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THE 154TH OPEN - PREVIEW STATS / FACTS

Champion Golfers at Royal Birkdale

There have been ten previous stagings of The Open at Royal Birkdale, with the first held in 1954.

YEAR	CHAMPION	COUNTRY	SCORE	NUMBER OF WINS
1954	Peter Thomson	Australia	72, 71, 69, 71 – 283	1 of 5
1961	Arnold Palmer	USA	70, 73, 69, 72 - 284	1 of 2
1965	Peter Thomson	Australia	74, 68, 72, 71 – 285	5 of 5
1971	Lee Trevino	USA	69, 70, 69, 70 – 278	1 of 2
1976	Johnny Miller	USA	72, 68, 73, 66 – 279	1 of 1
1983	Tom Watson	USA	67, 68, 70, 70 - 275	5 of 5
1991	Ian Baker-Finch	Australia	71, 71, 64, 66 - 272	1 of 1
1998	Mark O'Meara	USA	72, 68, 72, 68 - 280	1 of 1
2008	Pádraig Harrington	Ireland	74, 68, 72, 69 - 283	2 of 2
2017	Jordan Spieth	USA	65, 69, 65, 69 - 268	1 of 1

With the exception of Ireland's Pádraig Harrington, only Americans and Australians have won The Open at Royal Birkdale.

Of the ten stagings of The Open at Royal Birkdale, five were part of consecutive victories (Peter Thomson – 1954, 1955, 1956; Arnold Palmer – 1961, 1962; Lee Trevino – 1971, 1972; Tom Watson – 1982, 1983; Pádraig Harrington – 2007, 2008). Harrington's Birkdale victory was the last successful defence of The Open.

Four of those consecutive victories were almost longer streaks: Thomson was second in 1952, 1953 and 1957 before winning again in 1958; Palmer was second in 1960; Trevino lead by two going into the final round of 1970 and missed the play-off by two strokes after a 77; Watson was joint-leader going into the final round of 1984 and finished tied-second, two behind Seve Ballesteros. In addition to these, Johnny Miller missed out on a play-off in 1975 by one stroke, the year before he won, Ian Baker-Finch played in the last group on the final day in 1990 and Jordan Spieth was joint-leader going into the last round in 2018.

Peter Thomson is the only player to have won at Royal Birkdale on two occasions, in 1954 and 1965. 1954 saw Thomson become the first Australian to win The Open on the course's

Championship debut, defeating Bobby Locke, Dai Rees and Syd Scott by a single stroke. Thomson's win in 1965 was his fifth, placing him joint-second on the list for most victories. The field in 1965 was considered much tougher, featuring defending champion, Tony Lema, Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus. Thomson won by two strokes from Christy O'Connor Senior and Brian Huggett, the third time a Welshman had finished runner-up in an Open at Royal Birkdale.

Arnold Palmer's one-stroke victory in 1961 was more comfortable than the margin may appear; he holed only two putts of any length during the final round, leaving a lot of putts short. Palmer played a famous second at the 15th (now 16th) from a bank in deep, clinging willow scrub, thrashing the ball 150 yards onto the green and made par. Finishing on a total of 284 with a three-shot lead over Dai Rees, Palmer watched as Rees failed to hole his second shot to the 470-yard 18th, and although Rees made a three to finish runner-up for a second time at Royal Birkdale, it wasn't enough to deny Palmer the title.

In The 100th Open in 1971, Lee Trevino arrived at Royal Birkdale having won the US Open and the Canadian Open in the previous three weeks. Joint-leader after each of the first two rounds, Trevino took a one-shot lead into the final day and triumphed by the same margin over Liang-Huan Lu despite a double-bogey seven on the 17th.

Johnny Miller began the final round of 1976 two strokes behind Seve Ballesteros but, after bogeying the first to fall three behind, there were four holes with a two-shot swing and one with a three-shot swing to the American in the first 12 holes. Seven ahead with six holes to play, Miller eagled the then par-five 13th and birdied the last two to win by six from Ballesteros and Jack Nicklaus.

Tom Watson successfully defended his title at Royal Birkdale in 1983, winning his fifth Open, and only one in England. Needing a par-four at the shortened 18th (513 yards to 473 yards), Watson hit a 213 yard 2-iron to the last green of which he said, "I busted that 2-iron as well as I could hit it." Watson finished one ahead of fellow Americans, Andy Bean and Hale Irwin, who had a fresh air shot over a tap-in on the 14th in the third round.

