

EXHIBIT 62

LIV Golf Field: Top PGA Tour Players Explain Why They Won't Join Saudi-Backed Series

By Anthony Riccobono @tony_riccobono

06/14/22 AT 4:05 PM

The LIV Golf Invitational Series has been the talk of the golf world, even as the 2022 U.S. Open approaches. While the new Saudi-backed league has gotten plenty of attention, the overwhelming majority of the world's best players are still part of the PGA Tour.

The first-ever LIV Golf field did feature some of the sport's biggest names. Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson and Sergio Garcia were just some of the players who competed in last week's inaugural event and were subsequently [suspended from the PGA Tour](#). Bryson DeChambeau and Patrick Reed are expected to be part of the next LIV Golf field at the end of the month.

The top 15 players in the [world golf rankings](#) have not made the jump to LIV Golf. Despite the [amount of potential prize money](#) to be made with LIV Golf, many of the best PGA Tour players seem unlikely to leave anytime soon.

"To be honest, part of the format is not really appealing to me," Jon Rahm [said of LIV Golf Tuesday](#) in Brookline, Massachusetts. "Shotgun, three days, to me is not a golf tournament, no cut. It's that simple. I want to play against the best in the world in a format that's been going on for hundreds of years. That's what I want to see."

Rahm is second in the world golf rankings and among the [top contenders](#) to win the 2022 U.S. Open. Two days before the start of the year's third major, the 27-year-old explained that he had little interest in competing in an upstart tour where the competition isn't nearly as strong.

"I play for the love of the game, and I want to play against the best in the world," Rahm said. "There's meaning when you win the Memorial Championship. There's meaning when you win Arnold Palmer's event at Bay Hill. There's a meaning when you win, L.A., Torrey, some of the historic venues. That to me matters a lot."

Forty-eight players competed for their share of \$25 million in prize money at the first LIV Golf event. The biggest names in the series have reportedly been paid nine-figure deals just for agreeing to be part of the PGA Tour's new rival series.

"It's astronomical money that they're throwing at people," Justin Thomas [told reporters Monday](#). "There's going to be some kind of number that's going to get people to think about it, and they're reaching that number with a lot of people. Selfishly, I don't want anybody to leave."

Thomas finished in third place at the 2022 RBC Canadian Open Sunday and enters the U.S. Open as the world's No. 5 ranked golfer. Rory McIlroy is ranked No. 3 in the world after winning the tournament. Both players have [expressed disappointment](#) in the fact that golfers are leaving the PGA Tour for LIV Golf.

"I grew up my entire life wanting to play the PGA Tour, wanting to break records, make history, play Presidents Cups, play Ryder Cups," Thomas said. "The fact that things like [the product of the PGA Tour] could potentially get hurt because of some of the people that are leaving, and if more go, it's just sad. Everything has got a price, I guess."

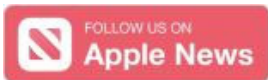
McIlroy is the betting favorite to win the U.S. Open. The four-time major winner just picked up his 21st career win on the PGA Tour, where he plans to continue playing.

"Because in my opinion it's the right thing to do," [McIlroy said](#). "The PGA Tour was created by people and tour players that came before us, the likes of Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer. They created something and worked hard for something, and I hate to see all the players that came before us and all the hard work that they've put in just come out to be nothing."



World number one Jon Rahm acknowledges fans after putting to tie the course record and take share of the third-round lead in the PGA Tour Tournament of Champions GETTY IMAGES NORTH AMERICA via AFP / Gregory Shamus

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EXHIBIT 63

Sports | June 15, 2022 11:18 am

Brooks Koepka Should Get Used to LIV Golf's "Black Cloud"

By Evan Bleier @itishowitis

With LIV Golf Invitational Series participants such as Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, Sergio Garcia, Kevin Na, Talor Gooch and Louis Oosthuizen set to tee off at the U.S. Open after playing in the Saudi-backed golf series last week, questions about the upstart tour aren't going anywhere.

Answering questions from reporters on Tuesday, Brooks Koepka complained about the "black cloud" the new golf series is casting ahead of the U.S. Open. Unfortunately for the four-time major champion, that cloud is going to be lingering for a long, long time.

