



# US OPEN

## BETTING PRIMER



# OPEN SEASON

STRATEGIES FOR BETTING THE US OPEN

### THIS FREE GUIDE INCLUDES

- PROFILES OF TOP CONTENDERS
- COURSE PREVIEW AND STATS THAT MATTER MOST
- TOURNAMENT BEST BETS

Greetings, all,

The PGA Tour is just about ready to tee it up at Pinehurst No. 2 for the 2024 U.S. Open and we're just about ready to start with arguably our most important time of the year at VSiN. Before I get into that, let's talk about what you're going to find in our U.S. Open Primer:

- Adam Burke's Course Preview and Stats That Matter
- Zachary Cohen's Profiles of the Top 10 Favorites
- Early Best Bets from Matt Youmans, Kelley Bydlon, and Wes Reynolds

There is an ad about this in the Primer, but allow me to go ahead and let you know about a special offer available to those who register at [VSiN.com](https://www.vsin.com) with the promo code PINEHURST. You will get a 30-day free trial to see what life is like as a VSiN Pro Subscriber.

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So, use that promo code PINEHURST after you enjoy the U.S. Open Primer and join us in VSiN City with your free trial.

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# PREVIEWING PINEHURST

**STATS THAT MATTER THE MOST**

By Adam Burke



For the fourth time in its storied history, Pinehurst No. 2 will host the U.S. Open. The third major championship of the year will be at Pinehurst for the first time since 2014, when Martin Kaymer won the second of his two majors. Michael Campbell won his only career major at this course back in 2010. Payne Stewart won back in 1999.

Kaymer's 9-under was eight shots better than anybody else in the field, but Campbell won at even par and Stewart won at 1-under. Pinehurst has played tough, as most U.S. Open venues tend to do.

We'll see if that changes this year. Since the last U.S. Open at Pinehurst, players and equipment have improved so much that the par 70 on a track measuring over 7,500 yards in length isn't as daunting as it once was. In fact, the last five U.S. Opens have finished with a winner at 6-under or better, so players are finding more success, but these courses are clearly playing tougher than average.

Pinehurst No. 2 should contain all of the usual attributes and characteristics. Let's dive into the course a little more and then consider the players who might fit the best based on the stats that matter most.

## Previewing Pinehurst

There aren't a whole lot of guys who were in the field or prominently featured back in 2014 in this year's field. The course now has what is called "Champion Ultradwarf Bermudagrass" greens instead of bentgrass per PGATour.com, so that is one significant change. A lot of players walked the course and played practice rounds on Monday and many more will be arriving on Tuesday and Wednesday to see how they roll, since this will be the first U.S. Open to employ that sort of putting surface.

There are three 500+ yard par 4s and four other par 4s that

measure at least 470 yards. Perhaps a blessing and a curse this week at Pinehurst is that there aren't a lot of areas for traditional rough to grow. Many of the fairways are lined by sandy areas and wiregrass. It might be better to be in a shallow sand trap than shin-high rough in some respects, but driving accuracy once again remains an essential skill in a major.

What the sandy areas do is force players to consider the risk-reward of going for a green by having to take a less-lofted club from the sand. We're going to see some middle irons out of those areas and that does create less margin for error, not only in terms of ball flight, but also in terms of getting good spin when landing on the green.

In that same breath, there are only three par 3s on the course and two of them play over 200 yards. Pin placements are a factor for all 18 holes, but we've seen some diabolical ones in the past. Shinnecock Hills in 2018 comes to mind. It is going to be very hot and not terribly humid during the day, so these greens are just going to bake in the June sun. By Sunday, they might be like landing a wedge on concrete.

Pace of play is also a factor here. The U.S. Open is inclusive of a lot of different players, including regional and amateur qualifiers who have earned their way into the field. With the difficulties of the course for even the world's best, we could have some long rounds on Thursday and Friday. Fatigue may be a factor between the weather conditions and the mental strain of getting around the course.

## The Stats That Matter Most

While the shortcut is just to look at Scottie Scheffler's body of work and say, "Everybody needs to play like that", there are some metrics to pay closer attention to this week at Pinehurst based on the course. And, look, these aren't just for trying to pick a winner. There are Top 10, Top

20, H2H matchups, and all sorts of other betting options available.

