

COLUMN

Compleat Golfer's playing editor is South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen. Apart from providing regular instruction, his monthly column takes you into his world

Major Contention

It's been four years since a South African has won a Major and it's time we did so again. The Open Championship holds a special place in my heart - not only because I won at St Andrews in 2010, but because of the tournament's long history.

It remains my only Major victory, although I still reflect on two opportunities when I could have added to that total had the ball bounced for me. At the 2012 Masters I was beaten by Bubba Watson in a playoff and at the Old Course at St Andrews last year I again lost in a playoff, beaten by Zach Johnson. It's a hard pill to swallow when you know you still have a chance to win a Major even after the 72 holes of regulation have been played, and then come up short!

Ernie Els won his fourth Major at Royal Lytham in 2012, and before that Charl Schwartzel won The Masters in 2011, a year after I won The Open. Trevor Immelman won the 2008 Masters and Retief Goosen his second US Open in 2004. Before that it was Ernie at the 2002 Open and Retief at the 2001 US Open.

So, as you can see, South Africans have a good record

at the Majors. The Open and PGA Championships are coming up, which gives us our last opportunities for 2016. The last time South Africa had to wait more than four years between Majors was the period up to 1994, so let's hope recent history allows someone to come through in this year's remaining Majors.

I think it can happen. Branden Grace is certainly a Major

champion-in-waiting and there are a few of us behind him in the World Ranking who can come through if all the cards fall together in the particular week. A lot of us are performing well, so let's see what happens.

I don't have the fondest memories of the 2004 Open, also staged at Royal Troon, where I missed the cut after shooting 74 and 82. Ernie did a lot better and came so close, eventually losing in the playoff to Todd Hamilton, while Retief also finished in the top 10, in a tie for seventh, so he had a good week.

It's a challenging course and, as always, if the weather gets up it makes it even tougher. I feel good about my game, though, so let's hope for the best! ◉

Branden Grace is certainly a Major champion-in-waiting and there are a few of us behind him in the World Ranking who can come through if all the cards fall together



PUTTING FROM THE FRINGE

In a perfect world I prefer chipping it from here because it's not easy to control the speed of the putt. But, when it's a really tough chip I'll use the putter. I still believe bad putts can have a better outcome than a good chip - if it's a tough chip. But, if it's straightforward coming off the fringe, I feel I'm able to control it a lot better chipping with a 7- or 8-iron, just to get it on the green and releasing the ball. With putting a lot of things can happen, especially with us in South Africa where you've got the kikuyu grass which is so tough to judge, that it can bounce anywhere. Here, you can see me showing what it's like with the putter. It is slower, so you need to get your pace right and a lot of the time you're going to leave the putt short. All in all, I prefer chipping from the fringe if I can.