"I'm trying to focus on the U.S. Open, man," [Koepka said](#). "I legitimately don't get it. I'm tired of the conversations. I'm tired of all this stuff. Like I said, y'all are throwing a black cloud on the U.S. Open. I think that sucks. I actually do feel bad for the [USGA] for once because it's a shitty situation. We're here to play, and you are talking about an event that happened last week."

As long as former major winners like Mickelson, Johnson and Garcia, who are suspended from playing on the PGA Tour but can play in the U.S. Open because it is run by The United States Golf Association, stay with the Saudi-backed series, the questions are going to keep coming.

Speaking with Jim Nantz during the CBS broadcast of the Canadian Open last weekend, PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan asked a pertinent question of his own. "I would ask any player that has left, or any player that would consider leaving, have you ever had to apologize for being a member of the PGA Tour?" he said.

It's a fair query and one that players like Mickelson and Johnson will have to continue to answer as long as they keep taking big money from an organization that draws its cash from [a very unsavory source](#). As is [becoming clear](#), the payouts the LIV golfers are taking are the equivalent of blood money and outrage about that isn't going anywhere.

"If Vladimir Putin had a tournament, would you play that?" LIV golfers Ian Poulter and Lee Westwood [were asked](#) last week. "In a generality, is there any way you wouldn't play on a moral basis? If the money was right, is there any way you wouldn't play?"

Neither player had a good answer — because there isn't one. That doesn't mean they shouldn't have been asked. Those questions are going to keep coming and, whether Koepka likes it or not, the black cloud will keep hanging.

The U.S. Open begins on Thursday at the Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts.

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EXHIBIT 64

Three Former Members of Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club Explain Why They Quit Over a Saudi-Backed Tournament

By Sophie Peel June 15, 2022 at 5:34 am PDT

In March, a recently launched but already embattled golf league called LIV Golf announced its first tour. Its second stop in the U.S.: Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club northwest of Portland. The North Plains club, a swanky oasis nestled between huge firs, features two 18-hole golf courses—one public, the other open only to members.

Pumpkin Ridge now has a few less of those members.

That's because they object to hosting a tour financially backed by Saudi Arabia's investment arm. The Saudi Arabian government has long faced accusations of human rights abuses—as well as allegations that it's used investment in major sports as a way to distract from those abuses.

The LIV tour event at Pumpkin Ridge will be held June 30 through July 2.

Pumpkin Ridge is managed locally but owned by Escalante Golf, a Texas-based company started by three college fraternity brothers.

Escalante did not respond to *WW*'s repeated requests for comment. Another silent voice: Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler. While the tournament isn't in Portland proper, it will likely draw thousands of spectators to a town just miles away. In late April, 11 mayors in Washington County signed a letter opposing the tournament there. Wheeler hasn't said anything, and his office did not respond to *WW*'s requests for comment. Meanwhile, Pumpkin Ridge is seeing members depart. It's not clear how many, but some former members estimate the number may be as high as 40.

WW

In the past week, *WW* spoke to five former members of Pumpkin Ridge. All five tell *WW* they first heard about the tournament being hosted at Pumpkin Ridge from news reports.

Four quit the club within a month. *WW* asked three of them—Tom Etzel, the CEO of an events management company; Eamon McErlean, an executive at a software company; and Roland Carfagno, who owns Italian restaurant Justa Pasta—why they left.

Members' answers have been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

What was your reaction to the news?

Tom Etzel: I was shocked, surprised and disappointed.

I reached out to Escalante, both to club management and corporate headquarters. I spoke to both the club and corporate headquarters. I was disappointed in their responses, and they seemed very calculated.

I left the club that same day. I'm one person, but I felt it was important and, obviously, I had had conversations with other members who shared some of the same beliefs. I hoped we could change their minds.

What's the problem with LIV Golf playing at Pumpkin Ridge?

Eamon McErlean: I'm not thinking that the PGA is perfect, by any means. But what we do know about the Saudi Arabia wealth fund, when you start to pull back the layers a bit and see some of the human rights crises they've been associated with, it's just not something I would want to be tied to in any way.

I emailed Escalante two, if not three, subsequent emails stating my frustration with three things: One, the decision itself. Two, how it was communicated. And three, how over the past few months the level of service had significantly deteriorated. Some of the basics, like literally no golf balls on the range, no towels available. There was one Saturday afternoon a little stack shack halfway through the round wasn't just closed, it was locked up. These are all First World problems, I get it. But as a paying member, you expect a level of service.