Ian Baker-Finch won his only major in 1991 at Royal Birkdale, coming from five behind after the first round, and four behind after the second, to be joint-leader thanks to a third round 64. A 66 in the final round saw him tie the record of 130 for the lowest score over the final 36 holes in The Open. Mike Harwood finished second to make it an Australian one-two.

Mark O'Meara played in the final group in 1991 with Baker-Finch at Royal Birkdale, finishing tied-third, then won the next staging here in 1998 after a four-hole play-off with Brian Watts. O'Meara also won the 1987 Lawrence Batley International on this course. In 2017, O'Meara played his 31st and last Open at Royal Birkdale and had the honour of hitting the first tee shot in the first round.

Pádraig Harrington became the second player to successfully defend his title at Royal Birkdale in 2008, beating Ian Poulter by four strokes, with a three-over-par total of 283. Harrington had injured his wrist in the build-up to The Open and had considered withdrawing, playing only nine holes in the practice rounds. Fifty-three year-old Greg Norman held a two-shot lead going into the final round, at that time the oldest man to hold a 54-hole lead in The Open but Harrington's magnificent finish in strong winds, including an eagle at the 17th, saw him have a comfortable walk up the final hole knowing he'd won.

Jordan Spieth's opening comment in his press conference after winning in 2017 was, "We're going to skip the first twelve holes, right?", referring to his adventurous bogey-five on the 13th, where he took a penalty drop onto the practice ground, which meant he was behind playing partner Matt Kuchar for the first time, followed by a finish of birdie, eagle, birdie, birdie, par to win by three strokes.

Number of Champions

In the previous 153 Opens there have been 91 different Champion Golfers of the Year. 27 players have won The Open more than once. 63 Opens have resulted in a repeat winner (the 27 players have won 89 Opens between them).

Longest Span of First-Time Winners

Scottie Scheffler's win at Royal Portrush in 2025 extended the current streak of first-time winners of The Open. The streak currently sits at 12 first-time Champions, starting with Phil Mickelson in 2013 through to Scheffler in 2025. This is the longest span of first-time winners since The Open began.

The last player to have won The Open on two or more occasions was Ernie Els in 2012.

Stroke Average at Royal Birkdale

YEAR	PAR	STROKE AVERAGE	YARDAGE	CUT	WINNING SCORE
1983	71	72.90	6968	146 (+4)*	275 (-9)
1991	70	72.20	6940	148 (+8)	272 (-8)
1998	70	74.03	7018	146 (+6)	280 (Level)
2008	70	74.907	7173	149 (+9)	283 (+3)
2017	70	71.852	7156	145 (+5)	268 (-12)

* There was also a 54-hole cut in 1983 which fell at 217 (+4)

For 2026 the par for the course is 70 and the total yardage is 7223 yards, an increase of 67 yards on the 2017 total. Royal Birkdale is playing as the 15th longest course in Open history, but the longest ever set as a par-70. Across the four days in 2017, the stroke average varied from 74.026 in the second round, when there was at times torrential rain and winds gusting up to 40 mph, to 69.026 in the third round (still the lowest individual day's figure ever recorded in The Open), when the course was damp from the previous day's rain, the wind had disappeared and the sun was out.

Low Scoring and Course Record at Royal Birkdale

The course record for the old lay-out of Royal Birkdale is 62 set by Branden Grace in the third round of 2017. Grace's eight-under-par round was the first 62 ever scored in a men's major and featured five birdies on the front nine and three on the way back. It remains the lowest ever 18-hole score in The Open.

After the round Grace said he didn't realise that he was breaking the men's major record and it was only after he'd holed a two-foot putt for par on the 18th that his caddie, Zack Rasego, said to him, "You're in the history books."

