

## GOLF

# McIlroy keen to shake off Masters monkey

FRANK DALLERES

WORLD No3 Rory McIlroy insists he faces even more pressure this year to win the Masters – and complete a coveted career grand slam – than he did 12 months ago.

The Northern Irishman, who will be the last of all 89 players to tee off in Thursday's opening round, remains desperate to join a select group of just five men to have won all four Majors.

Expectation was at fever pitch last year with McIlroy on a hat-trick after scooping the Open and US PGA Championship in 2014, only for Jordan Spieth to win the first of his own back-to-back Majors.

McIlroy's 12-under-par score was enough to earn him fourth place – his best finish yet at Augusta – and he is anxious to improve on that this week and relieve himself of a burden.

"If I can win a Green Jacket and become just the sixth player in history to win a grand slam then I would retire happy knowing I have joined an exclusive list," he said.

"Every year I go to Augusta and haven't won, the pressure will build and build. Hopefully I can get that little monkey off my back, and then I'd just free-wheel it after that. A year

on from the hype that surrounded me, I feel I will know how to deal with it better. Having that experience will definitely help me this time."

McIlroy, who must also contend with the demons of his back-nine collapse five years ago, will play alongside Germany's Martin Kaymer and American Bill Haas in the final group to start the first round.

Defending champion Spieth is among the early starters in a group that also includes England's Paul Casey, while favourite and world No1 Jason Day plays alongside American Matt Kuchar and veteran Ernie Els.

## FIRST ROUND TEE-TIMES

2.48 Jordan Spieth (US), Paul Casey (Eng), Bryson De Chambeau (amateur)  
3.54 Justin Rose (Eng), Jamie Donaldson (Wal), Daniel Berger (US)  
4.05 Adam Scott (Aus), Kevin Kisner (US), Brooks Koepka (US)  
5.44 Branden Grace (SA), Bubba Watson (US), Ian Poulter (Eng)  
6.06 Jason Day (Aus), Matt Kuchar (US), Ernie Els (SA)  
7.01 Martin Kaymer (Ger), Bill Haas (US), Rory McIlroy (NIR)

All times BST



Rory McIlroy will be the last of all 89 players to tee off in Thursday's opening round

## IN BRIEF

### KOUYATE ESCAPES BAN AFTER RED RESCINDED

FOOTBALL: West Ham midfielder Cheikhou Kouyate will be available for Saturday's Premier League clash with Arsenal after the red card he was shown against Crystal Palace was rescinded by the Football Association yesterday. The 26-year-old was facing a three-match ban after being sent off for a foul on striker Dwight Gayle during the Hammers' 2-2 with Crystal Palace at Upton Park on Saturday.

### QUINS SEAL DEAL FOR SCRUM-HALF MULCHRONE

RUGBY UNION: Harlequins have announced the signing of scrum-half Charlie Mulchrone from Premiership rivals Worcester. The 26-year-old, who is eligible to play internationally for both England and Ireland, will move to the Twickenham Stoop in July. We have been monitoring Charlie for a couple of years. I am sure he will push on very quickly within our structure," said Quins head coach John Kingston.

### TWICKENHAM TO HOST RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP

RUGBY UNION: History will be made this autumn when Twickenham hosts the first Rugby Championship match to be staged outside any of the competing nations. Argentina will play Australia in London on 8 October in a repeat of last year's World Cup semi-final. Argentina will be the designated home team for the clash which will conclude this year's tournament, which starts on 20 August.

## CITY CHAMPIONSHIPS

# World Cup medallist Gibb invites City cyclists to race

## INTERVIEW

JESSICA FELLOWES  
TALKS TO TONY GIBB

TONY Gibb is an elite athlete who has not been out of Lycra since the late 1980s and still competes – he recently notched up another three wins to his previous 14 as National Champion as well as becoming World Masters Champion. Now he is a passionate ambassador for the sport and is delighted to encourage beginners as well as experienced racers to the City Cycling

Championships 2016. "This is a fantastic opportunity to ride on an Olympic velodrome and compete in an Olympic-scale event. If you win, you can call yourself a City Champion," says Gibb.

Gibb runs a racing team, one of whose members is a military veteran and winner of the cycling event in the Invictus Games, so he is particularly pleased about the money raised for Future For Heroes. Inviting the financial community to take part also makes sense to Gibb: "There's a groundswell of city people that have taken up cycling in the last five or six years. We even organise corporate days for clients as



Gibb races with Sir Bradley Wiggins

it's such a popular sport."

Gibb knows what makes cycling great: "Outside of racing, it's the freedom. You can go where you want and get fresh air while you do it. It's low-impact exercise, too, so much better for your body than running."

For beginners who have never raced in a velodrome, Gibb is encouraging: "It's a natural progression to go from the bottom to the top, you don't feel as if you're on a 'wall of death'. The mistake people make is to think they have to go full pelt – they wear themselves out after four laps." His best advice to those starting out is "pace yourself". The track bike – no gears or

brakes – and helmet are included in the day's price (£99) as well as a taster window, and there will be qualifiers so racers compete against others of similar ability.

See [citychampionships.com](http://citychampionships.com) for more details

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## PROGRAMME

9.30am Registration & Briefing  
10.00am Wattbike Heats  
1.00pm Lunch  
2.00pm Track Taster  
3.00pm Pursuit Finals  
5.30pm Prize Presentation



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