I think it had something to do with the tournament coming, I do. Because I played once before I left, and you could see the entire clubhouse getting repainted. It was just a complete face-lift across the board.

Escalante executives came to Pumpkin Ridge to answer member questions. What was that like?

Roland Carfagno: There was a huge uproar right away. A lot of members were like, what's going on? Everyone who I played with at Pumpkin left.

A couple of the people from Escalante Golf came up to meet with members, and it took me two minutes to realize they didn't really care at all what members thought. They held an open house and were there for four hours. It was them talking first, and then we were allowed to ask questions. There were questions about whether they considered how the members felt about it, concerns about how poor the service had been recently, questions about how they came about this decision.

The gist of their message was: This was too good of an opportunity for them to pass up. We all assume there's a big check behind this. They revealed nothing about money. I personally know six members beside myself who left. But nobody really knows for sure.

EXHIBIT 65

Brooks Koepka, Abraham Ancer the latest to leave PGA Tour for LIV Golf: Reports

By The Athletic Staff

June 21, 2022 Updated 7:30 PM PDT

Brooks Koepka, a four-time major winner and former world No. 1, will leave the [PGA Tour](#) for the [LIV Golf International Series](#), according to multiple reports on Tuesday. The PGA Tour announced Koepka withdrew from the Thursday's Travelers Championship in Connecticut and replaced by Mark Hubbard.

Abraham Ancer, No. 20 in the Official World Golf Ranking, will also join LIV, he [said in an interview with Boardroom](#), giving the new circuit two of their highest-ranked golfers to date.

Koepka, 32, will make his LIV Golf debut in the circuit's second event next week in Oregon, the Telegraph and Sky Sports reported. He is the third major winner to join LIV since its first event, joining Bryson DeChambeau and Patrick Reed, who will also make their LIV debuts next week. Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson and Sergio Garcia headlined the 48-player field for the first event in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, which was won by Charl Schwartzel on June 11.

At Nos. 19 and 20 in the world, Koepka and Ancer become LIV's second- and third-ranked golfers behind Johnson (No. 16). Ancer, 31, has won once on the PGA Tour (in 2021) and finished tied for ninth at the PGA Championship in May.

Koepka most recently competed at the U.S. Open last week, finishing 55th. When asked last Tuesday if he planned to remain on the PGA Tour permanently, Koepka did not give a definitive answer, saying, "There's been no other option to this point, so where else are you going to go?"

"I wasn't playing last week," Koepka said. "I'm here. I'm here at the U.S. Open. I'm ready to play U.S. Open, and I think it kind of sucks, too, you are all throwing this black cloud over the U.S. Open. It's one of my favorite events. I don't know why you guys keep doing that."

"The more legs you give it, the more you keep talking about it."

The LIV Golf series is controversial for a number of reasons, including that it's backed by Saudi financing and will play two of its eight tournaments this year at Donald Trump-owned courses. Its massive purses — \$255 million in prize money will be awarded over eight events — have now attracted eight top-50 golfers: Johnson, Koepka, Ancer, Louis Oosthuizen, DeChambeau, Kevin Na, Reed and Talor Gooch. Koepka's brother, Chase Koepka, also played in the first LIV event.

The PGA Tour responded as soon as the first LIV event teed off on June 9, [suspending](#) all current and future players who participate in the new circuit. The USGA allowed LIV golfers to play in the 2022 U.S. Open, and [it seems likely](#) they'll be able to participate in The Open Championship next month, though nothing is official as of now.

Koepka, who won back-to-back U.S. Opens in 2017 and 2018 and PGA Championships in 2018 and 2019, has not been nearly the player who was considered easily one of the top golfers in the world a few years ago. His best finish in this year's majors is 55th, where he finished at both the U.S. Open and PGA Championship after missing the cut at the Masters. He'll likely finish the year with his worst year-end world ranking since 2014.

No current top-10 golfer has joined LIV Golf. Collin Morikawa, the world No. 4 who finished tied for fifth at the U.S. Open, [tweeted Tuesday](#) he's "here to stay" on the PGA Tour.

