

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE COMPETITION SYSTEM IN PROFESSIONAL GOLF

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СТРУКТУРА І ЗМІСТ СИСТЕМИ ЗМАГАНЬ У ПРОФЕСІЙНОМУ ГОЛЬФІ

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Abstract.

The modern system of competitions in professional golf is unique. Its structure involves a large number of components of different levels that function as a coordinated mechanism. **Purpose** — to determine the components of the modern system of competitions in professional golf and their content. **Material.** Materials that were selected for analysis within the scope of the study related to the formation and development of competition system in professional golf both in the historical context and in relation to the current state. **Methods:** analysis and synthesis; historical; systematic approach. **The results.** The structure of the competition system in professional golf includes tours and tournaments within them. There are more than 20 tournaments today, which include different numbers of tournaments. The leading tours today are PGA Tour, European Tour, and Japan Golf Tour. At the same time, the most prestigious and oldest tournaments are The British Open, US Open, The Masters, and PGA Championship, which are sanctioned by the mentioned tours, and at the same time are held by independent organizations. They are the most profitable for athletes both from

Анотація.

Сучасна система змагань у професійному гольфі є унікальною. Її структура охоплює велику кількість компонентів різного рівня, що функціонують як скоординований механізм. **Мета** — визначити компоненти сучасної системи змагань у професійному гольфі та їх зміст. **Матеріали.** Для аналізу в межах дослідження відібрано матеріали, пов'язані з формуванням і розвитком системи змагань у професійному гольфі як в історичному контексті, так і на сучасному етапі. **Методи:** аналіз і синтез; історичний; системний підхід. **Результати.** Структура системи змагань у професійному гольфі містить тури й турніри в їхніх межах. На сьогодні відомо понад 20 турів, які складаються з різної кількості турнірів. Провідними турами є PGA Tour, European Tour і Japan Golf Tour. Водночас найпрестижнішими й найстарішими турнірами є The British Open, US Open, The Masters і PGA Championship, що їх санкціонують зазначені тури, але проводять незалежні організації. Вони є найбільш прибутковими для спортсменів з погляду грошових виплат і найбільш рейтинговими за кількістю очок, отриманих для Всесвітнього рейтингу гольфу. Формат

the view point of money payout, and the most rated in terms of the number of points received for the World Golf Ranking. The format of the competition coincides with most professional golf tournaments and involves playing 72 holes according to the «stroke play» system. The results of athletes are recorded in the World Golf Ranking to determine their position in the international sports golf arena. All leading tournaments provide preliminary selection either by the results of qualifying starts or by positions in the World Golf Ranking.

Conclusions. The system of competitions in professional golf has been developing for about two centuries. Today, the interaction of all its links is coordinated thanks to the effective cooperation of the leading organizations. It also allowed to build a complex, multi-level system of competitions, which is characterized by a high level of organizational and economic efficiency. Moreover, it continues to develop in accordance with modern trends.

Key words: professional golf, tour, tournament, system, efficiency

змагань збігається з більшістю професійних турнірів з гольфу й передбачає гру на 72 лунки за системою «stroke play». Результати спортсменів фіксують у Всесвітньому рейтингу гольфу для визначення їхніх місць на міжнародній спортивній арені гольфу. Усі провідні турніри передбачають попередній відбір або за результатами кваліфікаційних стартів, або за позиціями у Всесвітньому рейтингу гольфу.

Висновки. Система змагань у професійному гольфі розвивалася упродовж приблизно двох століть. Сьогодні взаємодію всіх її ланок координують завдяки ефективній співпраці провідних організацій. Це також дало змогу створити складну багаторівневу систему змагань, якій властивий високий рівень організаційної та економічної ефективності. Ба більше, вона продовжує розвиватися відповідно до сучасних тенденцій.

Ключові слова: професійний гольф, тур, турнір, система, ефективність.

Introduction

Modern professional golf is a rather unique phenomenon, which is characterized by dynamic changes in its structure. In particular, this applies to the system of its competitions as a key factor in the identification of a sport [1, 2].

Throughout the history of the formation and development of professional golf, a change in the structure and content of the competitions system components was observed. It should be noted that each of the major golf tournaments (The British Open, US Open, The Masters, PGA Championship) was founded and is held by a separate club or organization or by a commercial sponsor [3, 4, 5]. At the same time, the number of tournaments began to increase and professional golfers focused their attention to a greater extent on the competitions themselves, and not just on working in the club and as golf instructors. The increase in the number of tournaments in a particular geographic region later led to their consolidation into separate tours controlled by an independent organization [6].

As sports history researchers testify, the golf tour system was formed mostly by trial and error [7, 8, 9, 10 and other]. That is, there was no specific plan from the beginning.

