



## 2015 WGC-HSBC Champions

(The 4th of 47 events in the 2015-2016 PGA TOUR Season)

Shanghai, China      November 5-8, 2015      FedExCup points: 550 (winner)  
Sheshan International Golf Club

Purse: \$8,500,000  
Par/Yards: 36-36—72/7,199

### First-Round Notes – Thursday, November 5, 2015

*The World Golf Championship-HSBC Champions is the fourth event in the PGA TOUR's wraparound schedule that bridges two years with 47 official events. Over the span of 43 weeks, players vie to become the FedExCup Champion, which distinguishes the one player who not only performs well during the PGA TOUR Regular Season, but also excels through the four-event FedExCup Playoffs, culminating with the 2016 TOUR Championship by Coca-Cola.*

#### First-Round Leaderboard

Player	Score	Country	Official World Golf Ranking
Branden Grace	63 (-9)	S. Africa	22
Kevin Kisner	64 (-8)	USA	34
Steven Bowditch	64 (-8)	Australia	69
Thorbjorn Olesen	64 (-8)	Denmark	79
Danny Willett	65 (-7)	England	26
Patrick Reed	65 (-7)	USA	18
Dustin Johnson	65 (-7)	USA	8

#### Branden Grace

South African Branden Grace grabbed the first-round lead at the World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions after a bogey-free 63 on Thursday. The 9-under-par score is Grace's lowest round in his PGA TOUR career and one stroke short the current course record (2014 – Martin Kaymer – 62).

Entering this week Grace has never led after the first round of a PGA TOUR event in 44 previous starts.

This is Grace's 14<sup>th</sup> appearance in a World Golf Championships; his best showing came in the 2015 Dell Match Play (T9). His best performance at the HSBC Champions (T39) came in 2013.

Grace earned PGA TOUR membership for the 2015-16 season by finishing top 125 on the FedExCup non-member points list. He made 11 of 13 cuts, with four top-10s, including two of the four major championships (T4 – U.S. Open, 3 – PGA Championship). Grace capped off his year with an impressive 5-0-0 record in five Presidents Cup matches in the American team's 15½-14½ victory in South Korea.

Grace has won twice on the European Tour this season (Alfred Dunhill Championship, Commercial Bank Qatar Masters) and is currently No. 6 in the Race to Dubai.

#### Kevin Kisner

In his World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions debut, Kevin Kisner fired a bogey-free 64 in the first round and is one back of Grace after 18 holes. Kisner's 8-under-par score on Thursday tied his career-low on TOUR (second round – 2011 Viking Classic).

Kisner teed it up in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia last week at the CIMB Classic and tweaked his back during his final round. Kisner's injury prevented him from playing a practice round this week in Shanghai and Thursday was his first trip around Sheshan International Golf Club.

Kisner is playing in just his second World Golf Championships event. Earlier this year, the 31-year-old from Aiken, South Carolina, finished T37 at the Bridgestone invitational.

Kisner's round in detail: 9 of 14 fairways, 14 of 18 greens, 24 putts.

Last season, the former University of Georgia standout posted three runner-up three performances on TOUR (2 – RBC Heritage, T2 – THE PLAYERS Championship, T2 – The Greenbrier Classic) and finished No. 21 in the final FedExCup standings.

### **Steven Bowditch**

Australian Steven Bowditch tied his career-low first-round score on TOUR with an 8-under 64 on Thursday.

At the 2015 AT&T Byron Nelson Bowditch carded an 8-under 62 to grab the 18-hole lead and went on to capture his second TOUR victory. Both of Bowditch's TOUR wins have come in the state of Texas (2014 Valero Texas Open).

Bowditch has played in the World Golf Championships-Bridgestone Invitational twice; his best performance came in 2015 (T12).

### **Danny Willett**

England's Danny Willett bogeyed the par-4 9<sup>th</sup>, his final hole of the day, to card a 7-under-par 65.

Willett has won twice on the European Tour this season (Nedbank Golf Challenge, Omega European Masters) and is currently No. 2 in the Race to Dubai.

In 2015 the 28-year-old from Rotherham, England, finished top 20 in his three World Golf Championships appearances (Cadillac Championship – T12, Dell Match Play – 3, Bridgestone Invitational – T17).