As mentioned, driving accuracy will be a big deal. There is a fine balance here between distance and hitting a fairway. Because of some of the green angles and the sandy areas, some holes will punish accuracy more than reward distance and vice versa. Certainly the longer par 4s will require both. The par 5s may be kinder to distance, but there are only two of those with the par 70 scorecard.

All stats from PGATour.com

### THE TOP 10 IN DRIVING ACCURACY

1. Collin Morikawa (77.72%)
2. Sepp Straka (77.26%)
3. Tommy Fleetwood (74.91%)
4. Lucas Glover (74.78%)
5. Russell Henley (74.45%)
6. Shane Lowry (74.29%)
7. Si Woo Kim (74.26%)
8. Aaron Rai (72.61%)
9. J.T. Poston (72.36%)
10. Scottie Scheffler (72.09%)

Of those players, only Scheffler (2nd) ranks in the top 10 in SG: Off The Tee.

While SG: Approach matters at every single tournament, majors ramp it up a few notches. Second shots are much harder on these premier tracks in most cases than they would be at others.

### THE TOP 10 IN SG: APPROACH

1. Scottie Scheffler (1.528)
2. Corey Connors (.960)
3. Tom Hoge (.904)
4. Tony Finau (.791)
5. Justin Thomas (.767)
6. Xander Schauffele (.676)
7. Aaron Rai (.668)
8. Si Woo Kim (.608)
9. Lucas Glover (.554)
10. Greyson Sigg (.545)

(Patton Kizzire (8th), Keith Mitchell (10th) not in field)

A lot of majors become an exercise in minimizing damage by Scrambling. Sand scrambling will be another part of the equation here.

### THE 10 IN SCRAMBLING

(missing a green in regulation, but making par or better - tour average 59.78%)

1. Xander Schauffele (71.37%)
2. Alex Noren (69.31%)
3. Scottie Scheffler (69.20%)
4. Denny McCarthy (68.86%)
5. Hideki Matsuyama (68.44%)
6. Ludvig Aberg (67.94%)
7. Greyson Sigg (67.53%)
8. Tommy Fleetwood (67.49%)
9. Mackenzie Hughes (67.12%)
10. Billy Horschel (66.43%)

(Aaron Baddeley (2nd), Maverick McNealy (8th), Taylor Montgomery (12th) not in field)

Of those in the top 10 in Scrambling, Schauffele (2nd) is the only one in the top 10 in Scrambling from the Sand, which is defined as the percent of time a player misses a GIR, but still makes par or better when the birdie stroke is taken from the greenside bunker.

Remember, a lot of players will be hitting sand shots adjacent to the fairway based on their tee shots here.

Keep an eye on Proximity to the Hole as the tournament goes along. I think it's important, but with how hard these capped greens are going to be between the sunny, hot weather and the course setup, I don't know how much what happened before matters this week. Players are likely to miss a lot of GIRs and wind up scrambling or chipping/pitching towards the hole.

These aren't all, but some of the most important stats for this week. Watch how the tournament plays out as well. Guys playing in the morning before the warm temperatures might get an advantage due to increased humidity and moisture overnight coupled with cooler conditions. Those may not be luxuries afforded to them on Saturday and Sunday if they make the weekend with later tee times.

Pinehurst No. 2 is sure to be a challenge and is a track very much worthy of hosting such a prestigious event.

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# THE TOP 10

(ODDS PROVIDED BY DRAFTKINGS SPORTSBOOK)

By Zachary Cohen

## Scottie Scheffler

**(Win: +300 / Top 5: -120 / Top 10: -250)**

Scheffler's odds tell you everything you need to know about how dominant he has been this season. The OWGR and PGA No. 1 is the biggest favorite to win a major since Tiger Woods was listed at +180 to win the PGA Championship in 2009. Scheffler comes into this event after having won the Memorial Tournament last week, marking his fifth victory of the short season. Two of those wins came at THE PLAYERS Championship and the Masters, two of the bigger tournaments of the year. On top of that, Scheffler has finished inside the Top 10 in 12 of the 13 events he has played this season. He's a factor every time he's on the golf course, and he even finished T-8 when he showed up late to the PGA Championship because of a short stint in prison. He's unflappable.

