

## International qualifying changes for the 2014 Open Championship

Written by TMAC GOLF  
Monday, 28 October 2013 06:40

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A new international qualifying series featuring three events on the PGA Tour is being introduced for The Open Championship which takes place at Royal Liverpool (Hoylake) from 13-20 July, 2014.

The Open Qualifying Series will comprise 14 events in nine countries on five continents and will offer players the opportunity to qualify for golf's oldest Major Championship at prestigious events on the PGA Tour, the European Tour, the PGA Tour of Australasia, the Japan Golf Tour and the Sunshine Tour.

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Nine qualifying places will be available on both the PGA and European Tours. Players will be able to qualify on the PGA Tour at each of the AT&T National, The Greenbrier Classic and the John Deere Classic. There is one place in the John Deere Classic due to the logistics of qualifiers traveling to play in The Open at short notice. In Europe, players will be able to qualify at the Irish Open, the Alstom Open de France and the Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Open prior to The Open.

The Qualifying Series will begin with the Emirates Australian Open which runs from 28 November - 1 December, 2013. Qualifying places will also be available at the Mizuno Open on the Japan Golf Tour, The Open Qualifying Series – Thailand and the Joburg Open in South Africa.

Peter Dawson, the Chief Executive of The R&A, said, "This is a significant change to the qualifying process for The Open and one which will make the Championship as open as possible to players from around the world.

"The new Open Qualifying Series will create an exciting build-up to The Open as players bid to secure their places in the weeks leading up to the Championship. We believe it will enhance the qualification process by giving players the opportunity to qualify at 72-hole championships as well as being more convenient in terms of their scheduling.

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“We are very much looking forward to The Open 2014 Qualifying Series getting underway next month in Australia.”

Tim Finchem, the Commissioner of the PGA Tour, said, “We welcome this initiative from The R&A which will offer qualifying places at three events on the PGA Tour in the lead-up to The Open. This will give the players a clear pathway to secure their place in The Open at three prestigious events and create some added interest as players try to qualify for the world’s oldest Major Championship.”

George O’Grady, Chief Executive of The European Tour, said: “Incorporating the new Qualifying Series within three of The European Tour’s strongest tournaments on three of Europe’s finest courses will ensure qualifiers of the highest quality progress through to The Open Championship in July. We are delighted to support The R&A in this change which will be warmly welcomed by The European Tour membership.”

The 2001 Open Champion David Duval said, “I feel like The Open Championship is the most important golf tournament of the year. For guys to know that many weeks ahead of time that they are in, that they have qualified, and that they have had the chance to play 72 holes to do it, I think it’s a brilliant idea.”

Two-time Open Champion Padraig Harrington said, “I really do think it will attract more players to the Irish Open, especially those who are not already exempt for The Open Championship, and some quality players will be in that category. The Scottish Open and the French Open are also going to be involved which will also make those events stronger, whilst ensuring that The Open will have the strongest possible field. It’s a nice boost for the European Tour from The R&A.”

Paul Lawrie, the 1999 Open Champion, added, “I think there are two things that jump out. It’s going to strengthen the tournaments where those places are going to be coming from and that it is qualifying over a 72-hole event, which I think is fairer for the players trying to qualify.”

The Open Qualifying Series will replace International Final Qualifying (IFQ) for The Open Championship which was introduced in 2004 and involved 36-hole qualifying events in Australasia, Asia, Africa, America and Europe.

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Final Qualifying for The Open Championship has also been changed for 2014. Final Qualifying will continue to offer three places at each of four events in the UK but for the first time next year they will be played at four venues covering Scotland and the North-west, Central and South-coast regions of England to provide a more accessible route into The Open for competitors qualifying from the 13 Regional Qualifying events around the country. The venues are: Gailes Links, Hillside, Woburn and Royal Cinque Ports.

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