Hole	Par	Score	Notes
1	4	3	Driver, 127 yards gap wedge, 16ft putt
2	4	4	Driver, 130 yards gap wedge, 2 putts
3	4	4	Driver, 158 yards 9-iron, 2 putts from 8ft
4	3	2	8-iron, 35ft putt
5	4	3	Driver, 2 putts from 25ft
6	4	4	Driver, 218 yards 3-iron, 2 putts
7	3	3	9-iron, 2 putts from 14ft
8	4	3	Driver, 158 yards 9-iron, 25ft putt
9	4	3	Driver, 129 yards gap wedge, 12ft putt
Out	34	29	
10	4	4	5-iron, 161 yards 9-iron (short), 2 putts
11	4	4	Driver, 173 yards 7-iron, 2 putts
12	3	3	6-iron, 2 putts from 15ft
13	4	4	Driver, 180 yards 8-iron, 2 putts from 11ft
14	3	2	9-iron, 34ft putt
15	5	5	Driver, 240 yards 2-iron (short left), chip to 7ft, 2 putts
16	4	3	Driver, 142 yards 9-iron, 28ft putt
17	5	4	Driver, 239 yards 3-iron, 2 putts from 26ft
18	4	4	Driver, 165 yards pitching wedge (long), 2 putts
In	36	33	
Total	70	62	

There have been two rounds of 63 in Opens held at Royal Birkdale (Jodie Mudd, round four 1991; Haotong Li, round four 2017).

There have been five rounds of 64 in Opens held at Royal Birkdale (Craig Stadler, round one 1983; Graham Marsh, round four, 1983; Ian Baker-Finch, round three 1991; Dustin Johnson, round three 2017; Aaron Baddeley, round four 2017).

New holes at Royal Birkdale

The 14th and 15th holes are new to The Open this year. From the previous lay-out, the old par-3 14th no longer exists and is part of the Skill Zone this week. The 14th is now an update of the old par-5 15th that has been lengthened with a new green built back and to the right of the old green and the 15th is now a new par-3 that has been created heading back to the Clubhouse, so that each par-3 on the course plays in a different direction.

The 1st Hole – 447 yards, par-4

1st	Yardage	Par	Eagles	Birdies	Pars	Bogeys	Double bogeys +	Rank	Stroke Avg
2017									
Rd 1	435	4	1	14	93	38	10	3	4.308
Rd 2	448	4	0	16	116	23	1	16	4.058
Rd 3	445	4	0	15	46	15	1	8	4.026
Rd 4	448	4	0	8	48	14	7	1	4.286
Total	448	4	1	53	303	90	19	5	4.174

The 1st hole of Royal Birkdale played much longer in the first few Opens to be held here, with the original tee located near to where the practice putting green now sits. In 1954 and 1961 it measured 520 yards and, once par figures had been adopted from 1963 onwards, it was reduced to 493 yards for the 1965 and 1971 Opens and played as a par-5. For 1976 the tee was moved to its current position and the hole was reduced to a par-4. The Club is proud of the hole's reputation as the hardest opening hole on The Open rota, with a stroke average in 2008 of 4.52 the highest figure to par ever recorded for a first hole.

The 6th Hole – 514 yards, par-4

6th	Yardage	Par	Eagles	Birdies	Pars	Bogeys	Double bogeys +	Rank	Stroke Avg
2017									
Rd 1	490	4	0	8	73	67	8	1	4.500
Rd 2	485	4	0	6	71	66	13	2	4.583
Rd 3	489	4	0	7	52	18	0	2	4.143
Rd 4	511	4	0	5	49	22	1	2	4.247
Total	499	4	0	26	245	173	22	1	4.427

In 2026 the 6th hole of Royal Birkdale is playing as the longest ever par-4 used for The Open at 514 yards. The 6th has ranked as the hardest hole in every Open held at Royal Birkdale since statistics were first kept (1983, 1991, 1998, 2008, 2017).

Changing par at Royal Birkdale

Royal Birkdale is the only course to have hosted The Open that has played to an official par of 73, in 1965 and 1971. Back then the 1st, 13th, 15th, 17th and 18th were all par-5s. Royal Birkdale is also the only course on The Open rota to have played to four different par figures:

- In 1976 the 1st hole was reduced to a par-4 and the course played to a par of 72.
- In 1983 the 18th hole was reduced to a par-4 and the course played to a par of 71.
- In 1991 the 13th hole was reduced to a par-4 and the course played to a par of 70, which it has remained at ever since.

Lee Trevino won The Open at Royal Birkdale in 1971 at 14-under-par but took ten strokes more in total than Jordan Spieth in 2017, who finished at 12-under-par.