As far as the course goes, Scheffler fits pretty much anywhere. He's first on the PGA TOUR in SG: Total and SG: Approach to Green, while also being second in SG: Off The Tee. He's also first in Greens in Regulation Percentage and fourth in Scrambling. All of that is good enough to make up for him being just 71st in SG: Putting. In fact, he averages 5.22 birdies per round, which is the best mark on tour. And the tour average is just 3.77. He should navigate Pinehurst just fine.

## Xander Schauffele

**(Win: 11-1 / Top 5: +240 / Top 10: +120)**

Schauffele finally broke through and won his first major, shooting a 21-under to edge out Bryson DeChambeau in the PGA Championship at Valhalla Golf Course. The monkey is finally off the 30-year-old's back, and that should allow him to play freely moving forward. That's pretty dangerous for the rest of the golfers, as Schauffele often finds himself in positions to win and squanders opportunities.

Schauffele is likely going to have chances at Pinehurst, too. Schauffele doesn't necessarily go that big off the tee, as he's 41st in Driving Distance. But he's seventh in SG: Off The Tee and 26th on the PGA TOUR in driving accuracy percentage. Combining that with the fact that he is second in SG: Total, sixth in SG: Approach to Green, first in Scrambling and 16th in SG: Putting, Schauffele is a threat to win anywhere.

## Rory McIlroy

**(Win: 11-1 / Top 5: +250 / Top 10: +125)**

McIlroy hasn't been a real factor at a major in quite some time, but he has won two tournaments in 2024, played well at the RBC Canadian Open two weeks ago and is still a top-five player in both the FedExCup and OWGR rankings. McIlroy is also third on the PGA TOUR in SG: Total, fourth in SG: Tee-to-Green and fifth in SG: Off The Tee. And even some of McIlroy's non-elite numbers aren't bad. He just needs to find a way to put it all together on the biggest stage again.

Is McIlroy focused? That's probably the biggest question with him. McIlroy resigned from his position on the PGA TOUR Policy Board, but he's still peppered with questions about LIV Golf and the Public Investment Fund. He's also going through an awful lot in his personal life. The four-time major champion is going to have to compartmentalize all of that in order to win this event.

## Collin Morikawa

**(Win: 14-1 / Top 5: +320 / Top 10: +150)**

Morikawa is coming off a second-place finish at the Memorial Tournament, The 27-year-old still hasn't won any tournaments in 2024, but he's certainly knocking on the door. He has six Top 10 finishes this season, and he has also finished T4 or better in each of his last three events. One of those was a stellar outing in which he shot 15-under at the PGA Championship — which is impressive considering he was T3 at the Masters. Morikawa will now be hoping that a great recent run of form will help him win his third major.

The good news for Morikawa is that Pinehurst is a course that rewards accuracy off the tee. Well, Morikawa is first on the PGA TOUR in driving accuracy in 2024. He's also one of the most reliable iron players in the world. He just needs to find a way to get hot with the putter. He's only 96th on the PGA TOUR in SG: Putting this year. Morikawa's putting has been rather poor in key moments, too.

## Bryson DeChambeau

**(Win: 18-1 / Top 5: +400 / Top 10: +200)**

It's hard to compare DeChambeau to the rest of the field when it comes to key statistics. However, we know that the 30-year-old is long off the tee, and he's averaging 320.9 yards per drive in LIV Golf this year. That's the longest average amongst LIV golfers. Also, DeChambeau's 72.45% GIR in LIV Golf would put him second on the PGA TOUR.

Of course, it's easy to rule out what DeChambeau is doing in what is currently a lesser tour. But the last time we saw DeChambeau, he shot a 20-under to finish second at the PGA Championship. Considering DeChambeau also finished T6 at the Masters, it's pretty safe to say he's playing at a near-elite level right now. He needs to be taken very seriously at Pinehurst.

# THE TOP 10

(ODDS PROVIDED BY DRAFTKINGS SPORTSBOOK)

## Viktor Hovland

**(Win: 20-1 / Top 5: +400 / Top 10: +200)**

Hovland shot 18-under and finished third at the PGA Championship, marking a big-time return to form for the Norwegian. Hovland has always been one of the best ball-strikers on the planet, which is why he has been able to compete despite leaving a lot to be desired around the greens. But this weekend is really going to depend on which version of Hovland shows up. He looked like his former self at Valhalla, but Pinehurst has the potential to chew him up and spit him out.

Even at his very best, Hovland wasn't very good when it came to Scrambling. And his driving accuracy isn't exactly great. He's going to need to put it together when it comes to both in order to play well on this golf course.

