

2012 PGA TOUR PREVIEW

OFF THE TEE

The following are questions about the 2012 PGA Tour season that I have answered with my opinion.

Q: Who will have a breakthrough season in 2012?

I think the obvious choice is Rickie Fowler. The 23-year-old had a great first year on tour in 2010, recording two runner-up finishes and birdieing the last four holes of his Ryder Cup singles match to get a half point. But Fowler struggled at times in 2011, remaining without that elusive first PGA Tour victory. He did, however, tie for fifth at the Open Championship and tie for second at the WGC-Bridgestone Invitational, proving he can perform on the big stage. I expect Fowler to pick up his first PGA Tour win in 2012.

Q: How will Tiger do in 2012?

With the former No. 1 player in the world turning 36 in December, words can't describe how important 2012 is to Tiger in his pursuit of Jack Nicklaus's record of 18 major titles. Woods is winless on the PGA Tour in the last two years, but did come away with a late-season win at the Chevron World Challenge. Tiger will never be as dominant as we once was (circa 2000), but I think he will get back to his winning ways in 2012. He's got a new caddie, he seems healthy now and he has been with Sean Foley long enough that I think results are showing. I predict Tiger will win three or four times on the PGA Tour in 2012.

Q: Who will carry the reign for the United States after Tiger is done?

I think it is too early to tell in this category because I think Tiger still has 5-10 years of good golf left. Of the players that are on tour right now though, I think Dustin Johnson is a solid pick despite his mistakes in three majors since 2010. Hunter Mahan has shown flashes of brilliance in his young career, but didn't win in 2011. Players like Matt Kuchar, Nick Watney and Bill Haas don't have that 'wow' factor that I saw in Tiger. I haven't been sold on Rickie Fowler and Keegan Bradley quite yet despite what they've done these last couple years. And then there are really young players, like Patrick Cantlay and Peter Uihlein, who haven't even been on tour yet. I think there are a handful of talented young Americans, but it's still too early to tell who will take the reigns from Tiger.

Q: Will Luke Donald and/or Lee Westwood finally win a major?

I think Donald and Westwood, the top 2 players in the world, obviously have the talent to win a major. Plus they've both been close the last few years. These two players have a level of consistency that is rare to find in golf and I think they are capable of putting together four straight solid rounds in a major. I, however, don't see either of these players winning a major in 2012 because there are so many good players out there that are capable.

Q: Will Rory McIlroy become the new Tiger?

The No. 3 player in the world had a successful year in 2011, winning his first major at the U.S. Open. However, I don't think he will be the dominating force that Tiger was. There is so much parity in the game today that I'm not sure one player is going to dominate in the ways that Tiger did in the 2000s. McIlroy, who's joining the PGA Tour in 2012, obviously has a rare talent, but he's still only 22 and is still learning some things. With that said, I expect McIlroy to win a few worldwide titles in 2012, including a major. I also think he will obtain No. 1 ranking at some point in the year.

Q: Will the United States win the Ryder Cup?

The U.S. has struggled mightily against the Europeans in the last decade and some say it is due to a lack of passion that the Euros possess. The European side is going to be very tough with the top 4 players in the world all hailing from there, but if young Americans like Webb Simpson, Bill Haas, Rickie Fowler and Keegan Bradley all have good years in 2012, along with the veteran leadership of Tiger, Phil and Steve Stricker, I think the U.S. will defeat the Euros, especially with the homefield advantage at Medinah.

THREESOMES

I have placed groups of three golfers together and predicted how many major championships combined they will win from now until they retire. All previous majors won are not included.

Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, Ernie Els: 3 majors
Rory McIlroy, Jason Day, Rickie Fowler: 11 majors
Vijay Singh, Jim Furyk, Steve Stricker: 1 major
Luke Donald, Lee Westwood, Martin Kaymer: 4 majors
Adam Scott, Geoff Ogilvy, Aaron Baddeley: 2 majors
Ben Crane, Jeff Overton, Jonathan Byrd: 0 majors
Angel Cabrera, Camilo Villegas, Andres Romero: 0 majors
K.J. Choi, Y.E. Yang, Kim Kyung-tae: 1 major
Dustin Johnson, Hunter Mahan, Bubba Watson: 5 majors
Keegan Bradley, Lucas Glover, Zach Johnson: 0 majors
Ryo Ishikawa, Matteo Manassero, Patrick Cantlay: 6 majors
Anthony Kim, Sean O'Hair, Stewart Cink: 1 major
David Toms, Retief Goosen, Darren Clarke: 0 majors
Charl Schwartzel, Louis Oosthuizen, Tim Clark: 1 major
Padraig Harrington, Henrik Stenson, Justin Rose: 0 majors
Webb Simpson, Bill Haas, Brandt Snedeker: 2 majors
Ian Poulter, Sergio Garcia, Paul Casey: 3 majors
Matt Kuchar, Nick Watney, Bo Van Pelt: 2 majors
Graeme McDowell, Trevor Immelman, Mike Weir: 0 majors
Alvaro Quiros, Robert Karlsson, Fredrik Jacobson: 1 major

