

Chasing the Dollar or Success?

With the proverbial London buses, you don't see one for ages then two come along. And now the same can be said for Sergio Garcia. No win for nearly three years then two on the trot!

On Sunday 30th October Sergio Garcia completed an amazing fortnight when he beat his



compatriot Miguel Angel Jimenez by a single shot in the Andalusia Masters at the spectacular Valderrama Golf Club in Sotogrande. This followed his truly amazing and record breaking, win the week before when he won the Castello Masters by eleven shots, on the Club de Campo del

Mediterraneo course, where he had started his golfing career by winning the boys under twelve championship some twenty years earlier.

Garcia had started the final round two shots clear of the field but endured a shaky front nine which saw Jimenez first draw level then ahead before Garcia rallied to lead by three with three to play. Even then the drama was not over as Jimenez birdied the 16th and 17th. But Garcia had a fantastic up and down at the last to secure his victory, a victory that sees him once again ranked in the world's top twenty.

Hopefully this will bring about a renaissance in thirty-one year old Spaniard's career that had seemed all but over a short while ago.

It seems only yesterday that Sergio won the hearts of all golfing fans, and particularly the Americans, when at the U.S. PGA of 1999 at the Medinah golf course, he hit a shot at the 16th from behind a tree and with his eyes closed! Those watching then witnessed Sergio chasing the ball up the fairway running and jumping as he tried to see where the ball had gone. He needn't have worried because it landed fine and he was on his way to being runner up to that man Tiger Woods.



Reuters / Scott Olson

It seemed as though the world had a new star who at just 19 years of age looked to be the natural challenger to Tiger Woods superiority. However, following great success on both the US and European tours and at several Ryder Cups, Sergio seemed to run out of steam.

It has taken Sergio a number years of sheer hard work to get back to the top of the tree, with many disappointments both professional and personal along the way, but at the age of thirty-one he still has several years to go in his career and let's hope that elusive major can be brought home, but his story should be a lesson to all young golfers because great promise does not always turn into a long and continually successful career.

Few golfers will enjoy year after year of success. It is often a long, hard slog involving much travel and hard work and it is not always the best thing to chase the dollar across the world as we see all too often these days.

With this in mind and mindful of the history that surrounds Valderrama it was a shame to see so many of our top European golfers like Westwood and McIlroy choosing to travel and play in the inaugural Shanghai Masters, an event that is not sanctioned by any major tour. As



the event does not form part of any tour and therefore does not attract ranking points it is easy to argue that it was purely for the money that so many top golfers turned out in Shanghai. Mind you as first prize was \$1.2 million it's easy to see why they may have given in to temptation! And maybe I'm being a

bit sentimental but I would prefer players to be loyal to the Tours first, particularly if they are aiming to head one of them, as McIlroy is in Europe.

That said it was good to see many of Europe's best golfers such as Jimenez, Garcia, Kaymer and defending champion MacDowell, at Valderrama. It was just a shame not to see world number one Luke Donald again grace Spanish soil as he had done so earlier in the year when finishing runner up at the World Match Play at Finca Cortesin. But as his wife was due to give birth to their second child at the same time as the tournament he can be forgiven his absence. We wish him and wife Diane all the best.

So as we hopefully watch Garcia continue to improve we also will continue to cheer on Luke Donald as he shows everyone just what hard work allied to a natural ability can achieve.

At the time of writing Donald rightly sits on top of the world ranking and has topped the US money list after fourteen top ten finishes in nineteen events. He also leads The Race to Dubai with seven events to go and hopefully will complete a unique double of heading the money lists both sides of the Atlantic.



Maybe then he will silence his critics, and in particular Sir Nick Faldo, who seem to argue that no one deserves to be world number one having not won a major. Maybe they should look at the list of players who have won one major and little else, before judging whether they are better players than Luke Donald. Ben Curtis, Rich Beem, Shaun Micheel world number ones? I don't think so.

Anyway I digress, the real moral of this piece should be that talent alone doesn't always bring great success, nor does sheer hard work. However, talent and hard work will bring the best chance of great and continued success and Garcia and Donald have both in abundance. Long may their current success continue.