## Brooks Koepka

**(Win: 20-1 / Top 5: +450 / Top 10: +210)**

The last time the US Open was played at Pinehurst No. 2, Koepka finished T4. That was back when Koepka was only 24 years old, and the Florida native hadn't yet won a major. Now, Koepka is a five-time major champion, and he won one as recently as last season. Koepka also happened to earn a victory at LIV Singapore, shooting a 15-under to edge out Cameron Smith in early May. He followed that up with another decent outing at LIV Houston. Sure, you can downplay LIV all you want, but good golf is good golf.

The reality is that Koepka is going to have a shot at winning this thing as long as he's putting well. The two-time US Open champion is great off the tee and can hit every shot in the book with his irons. He just needs to make that count by taking advantage of the position he puts himself in on the greens.

## Ludvig Aberg

**(Win: 22-1 / Top 5: +450 / Top 10: +210)**

Aberg finished in second place at the Masters, but he missed the cut at the PGA Championship. The 24-year-old clearly has all the talent in the world, but he's still capable of turning in some head-scratching performances on big stages. Theoretically, Aberg's ball-striking should give him a chance anywhere, as he's seventh on the PGA TOUR in SG: Total, 12th in SG: Tee-to-Green, 18th in SG: Off-the-Tee and 15th in SG: Approach the Green. On top of that, he's 28th in Driving Distance and 24th in Driving Accuracy.

Aberg just needs to put it all together for an entire weekend, and it really starts with his iron play. If he can dial it in with those, he's very much live to win on a course like this. The reality is that Aberg's first major is coming very soon, so backing him until he wins one makes a lot of sense.

## Jon Rahm

**(Win: 28-1 / Top 5: +550 / Top 10: +260)**

Everybody on the planet knows that Rahm took an exorbitant amount of money to go to LIV Golf. Unfortunately, the Spaniard still hasn't won a LIV Golf event, despite being the biggest name on the tour. The two-time major winner and former world No. 1 also finished a disappointing T45 at the Masters and then missed the cut at the PGA Championship. So, Rahm has a lot of work to do in order to show the world that he's still one of the best golfers on the planet.

It should, however, be noted that Rahm is second in LIV Golf with 5.18 birdies per round. So, he's not far off Scheffler's PGA TOUR numbers in that regard. Rahm is also ranked inside LIV Golf's Top 10 in Scrambling, GIR, Putting Average and Driving Distance. That said, he's still a high-upside player and you can't rule out the possibility of him getting hot here.

## Tommy Fleetwood

**(Win: 35-1 / Top 5: +650 / Top 10: +280)**

It's well documented that Fleetwood has never won a PGA TOUR event, but that's going to have to change eventually. He's too good to retire without a win, and he has won tournaments on the DP World Tour. And realistically, there's no reason Fleetwood can't win a major.

Fleetwood is also an interesting fit for this golf course. Pinehurst rewards guys that are accurate off the tee, and Fleetwood is third on the PGA TOUR in Driving Accuracy this year. On top of that, he's one of the best in the business when it comes to iron play. And it's not like he's bad with the putter either. Fleetwood just needs to be a little more consistent on the greens, especially later in tournaments.

# VSIN EXPERT US OPEN

## BEST BETS

### MATT YOUMANS

#### SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER (+300)

Scheffler has become the Patrick Mahomes of the PGA Tour. If you don't bet him, you will probably regret it on Sunday afternoon. I bet on Mahomes in the Super Bowl and feel compelled to ride with Scheffler to win and finish top five (-120, DraftKings) because it will be a shock if he's not in the hunt at Pinehurst.

#### COLLIN MORIKAWA (14/1)

After tying for third at the Masters and tying for fourth in the PGA Championship, Morikawa is the only player in the field who has finished in the Top 5 in both majors this year. He's playing with confidence and his current form is strong. While there is no shame in finishing second to Scottie Scheffler, Morikawa's failure to close on Sunday at the Memorial extended a trend. He has been too passive in final rounds, seemingly content with playing it safe and contending. He needs to be more aggressive on Sunday and chase the win. Morikawa might be able to get over the hump at Pinehurst, a course that fits his fade and long-iron accuracy. I bet Morikawa last week and will stick with him to win and finish Top 10 (+150, DraftKings).