LIV Golf's next event begins June 30 at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains, Ore.

(Photo: John David Mercer / USA Today)

EXHIBIT 66

Sen. Ron Wyden urges Pumpkin Ridge golfers to consider Saudi government human rights abuses

Demi Lawrence (Portland Business Journal)

Published: 5:28 PM PDT June 23, 2022

Updated: 5:28 PM PDT June 23, 2022

Golfers will tee off June 30 at the Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club. It's part of the LIV International Golf Series, a league backed by the Saudi Arabian government.

PORTLAND, Ore — As opposition to a Saudi Arabian government-backed golf tournament escalates, Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden is asking players to consider the death of a 15-year-old Portland girl.

Golfers are set to tee off June 30 at the Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains. The event is part of the LIV International Golf Series, [a league backed by the Saudi Arabian government](#).

According to Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, that includes the hit-and-run death of Fallon Smart in August 2016. Smart was struck by a vehicle [allegedly driven by 20-year-old Saudi citizen Abdulahraman Sameer Noorah](#) at Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard and 43rd Avenue. Investigators said Noorah was going nearly 60 miles per hour.

Noorah was held on a manslaughter charge with a \$1 million bail. Upon making bail, he was placed on house arrest but removed the monitoring device he had been ordered to wear while awaiting trial.

Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, has vociferously opposed the LIV tournament, a big reason being Smart's death. He said he understands why some professional golfers may be quick to dismiss the political implications of the LIV series, but wishes they'd put themselves in Fallon's family's shoes.

"If one of the golfers was visiting with me this morning, and said 'I'm just here to play golf...I would say 'I understand why you might say that, so here's my question for you: How would you feel if Fallon Smart was your daughter?'" Wyden said "And the person who murdered her was whisked out of the country by the government that is throwing enormous sums of money around to cleanse their bloodstained hands, to engage in sportswashing?"

For more on the Pumpkin Ridge event, including a poll on the tournament, [please visit the Portland Business Journal](#).

EXHIBIT 67

News > All Articles > DP World Tour confirms member sanctions

NEWS

DP World Tour confirms member sanctions



Friday, June 24, 2022

The DP World Tour today confirmed the sanctions to be taken against members who breached Tour regulations and participated in a LIV Golf event at Centurion Club from June 9-11, despite not having received releases to allow them to do so.



Such actions contravened the conflicting event Regulation laid down in the Members' General Regulations Handbook as well as the Code of Behaviour Regulation, of which the members have been

reminded on a number of recent occasions, and has led the Tour to take the following steps, which have been notified to all members concerned.

- They will be fined £100,000*
- They have been advised that they are suspended from participating in the following DP World Tour tournaments - the Genesis Scottish Open and Barbasol Championship (July 7-10) and the Barracuda Championship (July 14-17) and have been removed from the entry lists of these events where applicable.

It is important to note that participation in a further conflicting tournament or tournaments without the required release may incur further sanctions.

*Money raised from the fines will be shared equally in two distinct ways; (i) it will be added to prize funds of upcoming tournaments on the DP World Tour, to the benefit of Members of the DP World Tour who have complied with the Release rules and (ii) it will be distributed through the Tour's Golf for Good programme to deserving charitable causes in the communities that the DP World Tour plays.



Keith Pelley, Chief Executive of the DP World Tour, said: "Every action anyone takes in life comes with a consequence and it is no different in professional sport, especially if a person chooses to break the rules. That is what has occurred here with several of our members.

"Many members I have spoken to in recent weeks expressed the viewpoint that those who have chosen this route have not only disrespected them and our Tour, but also the meritocratic ecosystem of professional golf that has been the bedrock of our game for the past half a century and which will also be the foundation upon which we build the next 50 years.

"Their actions are not fair to the majority of our membership and undermine the Tour, which is why we

are taking the action we have announced today.”



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NEWS

BMW International Open - Day one digest

Everything you need to know from day one at Golfclub München Eichenried.

Jun, 24 2022

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EXHIBIT 68

LIV Golf heads to Oregon, where local officials aren't happy

By ANNE M. PETERSON June 26, 2022

Saudi Arabia-backed LIV Golf is getting a chilly reception in Oregon, its first stop in the United States.

