

# BetFan

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# **Thomas And Fleetwood Against The Players**

## **Championship Field** - By Ian Hudson

The Players Championship is the most prestigious golf event of the year after the four major championships. The winner is usually a former or future major champion but there was a huge upset when Kim Si-woo was the winner last year. However, order can be restored this week and Justin Thomas has the profile for a championship known as the fifth major due to the quality of the field. Each-way punters may be interested in Tommy Fleetwood at bigger prices.

In the past the Players has been held before the US Masters which is the first major of the season. In moving to the current date there is now a run of five months in which one of the five biggest events of the season are played. The best players focus on these events and structure their year to peak in the weeks that matter most and this week is one of those. After the majors the WGC events are lucrative and carry the most ranking events but the Players Championship tops them for prestige.

Since 1982 this huge global tournament has been played at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Verde which is where the PGA Tour headquarters are located. Many professionals live in the area and the stadium course was designed and located with convenience in mind. TPC Sawgrass is also a good viewing course with natural hills and embankments surrounding the greens. It's the perfect setting for one of the very best tournaments in the sport.

TPC Sawgrass was put together with spectating in mind and is the work of the renowned designer, Pete Dye. With water in play on several holes and penal rough it rewards accuracy off the tee and the fairway because the greens are among the smallest on tour. The course is famous for the 17th hole with an island green but the par 4 holes generally provide the sternest test. Despite the demands of the 17th the last hole is often the toughest on the course.

The average winning score over the last 10 years is 12 under in a range from 5 under to 16 under. There have been three playoffs in that spell and two one shot winning margins. There have been eight winners from the United States this century and the only multiple champion since 2000 is Tiger Woods. Ten champions since 2000 have won a major and Si-woo is the lowest world ranked winner in this spell. The last and only British winner was Sandy Lyle in 1987 and he also won two major championships.

Justin Thomas is the current US PGA Championship holder and currently at number two in the world rankings, behind Dustin Johnson. If he wins this week Thomas could reach the pinnacle of the sport for the first time. Sawgrass is not a good fit for Johnson's game as he tends to overpower courses with his long driving. Rory McIlroy is one of the best drivers in the world but his medium length putting often lets him down. Jon Rahm does not have the experience on the course to contend and his game is not the perfect fit. Thomas has all the attributes to get in the mix.

Fleetwood excels on courses that demand straight hitting rather than drives over great distances. The Southport born player is number three for greens in regulation on the European Tour. He has contended in majors and is now at number 14 in the rankings. Fleetwood has the temperament and game to win at this level and with Thomas is one of the players to back against the field.

## **Today's Sports Betting Preview** - By Rick Elliott

### **It Could Be A Bad Night For Huddersfield And Liverpool**

It's rare at this stage of the Premier League season to have a fixture in which both teams have something on the line. Last night Southampton beat Swansea in which in effect was a playoff and tonight Chelsea host Huddersfield and the outcome will have implications at both ends of the table. They are outside bets but Chelsea could still finish in the top four and qualify for the Champions League and Huddersfield could still be relegated and make an immediate return to the Championship. Stoke and West Brom are down so one more club will face the nightmare scenario of dropping into the second tier. HUDDERSFIELD are 5/2 with Betfair in relegation betting.

Tottenham are at home to Newcastle in another massive fixture in the context of playing in the Champions League next season, As much as it pains me to say (I support Man United) but there is still a chance that Liverpool won't be playing in the Champions League in 2018/19. They could lose the final against Real Madrid and drop down to fifth place in the Premier League. Tottenham and Chelsea must win tonight to make that unfortunate scenario feasible and the DOUBLE on the two London clubs can be backed at 1/2 with Ladbrokes. Newcastle have been involved in 20 league matches settled by one goal and Huddersfield 's last eight fixtures have seen two goals or less so don't expect a goal feast tonight but two home wins.

It's the first day of the Chester May Meeting which has a tradition of seeing future superstars in action. Shergar won at the fixture in 1981 and last year Wings Of Eagles and Enable appeared. At this stage of the season it's all about potential and unproven Classic ability but don't rule out seeing a future Derby and/or Arc winner at Chester this week. The Chester Vase (3.35) is a Derby trial which has been won by Aiden O'Brien seven times in the last 10 years. His FLAG OF HONOUR has a Derby entry and has the right pedigree for that race and the horse is on offer at 15/2 with William Hill to win at Chester today.