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TODAY'S SPORTS BETTING TIPS...

Neo Investments

1 - Each Way Bet - 15:00 Musselburgh - Solar Impulse @ 16/1

Value Wins

2 - Win Bet - 14:50 Ludlow - Daisy De Sivola @ 12/1

Early Odds

3 - Win Bet - 17:10 Wolverhampton (A.W) - Arnarson @ 9/2

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Justin Thomas Can Be The Champion Of Champions -

By Ian Hudson

Professional golf is now virtually an all-year activity and it all begins again for 2018 with the Tournament of Champions on the USPGA Tour this Thursday. The event is being played at the Plantation Course in Hawaii which means there will be some late night live action because the time difference with the UK is 10 hours. Regardless of the time zone Justin Thomas can defend the title he won in 2017.

The season-opener is confined to Tour winners during the previous calendar year. That means there is a limited field of just 34 players and there is no cut so everybody starts the year by winning some prize money. The champion this week gets a full two-year exemption so it's a title worth winning. The number one player also qualifies for the 2019 renewal so can plan a schedule accordingly.

The course at Kapalua puts a premium on distance over accuracy. It is not over long but the fairways are wide so finding them from the tees is not difficult. The greens are also above average in size so players who excel at hitting greens in regulation do not have an advantage. The key is setting up manageable approach shots to the correct part of the greens and that task is made easier by long driving.

The course is beside the sea but not really links in nature. For a coastal course there are plenty of trees and the fairways are more lush than fast running. However, trade winds can increase the degree of difficulty and cause scores to rise. Since 2000 the winning score has been in a range of 8 to 31 under and the main difference in conditions has been the wind. The course is relatively easy in benign weather.

The tournament was formerly called the Mercedes Championships and in that guise saw a rare occurrence. Stuart Appleby won three times in a row from 2004 and 2006 and he is the only three-time winner this century. Tiger Woods has won the Tour curtain-raider twice and if he plays this time next year he will have won a regular tournament, WGC event or major. The former world number one is returning to the sport after two years of injuries and operations. Phil Mickelson won the event twice in the 1990's but has not qualified this time.

Dustin Johnson has all the attributes to contend and he won the Tournament of Champions in 2013. His winning score of 16 under was exceptional as the event was reduced to 54 holes. Thomas was the champion a year ago with a score of 22 under and then went-to-back when winning the Sony Open the following week on the second leg of the Hawaii Swing. Thomas won five times and the FedEx Cup.

Rickie Fowler ticks a lot of boxes this week. He blitzed through the field with a final round of 61 to win the Hero World Challenge in December. Fowler was tied sixth in 2013 and solo 5th last year so can handles the course. Hideki Matsuyama is a long-

hitting ball striker with an impressive scoring average but he has lost the knack of winning while Sergio Garcia is not playing in Hawaii.

Jordan Spieth qualified for the tournament with three wins, including the Open Championship at Royal Birkdale. He has played in the Tournament of Champions in the last three years and has form figures of Second-Win-Tied Third. He has played 12 rounds at Kapalua and has an average of 67.67 shots. He has finished in the top 10 on his six latest starts so combines course and recent form but Thomas is preferred because he can hole more putts.

Spieth is certainly not shabby on the greens but his mate was fourth in strokes gained putting and third for proximity to the hole last year. The greens are relatively big so Thomas was hitting the right areas to set up many birdie and eagle opportunities. He is the USPGA champion and third behind Johnson and Spieth in the world rankings. Thomas can enhance his winning record in Hawaii with victory this week.

Today's Sports Betting Preview - By Rick Elliott

The forecast says it will be sunny and dry at least for the first four days of the 5th Test so England will not have the weather on their side as they try to avoid a 4-0 series defeat to Australia. The Ashes cannot be won but there is never a friendly when these two teams meet. England did win at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 2003 and 2011 but are the underdogs for the match that starts at the ground tonight at 11.30pm UK time. Australia have lost two of their last 23 Tests at the ground but both those defeats were against England. However, lightening is unlikely to strike again so AUSTRALIA are the bet for this match at [4/6 with William Hill](#).

Arsenal's third match in six days is a home fixture tonight against Chelsea who are something of a bogey team. In fact Arsenal have beaten their London rivals just once in the last 12 meetings and that record is unlikely to be enhanced in this fixture. Arsenal's busy schedule has created some injury absentees and Mesut Ozil won't be playing tonight. They are also missing Aaron Ramsey and Olivier Giroud so a weakened team will be taking on CHELSEA at home so the visitors should be backed to win three points at [13/8 with Betfair](#).

There is a saying that punters have never had it so good and certainly the non-runner/no bet rule for the major races at the Cheltenham festival is a massive concession. This means if you back a horse in ante post betting for the five features of the four day meeting with a number of bookmakers and the backed horse does not run you get your money back. This rule is usually applied at about the start of March but this year three leading bookies now make this offer. Not many Festival runners will be in action today at Ludlow where EXITAS has the trip and ground to suit in the 2.20pm race and is the standout racing bet of the day at [13/2 with Ladbrokes](#).