This coming week, the series, which is paying enormous signing fees for players like Phil Mickelson and Dustin Johnson, descends on Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in tiny North Plains, nestled in the rolling hills west of Portland.

But the North Plains mayor, as well as officials from surrounding cities, have written the club's owner, Escalante Golf, with concerns. Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden is speaking out against the tournament, and some members of the pricy club also are uncomfortable with the situation.

Opponents point to Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses, including the murder of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi. But in Oregon, there also is anger over the [hit-and-run death of 15-year-old Fallon Smart in 2016](#).

Saudi student Abdulrahman Sameer Noorah was facing a trial on first-degree murder charges when he removed a tracking device and vanished. U.S. authorities believe the Saudi government helped arrange for a fake passport and provided a private jet for travel back to Saudi Arabia. [The case was featured on "60 Minutes."](#)

"It's wrong to be silent when Saudi Arabia tries to cleanse blood-stained hands, in the fight for Oregonians to get justice — Fallon Smart was killed very close to our house in Southeast Portland, and the person charged with the crime, a hit-and-run death, was, based on all the evidence, whisked out of the country by the Saudis before he stood for trial," Wyden said in an interview with The Associated Press.

There is also concern the event could bring protests to North Plains, a town of just 3,400 people. Tickets to the event prohibit fans from displaying any political signs.

"We oppose this event because it is being sponsored by a repressive government whose human rights abuses are documented. We refuse to support these abuses by complicitly allowing the Saudi-backed organization to play in our backyard," said a letter signed by North Plains Mayor Teri Lenahan and 10 other mayors from surrounding cities.

Wyden accuses the Saudi government of sportswashing.

"It's just a page out of the autocrats' playbook covering up injustices by

misusing athletics in hopes of normalizing their abuses,” he said.

The event also has put Pumpkin Ridge members in a difficult spot. Some decided to leave the club over the tournament, but it's unclear how many departed.

“A lot of members are like stuck between a rock and a hard place right now where politically they don't agree with it at all,” said member Kevin Palmer of Beaverton. “But I also joined last year and put down like \$12,000, and if I leave I don't get any of that money back.”

Greg Norman is CEO of LIV Golf Investments and the face of a circuit that aims to rival the PGA Tour. The 48-man field in Portland will compete for \$20 million in prize money for individual play, and \$5 million in team play, with 12 teams. Teams will be announced Tuesday after a draft.

Johnson, who had been No. 1 in the world longer than any player since Tiger Woods, and six-time major champion Mickelson were among the first big names to join. The Portland field since has added Bryson DeChambeau, Brooks Koepka and Patrick Reed, all major champions, though none among the current top 20 players in the world ranking.

The PGA Tour has suspended every member who competed in the first LIV event because they did not have conflicting event releases. Those in Portland also will be suspended when they tee it up.

The tour typically awards three such releases a year, only for tournaments overseas. It does not allow its members to compete in tournaments held in North America.

The Portland event is held the same week as the John Deere Classic in Illinois.

“The PGA Tour, an American institution, can't compete with a foreign monarchy that is spending billions of dollars in attempt to buy the game of golf,” Commissioner Jay Monahan said last week. “We welcome good, healthy competition. The LIV Saudi golf league is not that. It's an irrational threat, one not concerned with the return on investment or true growth of the game.”

The LIV tour consists of eight events this year, five in the United States. Following the stop in Portland, the tour moves to the Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster.

Texas-based Escalante Golf, owner of Pumpkin Ridge and another course on the LIV series, did not respond to a request for comment.

“We believe that we have a moral obligation to take a stand and speak out against this event in order to protect the people we serve,” the mayors wrote in their letter to the company. “While our local jurisdictions may not be able to prevent this event, we stand together to voice our concerns about the unwelcomed potential risks, visitors and harm this event could have on our communities.”

More AP golf: <https://apnews.com/hub/golf> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

EXHIBIT 69



GMT
23:34
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News > All Articles > DP World Tour, PGA TOUR expand and strengthen alliance

NEWS

DP World Tour, PGA TOUR expand and strengthen alliance



Tuesday, June 28, 2022

The DP World Tour and the PGA TOUR have moved to significantly strengthen not only their existing alliance but also help develop players to compete at the pinnacle of men's professional golf, by unveiling a ground-breaking new 13-year operational joint venture partnership.