### **Thorbjorn Olesen**

Thorbjorn Olesen's 8-under-par 64 in the first round is his lowest round on TOUR in 76 attempts.

Olesen has five-career top 10s on TOUR; his best showing came the 2013 Masters Tournament and the 2014 HSBC Champions (T6).

### **Dustin Johnson**

In search of his third World Golf Championship trophy, Dustin Johnson opened the HSBC Champions with a 7-under 65 and is just two back of Grace after the first round.

After missing a chance to defend his 2013 HSBC Champions title last year, Johnson returns to Sheshan International Golf Club looking for a repeat performance after shooting a 24-under par for a three-stroke victory over Ian Poulter. Johnson added a second World Golf Championships victory at the 2015 Cadillac Championship after he and fellow long hitters J.B. Holmes and Bubba Watson finished 1, 2, 3, respectively. Johnson finished the 2014-15 season inside the top 10 (7<sup>th</sup>) in the FedExCup for the fourth time in his career.

### **Hao Tong Li**

China's Hao Tong Li posted a 6-under 66 on Thursday and leads the Chinese contingent in the field. Li played this past season on the Web.com Tour after finishing No. 1 on PGA TOUR China in 2014.

This past season, Li retained his Web.Com Tour card after advancing to the Web.com Tour Finals. In 23 starts Li recorded seven top 25s, made \$101, 952 and ended the year No. 49 on the money list. Li's best performance came at the Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr. Pepper (T6).

### **Bubba Watson**

For the second straight season, Bubba Watson is making his PGA TOUR season debut at the HSBC Champions. Watson carded a 4-under 68 in the first round and is five behind Grace.

Last year, after a 1-under 71 in the first round, Watson played his way into contention, carded 67-69-70 and eagled the 72<sup>nd</sup> hole with one of the most memorable shots in tournament history to force a playoff with Tim Clark. Watson birdied the first extra hole and collected his maiden international victory.

### **Miscellaneous stats**

Showing the true global reach of the World Golf Championships, there are nine countries represented in the top 10 on the leaderboard after the first round.

### **Past HSBC Champions are in the field:**

Player	Year	Score	Place
David Howell	2005	73(+1)	66

Sergio Garcia	2008	68 (-4)	T16
Martin Kaymer	2011	69 (-3)	T31
Ian Poulter	2012	72 (E)	T60
Dustin Johnson	2013	65 (-7)	T5
Bubba Watson	2014	68 (-4)	T16

**Six players representing China are in the field:**

Player	Score	Place
Yi Cao	70 (-2)	T42
Zecheng Dou	70 (-2)	T42
Hao Tong Li	66 (-6)	8
Wenchong Liang	71 (-1)	T54
Ashun Wu	69 (-3)	T31
Xinjun Zhang	67 (-5)	T9

**Quick review of tournament history:**

- The HSBC Champions was created in November 2005 and became an official European Tour and Asian Tour event beginning in 2006. Event champions during that timeframe: 2005 – David Howell; 2006 – Y.E. Yang; 2007 – Phil Mickelson; 2008 – Sergio Garcia.
- In 2009, the HSBC Champions was granted World Golf Championships status but was an unofficial event on the PGA TOUR. Phil Mickelson’s win in 2009 is not considered an official PGA TOUR victory.
- Beginning in 2010, the HSBC Champions counted as an official PGA TOUR victory and offered a three-year exemption on the PGA TOUR—provided the tournament was won by a PGA TOUR member. Prize money, however, did not count toward the official PGA TOUR money list, even in a PGA TOUR member won the tournament. Tournament winners during this timeframe include: 2010 Francesco Molinari (unofficial PGA TOUR win); 2011 – Martin Kaymer (unofficial PGA TOUR win); 2012 – Ian Poulter (official PGA TOUR win).
- On the final day of the 2012 event, HSBC announced renewal of its title sponsorship through 2015, along with the announcement that the event would become a part of the PGA TOUR’s FedExCup. Dustin Johnson became the first champion to be awarded official money, FedExCup points (550), and a three-year exemption for his victory in 2013 and Bubba Watson winning last year.

Scoring averages at the par-72 Sheshan International Golf Club

	<b>Front 9</b>	<b>Back 9</b>	<b>Total</b>
R1:	34.963	34.614	69.577

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