

MBBC XXIV ODDS

(* Some consideration was giving to preparing a video version of this, but, let's be honest, I'm writing this nonsense less than 48 hours before we leave, so that ain't happening)

2020 has been a VERY strange year. The 24th installment of the Myrtle Beach Birdie Championship was originally set for Las Vegas in May, but in late February rumors began circulating about a possible virus coming from China. President Trump said it was nothing to worry about and that it would simply disappear but that proved to be inaccurate. In Mid-March, the Covid-19 pandemic lead to a complete shutdown of the entire country and the cancellation of all major sports. There was still *some* hope that the MBBC would go forward, but ultimately that proved unrealistic and it was cancelled. With so much uncertainty, it was unclear if the MBBC would be held in 2020. Gradually, the players began to discuss alternate plans, with the consensus being that the best plan would be to find some place within driving distance. Myrtle Beach was considered, but at the time the plans were made, Myrtle Beach was a bit of a hot spot for the coronavirus, and it was also a bit too far of a drive. There was also some discussion of Ocean City, Maryland hosting the event, but that was also quickly voted down. Out of the blue and based apparently on information provided by a neighbor, Eric Drossner proposed Williamsburg, Virginia. Some internet research revealed a solid group of golf courses in the area. Scott took the ball and ran and immediately contacted Whitney of Virginia Golf Vacations and the 2020 MBBC was reborn. The players will be staying at the Powhatan Plantation Resort, which may very well be the nicest accommodations ever for them. Dan Hoelke will make the 5+ hour drive from Pittsburgh, while Paul Rovner and Drossner will pick up Scott Woods, and the MBBC XXIV will open at Royal New Kent. After that round, the players will drive another 30 minutes to Williamsburg. Saturday's round will be at The River Course at Kingsmill Resort. Initially, the round was set for late morning, but after learning that Penn State's season opener at Indiana will kick at 3:30, Scott was able to contact Whitney and get an earlier time. Sunday will feature 36 holes at Ford's Colony Country Club on the Blackheath and Blue Heron courses. The MBBC is currently scheduled to close at the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club – Gold Course on Monday morning. (As of the publishing of these odds, there is chatter about playing an additional round, but it is unclear if that chatter is serious or not and/or if any such additional rounds would count toward the MBBC title.)

After about 6 months of largely being stuck at home, excitement is at an all-time for MBBC XXIV.

Odds to Win MBBC XXIV

Eric Drossner: 1-10

These are the lowest odds ever set in MBBC history. The oddsmakers are simply that confident that this is Drossner's tournament to lose. As has been the case for many years, Drossner is simply the best and most consistent golfer of the foursome. He has played significantly more rounds than any of the other competitors and has consistently reported birdies. Most recently, he reported a 4-birdie round. Drossner has absolutely dominated the MBBC since 2007. Since then then, he has won 9 times. Of the 3 years he did not win, only 2016 when Woods was a legitimate loss. In 2017, Drossner had to leave the tournament early and last year's format change heavily favored eventual winner Paul Rovner. In his most recent win in 2018, Drossner's total was 6, but 2 of those 6 were actually eagles. Since 2009, when he made a record 9 birdies,

Drossner has only made less than 6 birdies on 2 occasions. Perhaps the *only* thing Drossner has working against him is that he *generally* does not play as well away from the friendly confines of his home course. He also does not tend to play well when he's hungry, which *might* be an issue at several courses due to Covid-related restrictions.

Scott Woods: 5-1

While it's hard to truly call the second favorite a dark horse, Woods is considered the dark horse by default, because the oddsmakers don't believe Hoelke or Rovner really have legitimate chances to contend. Woods appears to be the only real threat to Drossner's coronation, although there's really not a whole lot of evidence to even support that. As usual, Woods has played only a handful of rounds since the last MBBC (some 17 months ago) despite his usual claims that he intends to play more. He played well at the impromptu Champions' Challenge at Penn National Golf Club several months ago, but gacked a couple of birdie opportunities. He did birdie during separate rounds with Dan Hoelke in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, but also played miserably at a round at home and at another in North Carolina. Woods is basically hit-or-miss, as he has always been. He will likely make a birdie or 2 early, but the question is whether he can play consistently enough in order to keep up with the pace that oddsmakers expect Drossner to set.

Dan Hoelke: 15-1

It's been a frustrating 14 years since Hoelke last won the MBBC title. There have really only been a couple of near-misses since then. Like Woods, he has played a few rounds in the build-up to the MBBC and has fired a few birdies top once again give hope that he can return to his former glory. Hoelke has the game, but many believe that his biggest challenge is between the ears. In the last several years, Hoelke has largely been frustrated by his ability to control his golf ball off the tee. There is a theory that Hoelke's chances increase significantly if he can just learn to relax on the golf course and not get too down when things are not working for him. If he can make a few early birdies and stay even-keeled throughout the tournament, he will have a chance, especially if Drossner struggles. A MAJOR issue for Hoelke is that his beloved 5-0 Pittsburgh Steelers will be playing on Sunday, which he will certainly be watching and which will almost certainly be a distraction for him. Hoelke has done this before while following the Penguins, and golf was mostly a second-thought for him while he was watching.

Paul Rovner: 50-1

It may seem odd to see the defending champion with odds this high. However, last year's format, which involved use of handicaps, benefitted Rovner more than any other player and basically allowed him to coast to the title, one that many don't believe was legitimate. Besides 2019, Rovner has won twice since 2002. 2012 was his infamous 3-birdie closing round at Crow Creek to shut the door on any challenges. 2017 was the year that Drossner left the tournament early. Rovner has apparently joined Drossner's golf club, but the warm-up round reports have not been promising. There have been rumors of yet another swing change, but other than that, there have not been many other updates from the Rovner camp. As is always the case, while it is

helpful to all players to get off to quick start, it is likely most important to Rovner. He needs to keep pace with the rest of the group. If he falls behind early, it seems unlikely that he'll be able to climb back into contention.

Over/Under – Hole on which the first birdie will be made: 6.5

This has become a very popular prop bet over the last 8 years. The under has hit 7 out of 8 years. This year is somewhat similar to the first year in Vegas, when the oddsmakers expected the group to struggle in a different environment. That proved to be completely wrong, as Woods birdied the opening hole and Drossner birdied the second. It's unclear if there will be fireworks out of the gate this year, but history suggests that the first strike will come early.

Individual Player Over/Unders

Eric Drossner – 7.5

Scott Woods – 3.5

Dan Hoelke – 3.5

Paul Rovner – 1.5

Some may believe that Drossner's total is too high, but if he plays as he has during his warm-up rounds and as he has historically in the MBBC, this number might actually be too low. Vegas expects Woods, Hoelke and Rovner to struggle.

Group Over/Under – 14.5

Oddsmakers have put the total for the group at just under an average of 3 birdies per round. While Drossner is expected to do his part, there could be as many as 3 anchors that keep the total from going over. The weather is supposed to be very favorable, and due to Covid restrictions, the group does not expect to be out late at night, so everyone should be well-rested for golf.