Countries represented in the field

With four places still to be gained in The Open (three through the Genesis Scottish Open and one through the Last-Chance Qualifier) there are players from 28 countries in the field for The 154th Open. The countries are (number of players in brackets):

Argentina (1), Australia (7), Austria (2), Belgium (1), Canada (2), Chile (1), China (1), Colombia (1), Denmark (3), England (20), Finland (1), France (5), Germany (2), Ireland (4), Italy (2), Japan (8), Netherlands (1), New Zealand (3), Northern Ireland (3), Norway (3), Scotland (2), South Africa (8), South Korea (6), Spain (6), Sweden (5), Thailand (1), USA (52) and Zimbabwe (1).

Former Champions in the Field

There are 15 former Champions playing at Royal Birkdale this year, one fewer than last year at Royal Portrush.

David Duval 2001	Pádraig Harrington 2007, 2008	
Stewart Cink 2009	Louis Oosthuizen 2010	Darren Clarke 2011
Rory McIlroy 2014	Henrik Stenson 2016	Jordan Spieth 2017
Francesco Molinari 2018	Shane Lowry 2019	Collin Morikawa 2021
Cameron Smith 2022	Brian Harman 2023	Xander Schauffele 2024
Scottie Scheffler 2025		

The exempt former Champions that are not playing this year are John Daly (1995), Justin Leonard (1997), Paul Lawrie (1999), Tiger Woods (2000, 2005, 2006), Ernie Els (2002, 2012), Ben Curtis (2003), Todd Hamilton (2004), Phil Mickelson (2013) and Zach Johnson (2015). Daly and Hamilton, both 60, are no longer exempt for The Open after this year. Lawrie and Clarke's last year of exemption is 2029.

Amateurs in the Field

As it stands there are ten amateurs in the field for The 154th Open, one more than were in the field at Royal Portrush in 2025 and five more than played here in 2017.

PLAYER	COUNTRY	METHOD OF QUALIFICATION
JACK BUCHANAN	South Africa	Africa Amateur
ALEJANDRO DE CASTRO PIERA	Spain	FQ – Burnham & Berrow
STUART GREHAN	Ireland	The Amateur
LEV GRINBERG	France	Open Amateur Series
DAVID HOWARD	Ireland	RQ – The Island / FQ - Dundonald
MASON HOWELL	USA	US Amateur
FIFA LAOPAKDEE	Thailand	Asia-Pacific Amateur
MATEO PULCINI	Argentina	Latin America Amateur
NEVILL RUITER	Netherlands	FQ – Dundonald
TIM WIEDEMEYER	Germany	European Amateur

David Howard came through Regional Qualifying at The Island and, after losing a play-off for an automatic spot, was the fifth reserve for Final Qualifying. After making it into the field at Dundonald he finished tied-second (140, -4) and qualified for The Open.

Mason Howell is the first winner of the US Amateur to use his exemption for The Open since Gunn Yang in 2015.

Silver Medal Winners at Royal Birkdale

The Silver Medal awarded to the leading amateur was introduced in 1949. The winners of the Silver Medal at Royal Birkdale are:

Year	Player	Country	Number in field / to make the cut	Position	Total
1954	Peter Toogood	Australia	12 / 2	T15	291
1961	Ronnie White	England	7 / 2	T38	306
1965	Michael Burgess	England	13 / 3	T29	299
1971	Michael Bonallack	England	9 / 2 / 2	T22	291
1991	Jim Payne	England	8 / 2	T38	284
1998	Justin Rose	England	5 / 3	T4	282
2008	Chris Wood	England	5 / 2	T5	290
2017	Alfie Plant	England	5 / 1	T62	286

Eight of the ten Opens at Royal Birkdale have resulted in a Silver Medal winner (in 1976 and 1983 no amateurs made the cut).

The last seven winners of the Silver Medal at Royal Birkdale have been English. This year there are no English amateurs in the field.

The two best performances by amateurs in The Open in the last 65 stagings have both come at Royal Birkdale; Justin Rose finished tied-fourth in 1998, two strokes out of the play-off and Chris Wood finished tied-fifth in 2008.

Ronnie White won the Silver Medal at Royal Birkdale in 1961. White had been a member of the Club since the age of 12 and lived locally most of his life. He also won the Lancashire Amateur (1948), the Golf Illustrated Gold Vase (1949) and the Brabazon Trophy (1950), all at Royal Birkdale and played in the Walker Cup here in 1951. The United States of America team defeated Great Britain and Ireland by 6 points to 3, but, in his two matches, White partnered with Joe Carr to halve with Frank Stranahan and Bill Campbell, and beat Charles Coe in singles by 2&1.

