \$4 million for his score and the other \$750 grand for that of his team's.

2 Critics of the LIV Golf series, an operation backed by the almost limitless bankroll of the government of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, point to the source of the money – the Saudis are as backwards in human rights as any nation this side of North Korea can be – the signing of contracts, the three-round format, the smallish field, the lack of a cut, the shotgun start, and even the lack of commercials on the LIV-produced television broadcast.

Of those criticisms which have to do with golf, the one that might most hurt is the field size. On the PGA Tour, only the Masters, the BMW Championship and the Tour Championship, the first the hallowed opening major of the year and the latter two the penultimate and final stages of the PGA Tour's FedEx Cup playoffs, have fields under 100. Every other start offers from 125 places and up.

3 What the LIV Golf concept offers – in a larval stage at the moment, but

the foundation is there – is a series of playoff-style tournaments, albeit without a regular season to qualify for. The brainchild of **Greg Norman** almost 30 years ago was centered in his belief that the best players should play each other more often and for more money, he finally found a backer that would stand up to the PGA Tour. It happens to be a monarchy that has oil to fund its fun, but to Norman, and apparently to many of the players, a backer is a backer.

4 The early success of the LIV Golf circuit has been shadowed by the lack of specificity by the players asked to defend their taking part in it. They have all but taken the Fifth Amendment in dodging questions about the Saudis, and in an amazing lack of forthrightness, not a one to our knowledge has simply come out and said, "I'm doing it for the money."

That, of course, is the only real reason to get involved with something so new when it requires leaving, at least for the moment, something so grounded in the foundation of the professional game.

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Tour vs. Tour vs. Tour

Top 100 in World Ranking playing this week



John Deere Classic

T58 Webb Simpson
66 Sahith Theegala
75 Christian Bezuidenhout
80 Adam Hadwin
83 Cameron Davis
86 Maverick McNealy
88 Anirban Lahiri
93 Denny McCarthy
99 J.T. Poston



Irish Open

10 Matt Fitzpatrick
24 Shane Lowry
26 Tyrrell Hatton
35 Thomas Pieters
36 Seamus Power
48 Lucas Herbert
56 Ryan Fox
T58 Adri Arnaus
64 Min Woo Lee
68 Pablo Larrazabal
100 Robert MacIntyre



LIV Portland

17 Dustin Johnson
19 Brooks Koepka
21 Louis Oosthuizen
22 Abraham Ancer
31 Bryson DeChambeau
33 Kevin Na
38 Talor Gooch
39 Patrick Reed
63 Sergio Garcia
71 Richard Bland
74 Matt Jones
79 Shaun Norris
81 Sam Horsfield
84 Phil Mickelson
87 Lee Westwood
95 Ryosuke Kinoshita
96 Ian Poulter
97 Hudson Swafford

The John Deere Classic features nine players in this week's Official World Golf Ranking Top 100. The European circuit's Irish Open has 11, including U.S. Open winner Matt Fitzpatrick, while the LIV Golf Portland Invitational boasts 18.

5 As an entity, the PGA Tour dates back more than a century, from the time individual cities in the south and west, and in Mexico, staged big-money tournaments – purses of up to \$5,000 – to lure club pros who only got away in the summer for the majors: the U.S. Open, Western Open, PGA and sometimes the North & South at the start of spring. The names made headlines, the stories carried datelines like Miami, Fla., and Agua Caliente, Mexico, and Los Angeles, and gradually, a circuit developed.

The PGA of America built a formal structure around it, and in 1968-69, after a decade of wrangling for control – a scrap that coincided with **Arnold Palmer** and the Image Orthicon camera falling head over heels for each other – the touring players got control of what everyone already called the PGA Tour. That name was finally incorporated in 1975, and the path to dominance over world professional golf began.

6 So here we are, with the old-line circuit making its annual stop in Illinois, the European carnival booked on the Emerald Isle for the Irish Open, and the sheiks in the not-quite-chic destination of

North Plains.

The Saudis, having aided the U.S. greatly in the Gulf War after 9/11, now bankroll a golf war. Why they picked golf is anyone's guess. But they have picked it, and with the first head-to-head week on American turf, the battle is joined.

7 Meanwhile, in sylvan Silvis, all appears normal. The suites are back, the field is largely bereft of big names – a chart above details where the current top 100 plays this week, and LIV Portland wins the day in that regard – but that isn't unusual at the Deere.

Indeed, the tournament is known for identifying new stars, from **Payne Stewart** 40 years ago to **Jordan Spieth** and **Bryson DeChambeau**, the latter a LIV newcomer, more recently. First-time Tour winners are the dish of choice at the Deere, along with Whitey's ice cream.

8 Picking a winner in a golf tournament is folly, but given the first-time winner aura, and his recent play (T14 at the U.S. Open and T10 at Hartford), watch for Northbrook's **Nick Hardy** to contend.

9 Also keep an eye on Pekin's **D.A. Points**, seeking to make his second cut in 15 Deeres. – **Tim Cronin**

Key Tee Times

Thursday (CT)

First Tee

6:45 a.m.: Emiliano Grillo, Maverick McNealy, Brandon Hagy

7:51 a.m.: Austin Cook, Rory Sabbatini, Vince Whaley

8:13 a.m.: Andrew Putnam, Kelly Kraft, Scott Gutschewski

8:57 a.m.: Chase Seiffert, Nick Hardy, a-Nathan Petronzio

12:43 p.m.: Webb Simpson, Lanto Griffin, Jason Day

12:54 p.m.: Charles Howell III, Brandt Snedeker, Sahith Theegala

1:05 p.m.: Lucas Glover, Dylan Frittelli, Zach Johnson

2:22 p.m.: Michael Gligic, David Skinnis, Patrick Flavin

Tenth Tee

6:56 a.m.: Wesley Bryan, D.A. Points, Kramer Hickok

7:51 a.m.: Kevin Streelman, Nick Watney, Mark Hensby

8:02 a.m.: Kevin Chappell, Vaughn Taylor, Denny McCarthy

8:24 a.m.: Chris Stroud, David Hearn, Omar Uresti

12:32 p.m.: Charley Hoffman, Ben Martin, Shawn Stefani

1:05 p.m.: Jason Dufner, Aaron Baddeley, Cameron Percy

1:16 p.m.: Grayson Murray, Ryan Moore, Parker McLaughlin

1:27 p.m.: Henrik Norlander, Doug Ghim, Max McGreevy

Television

6:45 a.m., ESPN+, four channels

2 p.m., Golf Channel

Radio

Noon, PGA Tour Radio