2012 MAJOR WINNER PREDICTIONS

Masters (Augusta National): Rory McIlroy

U.S. Open (Olympic Club - Lake Course): Dustin Johnson

The Open Championship (Royal Lytham & St. Annes Golf Club): Ian Poulter

PGA Championship (Kiawah Island Golf Resort - Ocean Course): Adam Scott

PLAYERS TO WATCH IN 2012

By Connor Stange

2011 was a year in which today's world of golf showed its true parity. It was a year where young guns emerged, Europeans dominated and Tiger continued to struggle. In ways it was the start of a new era, as unheralded youngster Keegan Bradley took home the PGA Championship and relative no-name Bill Haas won the FedEx Cup. But at year's end, the top 4 world rankings belong to Europeans, perhaps signifying the changing of the guard. The game has never been so evenly matched and internationally diverse as the 2012 season begins.



UNITED STATES

Tiger Woods

Age	World Rank	Majors
36	23	14



Tiger Woods will start the 2012 season riding momentum from his first victory in over two years at the Chevron World Challenge. I expect Woods to win at least three tournaments and maybe a major.

Dustin Johnson

Age	World Rank	Majors
27	7	0



Dustin Johnson is one of the best young Americans on the PGA Tour right now and although he and his caddie have split up, Johnson has had three top-10s in the last seven majors. 2012 will be a big year to see if he can get over the hump in a major.

Hunter Mahan

Age	World Rank	Majors
29	19	0



After a winless 2011, three missed cuts and a gut-wrenching loss at the TOUR Championship, Hunter Mahan will look to rebound and perform the way he did in 2010, with two victories, and in 2009, with two top 10 major finishes.

Rickie Fowler

Age	World Rank	Majors
23	32	0



After two years on the PGA Tour, Rickie Fowler is still without a win. The young gun has showed sparks of potential, finishing tied for fifth at the 2011 Open Championship. 2012 will be a crucial year for Fowler to see if he can get in the winner's circle.

Webb Simpson

Age	World Rank	Majors
26	10	0



Webb Simpson had a breakthrough year in 2011, winning twice. He finished in the top 20 at the U.S. Open and Open Championship, and will enter 2012 in the top 10 of the official world golf rankings.

Bubba Watson

Age	World Rank	Majors
33	21	0



Bubba Watson won twice in 2011 after breaking through for a first PGA Tour win in 2010. He didn't perform very well at the majors in 2011, with his best finish a tie for 26th at the PGA Championship, but Watson is one of America's best players.

Phil Mickelson

Age	World Rank	Majors
41	14	4



Phil Mickelson took home one PGA Tour title in 2011 and tied for second at the Open Championship. I think his best days are behind him at 41 years old, but I think he can still compete for majors, especially at Augusta.

THREE TO FORGET

- 1. Jim Furyk** (No. 50): The 41-year-old played flawlessly in the President's Cup, but he hasn't been a serious threat in the majors since 2009.
- 2. David Toms** (No. 26): After a great 2011, with one victory, a playoff loss and a tie for fourth at the PGA, I think age and short length will take its toll in 2012.
- 3. Anthony Kim** (No. 78): After an impressive first few years on tour, Kim didn't accomplish much in 2011 other than a tie for fifth at the Open Championship.



EUROPE

Rory McIlroy

Age	World Rank	Majors
22	3	1



Rory McIlroy will join the PGA Tour in 2012 after a great 2011. He has three top 5 finishes in his last six major starts, including an eight-stroke victory at the U.S. Open. McIlroy has learned from the Masters collapse and I expect big things in 2012.

Luke Donald

Age	World Rank	Majors
34	1	0



Luke Donald showed consistency unlike any other player in 2011, reaching the No. 1 ranking. He had three worldwide wins and two top-10 major finishes. I expect him to continue the success and pose a serious threat to win a major.