- *Move is a significant boost to a global pathway for competitive golf*
- *PGA TOUR to provide operational support and additional investment to the DP World Tour*
- *DP World Tour prize fund levels set to grow annually*

The partnership, through to 2035, builds on the success of the existing Strategic Alliance between the two Tours that was unveiled in November 2020 and which has already seen tangible benefits for members of both Tours, not least the co-sanctioning of the Genesis Scottish Open on the DP World Tour, alongside access for both memberships into the Barbasol Championship and the Barracuda Championship on the PGA TOUR.

Collaboration has already borne fruit for the DP World Tour with the introduction of new tournament title sponsors such as Genesis and Horizon and new Tour partners such as Fortinet and Velocity Global.

In addition, working together to drive prize funds and commercial revenue will not only benefit the entire range of both memberships immediately, but also develop immense strategic opportunities for all members of both Tours for the future.

As part of the new joint venture, the PGA TOUR will increase its existing stake in European Tour Productions from 15 percent to 40 percent, while utilising the DP World Tour's recognised international credentials and global footprint to continue to coordinate a worldwide schedule.



The DP World Tour will guarantee growth in annual prize funds to its membership for the next five years, all above the record 2022 levels unveiled as part of the DP World Tour title partnership arrangement announced last November.

The new joint venture will provide additional competitive opportunities for professional golfers of both Tours and also establish a clearly defined pathway for top players around the world. Players from the Sunshine Tour and ISPS Handa PGA Tour of Australasia, with whom the DP World Tour already has existing Strategic Alliances, now enjoy a formal pathway to the DP World Tour. With today's announcement, DP World Tour members will now have direct and formal access to the very pinnacle of the men's professional game on the PGA TOUR.

To achieve that, from 2023, the leading ten players on the end of season DP World Tour Rankings [in addition to those already exempt] will earn PGA TOUR cards for the following season.

Furthermore, the DP World Tour will work closely on the development and implementation of the new international events announced by PGA TOUR Commissioner Jay Monahan last week at the Travelers Championship in Connecticut, and DP World Tour members will gain access to those events.

Keith Pelley, Chief Executive Officer of the DP World Tour said: "Building on the success of the existing Strategic Alliance between ourselves and the PGA TOUR, this move will significantly enhance the meritocracy that has successfully served the professional game on both sides of the Atlantic for more than 50 years.

"It is a natural extension and progression of what we have been doing over the past few years and I passionately believe that this move is the right thing for our players, our Tour, our fans, and the game of golf in general.

"Our two tours have undoubtedly drawn closer over the past few years and today's announcement strengthens both Tours for the betterment of both memberships."

Jay Monahan, Commissioner of the PGA TOUR, said, "It was clear from the outset that our Strategic Partnership with the European Tour Group was a powerful agreement for both sides, and we are thrilled with today's announcement of this expanded partnership.

"We will continue to collaborate on a global schedule and key commercial areas as we draw our organizations and memberships even closer together while innovating to provide the most entertaining and compelling golf possible to fans around the world. On behalf of the PGA TOUR, I want to credit and commend Keith Pelley and his team at the European Tour Group for their incredible commitment to this effort."



Read next



NEWS

Italian Challenge Open: Tournament Guide

The Road to Mallorca heads to Italy for the Italian Challenge Open at Golf Nazionale. Here's everything you need to know for the week ahead.

Jun, 28 2022

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EXHIBIT 70

Wyndham Championship Sedgefield Country Club	1		2		T3		T3
	Joohyung Kim	-19	John Huh	-15	Russell Henley	-14	Sun
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LIV GOLF