#### BRYSON DECHAMBEAU (18/1)

The 2020 U.S. Open champ has everything he needs — impressive length off the tee plus creativity and talent around and on the greens — to go low at Pinehurst. I just missed with DeChambeau at 28-1 in the PGA when he fired a 7-under final round to finish -20, one stroke behind Xander Schauffele, who played the best golf of his life and finally closed the deal in a major for the first time. DeChambeau has finished in the top eight four times in the past seven majors, so play him to win and finish Top 10 (+200, DraftKings).

#### MATT FITZPATRICK (40/1)

A final-round 69 at the Memorial earned Fitzpatrick a top-five finish, which could be a buy sign at the right time. He has been erratic this year, tying for 22nd at the Masters and missing the PGA cut, but he's good enough around the greens to find the leaderboard this week. He excels on the toughest courses and won the 2022 U.S. Open. Fitz is worth a shot to win and finish Top 20 (+165, DraftKings).

#### KEEGAN BRADLEY (75/1)

When this major was played at Pinehurst in 2014, Bradley shot 69 or better in three rounds and tied for fourth. Bradley has finished in the top 25 in both majors this year, so he's my sleeper pick to win and finish Top 20 (+250, DraftKings).

### KELLEY BYDLON

Before I get to my early best bets, here are the stats I will be keying in on this week:

#### Driving Accuracy/Good Drives/Fairways Gained

- SG: APP
- Prox 175+, 200+
- Par 4s
- Scrambling
- SG: ARG
- Sand Saves
- SG: P 5-10, P 10-15 ft
- 3 putt avoidance
- Bogey Avoidance

#### COLLIN MORIKAWA (OUTRIGHT/TOP 10)

After some struggles to start the season, Morikawa has really rounded into form recently. After finishing T3 at the Masters, he's gone on to post four other top-10 finishes in five events. He might not be the best out of the sand or longest off the tee, but other than that, he's exactly what I'm looking for in a golfer this week; he's incredibly accurate off the tee, great on approach, especially with his long irons, can scramble around the green, and his putting has even improved. I have an outright bet on him at 21-1 from last week, but if betting now, I'd probably target him in "winner without Scottie Scheffler" markets, as well as a top-10 bet.

#### XANDER SCHAUFFELE (TOP 10)

I've made this exact bet in eight tournaments so far this season, and have cashed in on seven of those bets, so this is pretty much just an auto-bet for me at this point. Schauffele has teed it up in 13 events so far this season and has finished inside the top 10 (or tied) in 10 of them. If it weren't for Scheffler, we'd be talking a whole lot more about Xander this year. No real surprise, but they are my top-two rated golfers this week. With a premium on accuracy off the tee, a solid approach game, and a great ability to scramble and get up and down around the green, Pinehurst should be a great fit for Schauffele's game. The outright price is a little short for me, but I wouldn't blame anyone for betting it. I'll just continue to target the top 10 market.



## WES REYNOLDS

### COLLIN MORIKAWA (14/1)

While finishing runner-up by one stroke to Scheffler last weekend at the Memorial Tournament, Morikawa was better than the world No. 1 off the tee, around the greens, and with the putter. However, Scheffler gained +13.12 strokes with the irons on approach, nearly six strokes more than any other player in the field.

After a sluggish start to the 2024 season, Morikawa has finished T-3 (Masters) and T-4 (PGA Championship) in the year's first two majors. He has finished Top 4 in four of his last five events and Top 10 in five of his last six events.

In 2023, Morikawa also tied for second at the Rocket Mortgage Classic and tied for sixth at the Tour Championship, two tournaments contested on Donald Ross designs, so he is well adept at navigating his trademarked turtleback, pushed-up greens.

### CAMERON SMITH (40/1)

The 2022 winner of The Open Championship at St. Andrews has seemingly been a bit "out of sight and out of mind" since joining LIV Golf.

He still sprays it a bit off the tee, but Pinehurst No. 2 is a setup where he may not be all that penalized for that considering the width of the fairways and the fact that the Australian certainly grew up playing out of bunkers plus the sandy waste areas that are commonplace at Pinehurst.

Smith leads LIV in Scrambling and is still a bit of an artist around the greens. While the recent form does not jump off the page, this course is a better fit for him than most U.S. Open courses that have thick roughs where he typically struggles playing bomb-and-gouge type golf.

Cameron Smith