Lee Westwood

Age	World Rank	Majors
38	2	0



Lee Westwood is probably the best player without a major and will look to remove himself from that list in 2012. He has six top 10 major finishes in the last three years.

Ian Poulter

Age	World Rank	Majors
35	16	0



Ian Poulter struggled in 2011 but was victorious in one European Tour event. Despite no top 25s in majors in 2011, I think Poulter will rebound in 2012 and contend in at least one major.

Jason Day

Age	World Rank	Majors
24	8	0



Despite no victories in 2011, Jason Day finished second at both the Masters and the U.S. Open, proving he can perform on the big stage. I think Day will be tough to beat yet again in 2012 and I expect to see his name on leaderboards in the majors.

Matteo Manassero

Age	World Rank	Majors
18	58	0



At the age of 18, Matteo Manassero already owns two European Tour titles. It may be too early to determine how good the Italian will be, but I think he will make himself a more well-known golf figure in 2012 and continue to improve.

Ryo Ishikawa

Age	World Rank	Majors
20	51	0



It is still very early in Ryo Ishikawa's career, but the youngster has showed tremendous potential with his terrific golf swing. In 2010, he fired a 58 in a Japan Golf Tour event and in 2011, he introduced himself to America. Ishikawa will only get better.

Sergio Garcia

Age	World Rank	Majors
31	17	0



Sergio Garcia's career has always been a rollercoaster. However, Garcia won two late-season European Tour events and had two top 10s in majors in 2011, looking to reclaim himself as one of the world's best as he enters his 30s.

Charl Schwartzel

Age	World Rank	Majors
27	9	1



The 2011 Masters champion showed consistency in all four majors, finishing in the top 20 on all occasions. I don't know if I think Schwartzel will win another major in 2012, but I think he will be a contender and a force to reckon with.

Padraig Harrington

Age	World Rank	Majors
40	85	3



A few years ago, Padraig Harrington had won three of six major titles and was ranked No. 3 in the world. Ever since a swing change around that time, Harrington has struggled to get in the winner's circle. It will be interesting to see what he can do at 40.

K.J. Choi

Age	World Rank	Majors
41	15	0



K.J. Choi has been a solid player over the last decade and he won the Players Championship in 2011. Despite only one top 10 in the 2011 majors, I consider Choi dangerous when it comes to those tournaments. Even at 41, he still has some good golf left.

THREE TO FORGET

- 1. Justin Rose** (No. 18): Rose has always been close to getting to that next level on the PGA Tour and he won a FedEx Cup event late in 2011. However, I don't expect much from him in 2012.
- 2. Simon Dyson** (No. 28): The 34-year-old won twice on the European Tour in 2011, but I don't see him posing a serious threat on the PGA Tour or in the majors in 2012.
- 3. Robert Karlsson** (No. 24): Karlsson, 42, tied for fourth at the PGA, but didn't do much else in the majors. I have always considered Karlsson one of the world's elite, but I think age will become a factor in 2012.

Andres Romero

Age	World Rank	Majors
30	125	0



Andres Romero is my darkhorse for the 2012 season. He hasn't done much in the majors during the last three years, but I think if he gets on a roll, he can possess a challenge to any of his contenders.

INTERNATIONAL

Adam Scott

Age	World Rank	Majors
31	5	0



Adam Scott resurrected his career in 2011. He had a marvelous runner-up finish at the Masters and then, with the help of new caddie Steve Williams, won at Firestone and took seventh at the PGA. I look for him to continue the success in 2012.

THREE TO FORGET

- 1. Vijay Singh** (No. 63): The 48-year-old has seen better days with no victories since the 2008 FedEx Cup title and no top 10 major finishes in the last five years.
- 2. Camilo Villegas** (No. 89): Villegas, 29, struggled in 2011, with no wins and three missed cuts in the majors. He had a lot of potential a couple of years ago, but I've gotten off the Villegas bandwagon.
- 3. Ernie Els** (No. 56): After a solid season in 2010, Els missed the cut in three of the four majors and didn't win any events in 2011. At age 42, I think his best days are behind him.