At LIV Golf, the Saudi controversy stops at the Pumpkin Ridge gate

By Dan Rapaport | June 30, 2022



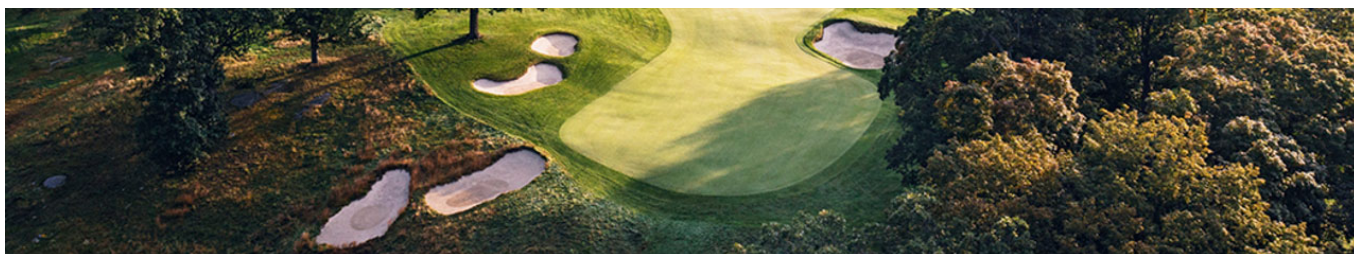
Fans watch golfers on the practice range during day one of the LIV Golf Invitational Portland.
Chris Trotman

NORTH PLAINS, Ore. — Fifteen-ish minutes before the shotgun start of LIV's first foray onto U.S. soil, a trio of retired Navy Seals employed American flag parachutes to plop down on Pumpkin Ridge's 10th fairway. A few minutes earlier, a bald eagle glided just over the driving range, sparking an

impromptu U-S-A! chant. (It is Fourth of July weekend, after all.) Four hours earlier and just down the road, family members of 9/11 victims fought back tears as they chastised 48 professional golfers for doing something they see as distinctly un-American: “getting in bed with the Saudis.”

Welcome is Professional Golf in 2022.

As Golf Digest detailed Wednesday, the tenor of discussion surrounding this event depends almost entirely on where you are. At golf courses around the Portland area, it’s a nuclear topic. People left their jobs at Pumpkin Ridge because of it. Portland is a deeply liberal town with a rebellious streak. It’s a curious place for a radioactive golf tour to hold its first tournament in America.



At that modest Veteran's Park on Thursday morning, as the daughter of Terrance Aiken spoke of her father, who died amid crumbling steel and jet fuel on the 97th floor of the North Tower, the line between the Saudi Arabian government and Phil Mickelson could not have been more clear. Those family members could not believe the Saudis' audacity to sportswash on American soil. They could not fathom why these impossibly talented golfers, who can earn money wherever and whenever, would disrespect the memory of their fathers and brothers. Especially Phil Mickelson.

"To see him kowtowing to the Saudi and saying that he doesn't give a crap, he doesn't give a crap about the struggles and the pain and the misery," said Brett Eagelson, who was 15 when his father was murdered. "Three-thousand dead Americans. He doesn't care because he got offered a paycheck? It's just the worst form of greed."

Eagelson and 10 others wondered why none of the players have engaged their 9/11 justice group—not when a 9/11 coalition published an open letter imploring

players to rethink their decisions, and not when they tried to get some face time at the players' hotel this week. Security stepped in, quickly, to preserve the bubble of tranquility all LIVers are relishing this week.

Inside Pumpkin Ridge's gates, and outside the media center, there has been hardly any talk of the Twin Towers, Mohammed bin Salman, Jamal Khashoggi or Fallon Smart. No one's discussing sharia law's treatment of Christians or homosexuals or women. The players have been clear in their justification for being here: I'm here to play golf and entertain the fans. The fans on-site—LIV wouldn't disclose the number, but this writer's very rough estimate has it somewhere in the 3,000 range, with more expected on the weekend, but not too much more, for LIV capped the number largely due to security concerns—wanted to watch the golf, and they wanted to be entertained. There were fathers and sons. Couples, young and old. Families with young children. And the relative scarcity of people made the viewing experience rather enjoyable. Everyone could see. Hardly any lines at concession stands and food trucks.

Perhaps it's to be expected, given they paid to be here, but the general consensus among the galleries: We don't condone Saudi Arabia, but we're here to watch the golf.

Bill Caffey, who studied foreign service in college, understands the complex nature of U.S.-Saudi relations. He spoke of the Fallon Smart situation—when a Saudi national hit and killed a Portland teenager while speeding, then was whisked away to Saudi Arabia and never faced trial—and lamented the lack of an extradition treaty between the two nations. But that did not stop him from coming to Pumpkin Ridge.

