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TODAY'S FREE SPORTS BETTING TIPS...

<u>Footie Flutters</u> Win Bet - National League - Harrogate v Salford 19:45 - Salford @ 2/1

Two Percent Club Win Bet - Lingfield (A.W) 14:00 - Wall Of Sapphire @ 11/2

<u>StatMan</u> Win Bet - Southwell (A.W) 15:25 - Marble Bay @ 13/8

McIlroy Tipped To Win The WGC Matchplay - By lan

Hudson

Rory McIlroy won the WGC Matchplay in 2015 and comes into this year's event after a big win. The nature of the tournament means there can be shocks but at his best McIlroy is the best player in the world and can beat all-comers. The 64 man field is divided into 16 groups of four players who play each other on a round robin basis over the first three days, from Wednesday to Friday. The group winners progress to the knockout rounds which culminate in Sunday's final which McIlroy can win. He won the Players Championship for the first time earlier this month.

The event is being played at Austin Country Club in Texas for the fourth successive year. Previous course winners of the event are Jason Day, Dustin Johnson and the defending champion Bubba Watson. All three players are big hitters who excel on courses that put a premium on distance over accuracy. Length of the tee is important even on the relatively short course that measures 7,108 yards and has a par of 71. Hitting greens in regulation is not as important as putting which is always a key element of matchplay golf. A long putt can repair the damage of a poor drive and approach shot and can help a player win a hole after being the outsider.

The top 16 players are seeded and the other 48 players are allocated a group based on their world ranking. In any group there will be one seed from the top 16, 17 to 32, 33 to 48 and 49 to 64 seeds. Matches are played over 18 holes in the group stages and up to the final which is contested over 36 holes. Only the group winners qualify for the last 16 which means the qualifiers will probably need to win all three matches. However, two wins could suffice if other results in the group go a certain way. Seedings are not a reliable guide to results in the group stage.

In the three world matchplay events at Austin 18 of the pool winners were the top seed, 12 were in the second bracket from 17 to 32 and nine progressed from the other two bands that included the 33 to 64 seeds. No player has qualified for the knockout rounds in each of the last three years on the course. Johnson was the defending champion last year having made the last 16 in each of the two previous years but lost all three pool matches and was eliminated at the first stage. Twenty-one players have won all three group matches in the 48 groups covering 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The event was first played in 1999 and there are only three multiple winners. Tiger Woods is the leading player with three wins from 2003 to 2008 and Day and Geoff Ogilvy are dual winners. The event has been won five times by the number one seed and 12 times from a player in the top 10. The highest seeded winner is Kevin Sutherland in 2002 who was the number 62 seed. Eleven winners were US players and nine WGC champions came from overseas. Paul Casey was the losing finalist in 2009 and 2010 and he successfully defended the Valspar Championship last week.

McIlroy is in Group 4 with Mathew Fitzpatrick (32), Justin Harding (47) and Luke List (64). His draw could hardly have worked out better because his three opponents are in the two lowest seeds in their band. The former world number one has won 24 of his 37 matches in the event but has not qualified for the knockout stages in the last two years. Fitzpatrick is 3 for 0 for not progressing, Harding is playing in his first world matchplay and List lost all three matches in 2018. It makes no sense to oppose McIlroy and the favourite can win the WGC world matchplay for the second time.

Today's Sports Betting Preview - By Rick Elliott

Raheem Sterling Could have The Last Laugh

In the past England have gone through qualifying games with ease and then not produced the goods when it mattered most in tournaments. They look good enough to go unbeaten in the group stages of Euro 2020 and progress to the finals which are being played in 13 cities next summer. England have shortened in the betting to win the tournament and are now a best price of 11/2.

Gareth Southgate's team are the first England outfit to score five goals in consecutive matches since 1984. RAHEEM STERLING scored four goals in the two matches. He is still young enough to be the PFA Young Player of the Year and is 3/1 with **Paddy Power** to win the main award for senior players.

The WGC Matchplay in golf brings together 64 players in 16 groups of four who compete on a round robin basis. The group winners progress to the knockout rounds over the weekend after matches over the next three days. Rory McIlroy is the favourite to win the event for the second time and Dustin Johnson is the number one seed based on world rankings. The top seed has won the event five times since it was first played in 1999. Johnson was the champion in 2017 on this week's host course.

If McIlroy and Tiger Woods win their groups they will meet in the last 16 over 18 holes on Saturday morning. McIlroy, the winner in 2015, could not have got a much easier draw as he plays the lowest seed from two bands and the second lowest seed form the other band. RORY MCILROY is 7/10 with **bet365** to win Group 4.

The racing at four meetings is ordinary today with no banker bet that stands out. The headline on the front page of the Racing Post complies with a system and ratings to identify potential winners of the Grand National. Only three horses meet eight criteria for potential winners of the greatest race in the world. Tiger Roll and Rathvinden are qualifiers but the best value is ROCK THE KASBAH at 20/1 with **Paddy Power**.