2012 PGA TOUR SCHEDULE

Week	Tournament	Course
Jan. 2-9	Hyundai Tournament of Champions	Kapalua Resort (The Plantation Course) Kapalua, Hawaii
Jan. 9-15	Sony Open in Hawaii	Waialae Country Club Honolulu, Hawaii
Jan. 16-22	Humana Challenge	PGA WEST La Quinta CC La Quinta, Calif.
Jan. 23-29	Farmers Insurance Open	Torrey Pines Golf Course (South Course, North Course) San Diego, Calif.
Jan. 30-Feb. 5	Waste Management Phoenix Open	TPC Scottsdale (Stadium Course) Scottsdale, Ariz.
Feb. 6-12	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	Pebble Beach, Spyglass Hill, Monterey Peninsula Pebble Beach, Calif.
Feb. 13-19	Northern Trust Open	Riviera Country Club Pacific Palisades, Calif.
Feb. 20-26	WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship Mayakoba Golf Classic	The Ritz-Carlton Golf Club, Dove Mountain Marana, Ariz. El Camaleon Golf Club - Mayakoba Resort Playa del Carmen, Mexico
Feb. 27-March 4	The Honda Classic	PGA National (Champion Course) Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.
March 5-11	WGC-Cadillac Championship Puerto Rico Open	Doral Golf Resort & Spa (TPC Blue Monster Course) Doral, Fla. Trump International Golf Club Puerto Rico Rio Grande, Puerto Rico
March 12-18	Transitions Championship	Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club Palm Harbor, Fla.
March 19-25	Arnold Palmer Invitational	Bay Hill Golf Club and Lodge Orlando, Fla.
March 26-April 1	Shell Houston Open	Redstone Golf Club (Tournament Course) Houston, Texas
April 2-8	<i>Masters Tournament</i>	<i>Augusta National Golf Club Augusta, Ga.</i>
April 9-15	RBC Heritage	Harbour Town Golf Links Hilton Head Island, S.C.
April 16-22	Valero Texas Open	TPC San Antonio (AT&T Oaks Course) San Antonio, Texas
April 23-29	Zurich Classic of New Orleans	TPC Louisiana New Orleans, La.
April 30-May 6	Wells Fargo Championship	Quail Hollow Club Charlotte, N.C.
May 7-13	THE PLAYERS Championship	TPC Sawgrass (THE PLAYERS Stadium Course) Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.
May 14-20	HP Byron Nelson Championship	Four Seasons Resort and Club Dallas at Las Colinas Irving, Texas
May 21-27	Crowne Plaza Invitational at Colonial	Colonial Country Club Fort Worth, Texas
May 28-June 3	the Memorial Tournament	Muirfield Village Golf Club Dublin, Ohio
June 4-10	FedEx St. Jude Classic	TPC Southwind Memphis, Tenn.
June 11-17	<i>U.S. Open</i>	<i>Olympic Club (Lake Course) San Francisco, Calif.</i>
June 18-24	Travelers Championship	TPC River Highlands Cromwell, Conn.
June 25-July 1	AT&T National	Congressional Country Club Bethesda, Md.
July 2-8	The Greenbrier Classic	The Greenbrier (The Old White TPC) White Sulphur Springs, W.V.
July 9-15	John Deere Classic	TPC Deere Run Silvis, Ill.
July 16-22	<i>The Open Championship</i> True South Classic	<i>Royal Lytham & St. Annes Golf Club Lancashire, U.K.</i> Annandale Golf Club Madison, Miss.
July 23-29	RBC Canadian Open	Hamilton Golf and Country Club Ancaster, Ontario, Canada
July 30-Aug. 5	WGC-Bridgestone Invitational Reno-Tahoe Open	Firestone Country Club (South Course) Akron, Ohio Montreux Golf and Country Club Reno, Nev.
Aug. 6-12	<i>PGA Championship</i>	<i>Kiawah Island Golf Resort (Ocean Course) Kiawah Island, S.C.</i>
Aug. 13-19	Wyndham Championship	Sedgefield Country Club Greensboro, N.C.

PGA TOUR Playoffs for the FedExCup

Week	Tournament	Course
Aug. 20-26	The Barclays	Bethpage State Park (Black Course) Farmingdale, N.Y.
Aug. 27-Sept. 3	Deutsche Bank Championship	TPC Boston Norton, Mass.
Sept. 3-9	BMW Championship	Crooked Stick Golf Club Carmel, Ind.
Sept. 17-23	TOUR Championship by Coca-Cola	East Lake Golf Club Atlanta, Ga.

Featured events

Week	Tournament	Course
Sept. 24-30	Ryder Cup	Medinah Country Club (Course No. 3) Medinah, Ill.
Oct. 29-Nov. 4	WGC-HSBC Champions	TBD, China