"The U.S. has lots of allies that have different forms of government than we would prefer here," Caffey said. "We've protected them, and they've given us the

free-flow of oil at market prices since World War II. But this is just a golf event. We're not going to change the government in Saudi Arabia."

Others were more blunt.

"Absolutely do not care," says Tim Fey, 32, of the Saudi controversy. "I'm so happy that someone finally brought [elite] professionals to Oregon. Oregon! We have Bandon Dunes and we don't have PGA pros coming out here for events. I've been to Waste Management, and that was awesome, and I'm like, bring that s--t here!"

There was, however, one isolated incident. On his first hole of the day, Brooks Koepka missed a four-foot putt. A fan yelled "That's what you get for playing here!" His playing partners and their caddies feared it would be the beginning of an onslaught of heckling. It was the only chirp they heard all day.

Cody Reynosa, 27, brought his 6-year-old son out to enjoy an ideal summer day at the golf course. When asked if he considered any political or humans rights issues before coming, he looked legitimately taken aback. Uhhh, hell no.

"I'm here for the pro golf, that's really all it is," Reynosa says. He came to watch Mickelson and Dustin Johnson, and he bought a Hy Flyers hat in the merchandise tent, the team Mickelson captains.

"We had the women and the other tour, but something like this—this is up there," Reynosa says. "They're putting on a show for me, and I'm here to watch it. I don't really care about politics and all that. I mean I do, but I don't let it get involved with my fun. I mean, this is golf."

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EXHIBIT 71

Saudi-backed golf tournament in North Plains stirs up controversy

FOX 12 Staff

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NORTH PLAINS, Ore. (KPTV) - Survivors of 9/11 and the families of victims flew across the country to attend an event in the small town of North Plains Thursday morning. The event was held to oppose the LIV Golf Invitational which began at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club.

The LIV Golf tour, financed by the Public Investment Fund, the sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia, drew some big names to Oregon including Phil Mickelson. The attendees of the 9/11 event accuse the golfers of taking blood money from the Saudi government. Last year, the Biden administration released documents showing that Saudi Government officials helped plant the terrorist attacks that killed roughly 3000 Americans. The Saudi government denies it.

"Never would I imagine that I would have to be here with ten other 9/11 family members flying across the country to speak out against American golfers who are getting in bed with the kingdom of Saudi Arabia," said Brett Eagleson who lost his father in the attacks. "The kingdom which our own FBI says facilitated the murder of our loved ones. It's shameful. It's disgraceful and it should never have been allowed to happen."

Family members who lost loved ones and those who got out of the towers, injured but alive, expressed their anger and hurt Thursday morning at a news conference about two miles away from Pumpkin Ridge.

"This event is nothing more than a group of very talented athletes who appear to have turned their backs on the crime of murder," said Tim Frolich, one of the survivors. "I invite them to look at the pain in our eyes, hear our stories."

Sean Passananti, whose father died in the towers, accused Saudi Arabia of sports washing.

"They are trying, through the honorable sport of golf, to buy legitimacy," he said.

The families have formed a group called [9/11 justice](#) and released a new ad which aired on Portland TV stations Thursday. The ad addresses golfers turning a blind eye to Saudi's human rights abuses and alleged role in supporting several 9/11 hijackers.

"We'll never forgive Pumpkin Ridge or the players for helping Saudi Arabia cover up who they really are. Don't let the Saudi government try to clean up its image using American golf," said the video.

The ad also brings up the case of Fallon Smart. The man accused of killing her in a drunk driving case in 2016 is a Saudi National who removed his tracking anklet before trial.

The state department said the Saudis may have helped him escape back to Saudi Arabia, and he has never returned to face justice.

Those who attended the event said, they want to enjoy it. They also said if people want to protest, let them protest safely.

"First amendment, you're allowed to do whatever you want but I'd rather than protest I'm just going to experience it and enjoy it and see what it is first-hand," said golf fan, Ian Morford.

Some said they were a bit nervous to attend, but wanted to show their support for the golfers.

"The reason why is because I heard a bunch of garbage going on and I didn't want to be a part of it. I'm glad I haven't seen it," says Harry Uhles, golf fan. "I'm here because I want to be. I'm not going to let people choose what I do. I support these guys I don't blame them for doing what they're doing."

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