Scottie Scheffler

Scottie Scheffler's 2025 win was the 21st occasion on which a player had won The Open and at least one other major in the same year, having won the PGA Championship earlier in May. The last five players to have won The Open and at least one other major in the same year have all won the same combination of majors (Woods 2006, Harrington 2008, McIlroy 2014, Schauffele 2024 and Scheffler 2025).

The last two Champion Golfers have won the PGA Championship and The Open in the same year (Schauffele 2024 and Scheffler 2025).

At Royal Portrush in 2025, Scheffler became the 12th different player to shoot four rounds in the sixties during an Open (14th overall). In his five previous Open appearances, Scheffler has a worst finish of tied 23rd at Royal Liverpool in 2023, with eleven of his 20 rounds being under 70 and fourteen of those being under par.

50th Anniversary – Johnny Miller

Friday 10 July was the 50th anniversary of Johnny Miller's six stroke victory in The 105th Open at Royal Birkdale in 1976. Miller started the final round two strokes behind Seve Ballesteros and, after a final round 66, finished six ahead of Ballesteros and Jack Nicklaus.

100th Anniversary – Bobby Jones

Thursday 25 June was the 100th anniversary of Bobby Jones' first victory in The Open at nearby Royal Lytham & St Annes in 1926 after a remarkable shot from sandy scrubland to the 17th green. That year featured the first Regional Qualifying for The Open with Jones entered at Sunningdale and after a first round of 66 that beat the previous course record by four strokes The Times reported, "The crowd dispersed awe-stricken. They had watched the best round they had ever seen, or ever would see, and what the later players did they neither knew nor cared."

After a second round of 68 to be leading qualifier by seven strokes, Jones said, "I wish I could take this course home with me."

The Open finishing on 19 July

The Open finishes on 19 July this year and is the first Open to finish on that date for 17 years.

2020 should have finished on 19 July but was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and 2015 was scheduled to finish on 19 July but went into an extra day as a result of bad weather on the Friday and Saturday.

The last player to win The Open on 19 July was Stewart Cink in 2009.

This year's final round is going to be the 28th anniversary of Mark O'Meara's win at Royal Birkdale in 1998; the 34th and 39th anniversary of Sir Nick Faldo's two wins at Muirfield in 1992 and 1987; the 45th anniversary of Bill Roger's win at Royal St George's in 1981.

Other previous Championships at Royal Birkdale

Other Championships to have been held at Royal Birkdale include The Women's Amateur on three occasions, four stagings of The Amateur, The Boys' Amateur twice, one Senior Open, the Walker Cup, the Curtis Cup, two Ryder Cups and six AIG Women's Opens.

The Irish amateur Jimmy Bruen Junior won both The Boys' Amateur (1936) and The Amateur (1946) at Royal Birkdale. Bruen's swing was so powerful that in the semi-final of The Amateur he broke his steel-shafted mashie niblick during a shot. He borrowed one from fellow competitor Gordon Peters for the final, and broke that, too. He borrowed a third from Henry Cotton, who was carrying the club as he followed the match. Bruen won the final by 4&3 against Bob Sweeny of the USA.

Sepp Straka's bogey-free streak

Sepp Straka had 21 consecutive pars to end The 153rd Open at Royal Portrush, starting at the 16th in the third round. Straka's last bogey was at the 6th hole in the third round and he is on a 30-hole bogey-free streak (he birdied the 7th, 12th and 15th in the third round).

Regional Qualifiers in the Field

Three players have made it through Regional Qualifying (RQ) and Final Qualifying (FQ) to take their place in the field for The Open.

- Tiger Christensen played in RQ at Minchinhampton where a 69 left him in tied-fifth position, he then came through FQ at West Lancashire with a 65 then a 70 (135, -9) and qualified in joint-second place. Christensen previously played in The Open as an amateur at Royal Liverpool in 2023 and is now making his professional debut in a major.
- David Howard played in RQ at The Island and, after losing a play-off for an automatic spot, was the fifth reserve for FQ. After making it into the field at Dundonald he finished tied-second (140, -4) and qualified for The Open. Howard is one of ten amateurs in the field and is playing in his first major.
- Tom Sloman won at Ferndown in RQ with a five-under-par 66, he then finished tied-third at Burnham & Berrow in FQ with a 69 then a 65 (134, -8). Sloman is playing in his first major.