

## WORLD-RANKING POINTS AT CENTRE OF GOLF DRAMA

The hottest sidebar to the ongoing saga of PGA Tour players defecting to the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Tour has centred around Official World Golf Ranking points. The bottom line is that the LIV players are not earning any OWGR points and plummeting in the world rankings as a result.

Fair or unfair?

OWGR ranking points are important, because a player's position in the rankings is used to determine qualification for some important events. The Masters, for instance, uses the OWGR points list to invite the top 50 in the world. Most of the top 50 have qualified via other avenues, but many hovering in the 40-55 range nervously watch the weekly listing to see if they'll be eligible for invitation to play at Augusta. The nabobs who run the tournament reward those in the top 50 at the end of the calendar year, and again following the tournament which ends the week before the Masters.

The OWGR constitution says the LIV tournaments are ineligible to deliver ranking points because they don't meet some of the organization's criteria — 54 holes, no-cut events and absence of a free path to qualifying for LIV events are no-no's in the OWGR world. The LIV application has apparently been filed to the OWGR brass, but there is a one-year waiting period after the application is submitted. So while the paperwork has yet to be approved, LIV players are receiving no ranking points, and falling further and further down the list. Phil Mickelson, for instance, has fallen out of the top 200 for the first time since the early 90s, and former No. 1 Dustin Johnson currently sits at No. 41. Said someone on Twitter: "If the OWGR says there are 40 better golfers in the world than Dustin Johnson, then the system has zero credibility."

That may be true, but since Dustin Johnson has removed himself from competing against a full field of the world's best golfers, how is anyone able to compute his comparative standing among the world's best golfers? He could win six LIV events in a row, but beating perhaps six or seven players of Grade A quality — as opposed to 50 or 60 on the PGA Tour — makes it impossible to determine how terrific Johnson's play actually is. Would that quality of play have given him six top-three finishes on the PGA Tour? Or would that quality of play have put him around 30th in the more competitive PGA Tour fields? Unless the best players are playing against the best players, we'll never know.

Eventually, LIV Golf players will be eligible for OWGR points, but their tournaments will have low strength-of-field grades, resulting in a reduced number of points for high finishes. It appears as if the LIV golfers, all of them extremely wealthy, will almost certainly remain in the world-ranking-point poorhouse.

- Fark.com, on the Giants signing shortstop **Carlos Correa** to a 13-year, \$350 million free agent contract (before the contract was voided and Correa wound up signing with the Mets): "The SF Giants just paid \$350 million for an overrated shortstop whose best season was five years ago when he knew what pitches were coming."
  - **Pierre LeBrun** in The Athletic, on junior hockey star **Connor Bedard**: "He is the kind of prospect an NHL franchise should go all-out tank-a-palooza for."
  - **Bob Molinaro** of pilot [online.com](https://www.online.com) (Hampton, Va.): "If **Jeff Saturday** isn't brought back, there must be somebody else at ESPN — maybe **Adam Schefter** or **Stephen A.** — who **Jim Irsay** can hire to coach the Colts."
  - Twitter offering from @riotsurvivor: "The NHL referee that just gave a penalty to **Hunt** for hurting **Bear** is technically a wildlife conservation officer."
  - Masters champ **Scottie Scheffler**, joking about the menu he'll choose for this year's Champions Dinner: "Steak for the PGA guys. **White Castle** for the LIV guys."
  - Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**: "The Packers are called the Pack. The Buccaneers are called the Bucs. The Patriots are called the Pats. How come the Titans aren't the . . . oh, right."
  - **Greg Cote** of the Miami Herald: "Marlins FanFest has been set for Feb. 11 at the ballpark so that fans might celebrate a stagnant offseason by Miami while other teams aggressively spent big."
  - **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "Canadian Olympic figure skater **Tessa Virtue** has gotten engaged to Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman **Morgan Rielly**. I suggest a spring honeymoon — the Leafs usually aren't busy that time of year."
  - Headline at the onion.com: "**Roger Goodell** announces thinking too hard about football has given him CTE."
  - From fark.com; "Packers fan Hall of Fame finalist took his wife's surname to literally become '**Mr. Packer**'."
  - [CBS.com](https://www.cbs.com) (you can't make these things up): After legal sports betting in Ohio became law at midnight Jan. 1, "**Pete Rose** ceremoniously places first legal sports bet on Reds to win 2023 World Series."
- Care to comment? Email [brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca](mailto:brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca)

