

## Time for golf's big names to step up at Lytham

[Neil Johnston](#) assesses the main contenders ahead of The Open at Royal Lytham and St Annes

Wednesday 18 July 2012



Luke Donald is in search of his first major win,  
Image: Keith Allison via flickr Creative Commons

After weeks of taking a beating from the British weather, Royal Lytham and St Annes is set to take on the world's best for the 141st Open Championship on Thursday. However, it is the course which has grown by 200 yards since its last Open appearance; that is likely to get the better of golf's elite this week. With none other than Tiger Woods branding the rough "nearly unplayable" or even "inescapable" and last year's champion Darren Clarke describing the course as "brutal", it will be an enduring test for those with their eyes on the Claret Jug.

So who is expected to shine at the Lancashire links? The last nine majors have been won by first time champions and the very nature of links golf means favourites could falter. However Lytham has a reputation for only being won by the greatest players, so if there is a time for the big names to step up it is now. And there are several that could be in contention.

Rory McIlroy has been in patchy form this season but has proved he has what it takes to win a major, and if he plays his best he could leave the pack behind. However, to win he will have to tone down his natural aggression. Lytham is not the place to take risks; one wayward shot and the ball can be gobbled up by the much feared rough, never to be seen again. If he is to win this week he will need to keep control of not just the ball, but his mind as well.

McIlroy's compatriot Graeme McDowell is also one to look out for. Finishing second at the US Open, he has performed well in the two majors so far this year. The Lancashire course may also suit his style, with accuracy being the key to success.

Bookies' favourite Tiger Woods appears to be edging towards his former self. With three wins on tour this year he has already shown that he can still produce world-beating golf, but he has yet to win that elusive 15th major. We saw signs of the Woods of the past at the US Open. After two days the former world number one was leading but then fell into an uncharacteristic tumble down the leaderboard of his own

making. Perhaps this week, though, he can go a few steps further and win a fourth Open title.

Luke Donald is still seeking his first major victory, and has been taking advice from some of the golfing greats on how to achieve that career goal. He finished 16th at the Castle Stuart last week – probably a performance on links he will take confidence from, considering it was an opportunity to try out some new shots. He has the ability to win and if he can navigate his way around the course, and if he gets the right breaks, the Englishman could secure his first major.

Finally, a more unlikely contender to look out for is Paul Lawrie. The 43 year old has been on superb form this season, having more or less secured his place in the Ryder Cup. Crucially, he is also a past winner of golf's biggest championship. He might have missed the cut last week but that isn't always a bad thing. It will have given him time to hone in on his game and refocus. Don't be surprised if he bounces back this week, after all, he still holds the record for the largest final day comeback in Open history. And indeed there are echoes of 1999 – that year Lawrie won the Qatar Masters before taking golf's most sought after trophy. He won his second Qatar title in February, and with Lytham showing similarities to the 'Car-nasty' course he conquered, perhaps we could have a British winner on Sunday.



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## 2 comments

andy d

13 Aug '12 at 6:46 pm

"car-nasty" sounds like b's description of a defender lol

[Report](#)

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Rizzle

14 Sep '12 at 8:57 pm

Very informative, what did mcloy have for dinner?

[Report](#)

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