

YOU CAN BET ON IT: TIGER IS BACK. BUT YOU MIGHT LOSE.

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Tiger is back. We think. At least he's saying he will make his long-awaited return at his Hero World Challenge in The Bahamas this week, an 18-player event that includes Dustin Johnson, Jordan Spieth, Hideki Matsuyama, Brooks Koepka, Justin Rose and Bubba Watson.

So what are the odds Tiger Woods wins in his return? What are the chances he shows up? And what do the experts who calculate such things think of the possibility that 2017 might be Woods' last season as a competitor?

As they like to say where gambling is frowned upon, this is not for the purpose of wagering but merely for entertainment value in your local pub, living room or office. But the website BookMaker.eu, which is based where betting is allowed, has set some interesting odds on Tiger's return and more.

For those not familiar with all this, here is how it works: In the case of the first bet, if you bet \$100 on a +385 and win you'd collect \$385. On the other hand, the -485 odds mean you'd have to bet \$485 to win \$100.

So here's what the experts are saying:

Will Tiger Woods announce retirement from professional golf before January 1, 2018?

Yes +385

No -485

How many PGA Tour/European Tour events will Tiger Woods compete in during 2017 calendar year?

OVER 6.5 (+105)

UNDER 6.5 (-135)

Will Tiger Woods win a PGA Tour/European Tour event prior to January 1, 2018?

Yes +900

No -1900

Tiger Woods world golf ranking on January 1, 2018 (current WGR is No. 861)

OVER 861 (+130)

UNDER 861 (-160)

Tiger Woods best finish during 2017 calendar year (minimum playing field of 100)

OVER 15.5 (-145)

UNDER 15.5 (+115)

Will Tiger Woods withdraw during the 2016 Hero World Challenge?

Yes +230

No -320

Tiger Woods finishing position at 2016 Hero World Challenge

1st +2000

2nd +1300

3rd +1100

4th-10th +260

11th-17th -115

18th +550

Will Tiger Woods finish in the top 5 at the 2016 Hero World Challenge?

Yes +350

No -500

Will Tiger Woods finish last (18th) at 2016 Hero World Challenge?

Yes +450

No -700

Will Tiger Woods hit fairway on first round tee shot on Hole No. 1 of Hero World Challenge?

Yes -165

No +135

Tiger Woods score on Hole No. 1 during first round of Hero World Challenge

Birdie +250

Par -120

Bogey or worse +160

How many birdies will Tiger Woods record in the first round of 2016 Hero World Challenge?

OVER 2.5 (-150)
UNDER 2.5 (+120)

How many bogeys or worse will Tiger Woods record in the first round of 2016 Hero World Challenge?

OVER 2.5 (-175)
UNDER 2.5 (+145)

Tiger Woods highest score on any hole during 2016 Hero World Challenge

OVER 6 (-160)
UNDER 6 (+130)

Tiger Woods 18-hole score during first round of 2016 Hero World Challenge

OVER 72.5 (-145)
UNDER 72.5 (+115)

Tiger Woods highest 18-hole round score during 2016 Hero World Challenge

OVER 74.5 (-150)
UNDER 74.5 (+120)

Tiger Woods lowest 18-hole round score during 2016 Hero World Challenge

OVER 68.5 (-145)
UNDER 68.5 (+115)

My reading of the odds leads me to these conclusions: Tiger likely won't retire in 2017; He will start at least six events; He likely won't win a tournament and he's most-likely to finish 11-17 at the Hero World Challenge.

My reading of these possible wagers also leads me to this conclusion: Twenty years after he turned pro, Tiger Woods remains one of the most compelling figures not just in golf but in all of sports. Like that horrid painting of Kramer in the "Seinfeld" episode, you can't take your eyes off him. The bookmakers agree.

"Tiger is always a magnet when it comes to golf wagering in our industry," Scott Cooley of BookMaker.eu told me. "Because of him, we'll get more action on this tournament with him in the field than any so far during the early part of the season. There's been some talk about his retirement so we thought posting odds

on the possibility would create some buzz, and we're only giving him about a 20 percent chance of retiring, but you never know. If he comes out and shoots 77 every day he may start accepting the fact that he's been passed by. We certainly don't expect him to be competitive in any major or regularly-fielded tournament this season."

Whatever Tiger does at the Hero World Challenge this week, people will be watching and reading about it. You can bet on it.

(<http://www.bookmaker.eu/live-lines/golf/golf-specials>)