Today, we have a sufficiently extensive system of competitions in professional golf, which covers practically the whole world. Therefore, the identification of specific features of the modern status of these system components has great importance for the formation of understanding of the essence of this kind of professional sport.

It should be noted that there are enough specialists who study the various aspects of golf competition systems [11, 12, 13, 14, 15]. While today, there is no comprehensive idea about its construction. A comparison of existing factual data from various sources and the selection of the most important components of the functioning of competition system in professional golf can have a significant scientific value.

Purpose. To determine the components of the modern system of competitions in professional golf and their content.

Research material and methods

The research was conducted based on the study of scientific and popular science sources of information. Important data were obtained from modern journals, which are indexed in the scientific-metric database Scopus. Key words for searching the databases were: professional golf, history, competition systems. Materials that were selected for analysis within the scope of the study related to the formation and development of competition system in professional golf both in the historical context and in relation to the current stage.

Research methods: analysis and synthesis (method was used to identify data important for research and to summarize them in accordance with the research goal implementation); historical (method was used to identify the features of formation and development of the competition system components in professional golf); systematic approach (method was used to determine the components of the golf competitions system and their relationships with each other).

The results and discussion. The calendar of professional golf competitions today includes a large number of tournaments of various levels. At the same time, the modern system of golf competitions is built on the so-called tours, which accordingly include a certain number of competitions. In this regard it is interesting that the organizations responsible for conducting golf tours do not always organize the competitions themselves [16, 17 and other].

Professional golf tours are essentially a tool that links golf events together on a regular schedule. Today there are separate tours for men and women. Usually, the tour is based on a certain geographical region, while some of them may also hold competitions in other parts of the world.

In general, more than 20 professional golf tours are organized today. They are held either by the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) or by an independent organization of a specific tour, which is responsible for the event, finding sponsors, etc. The vast majority of tours are organized for commercial purposes, to increase profits by maximizing prize money. There are almost weekly competitions on the tour for most of the year.

Players who have received a so-called «tour card» are allowed to participate in a tour, and therefore can participate in most competitions of the tour. In order to be admitted, players must pass the so-called «Q-School» (entrance tournament) or be a successful player in their tours and receive an invitation from the organization, or have notable success in other tour competitions. These rules are applied to higher-ranked tours. At the same time, any registered professional who pays an entry fee can take part in lower rank competitions.

Since 1986, the system of golf competitions has provided an Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR; until 1997 — Sony Rankings), which covers tours (as of 2022–23 tours). The OWGR is based on a player's standings in individual tournaments (not doubles or team events) over a two-year period. New ratings are formed every week [17, 18].

In addition to highlighting the best players, the Ranking is also used as a qualification criterion for selecting participants in leading tournaments.

Since 2012, the OWGR has established a minimum (40) and maximum (52) number of competitions in which a golfer must participate within two years. It should be noted that at first only the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews used the OWGR for its official purposes, but in 1990 it was recognized by the PGA Tour, and in 1997 — by other major golf tours.

Among the most popular and financially profitable men's golf tours today, we note the PGA Tour, European Tour, Japan Tour, PGA Tour Champions, and Asian Tour. There are others, but they are much less popular among professional golfers.

As for women's, the leaders today are the LPGA Tour (Ladies Professional Golf Association), Ladies European Tour, LPGA of Japan Tour. Among the main tournaments (majors), women, unlike men, have five: The Chevron Championship (since 1972), U. S. Women's Open (since 1946), Women's PGA Championship (since 1955), The Evian Championship (since 1994), and The Women's Open (since 1976).

Let us take a closer look at men's golf tours, which today essentially determine the

directions and goals of the development of golf as a kind of professional sport.

PGA Tour. In the history of the professional golf development, the year 1968 is considered the «formal» beginning of the organization of the PGA Tour, when the so-called «Division of Tournament Players» separated from the PGA, and then the golf tour of the same name was organized, which today is the highest in the ranking among all others [3, 19].

Most PGA Tour tournaments are held in the United States and North America. The

main ones in the tour are four tournaments, which, by analogy with tennis, are combined into Grand Slam tournaments (majors: The Masters, PGA Championship, US Open, The British Open). These tournaments have the highest rating and prize fund [4, 20].

In general, all of the leading golf tournaments have a large number of common features, but they also have their own characteristics, which are presented in table 1.

Table 1

**Characteristic features of the organization and holding
of key golf tournaments (majors) in the world**

Majors The criteria of comparison	The British Open	US Open	PGA Championship	The Masters
Year of creation	1860	1895	1916	1934
Management organization	The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews	United States Golf Association	Professional Golfers' Association of America	Augusta National Golf Club
Venue	The whole world, except the USA, Mexico	USA	USA	Augusta (Georgia, USA)
Deadlines	July	June	May	April
Conducting format	Stroke play	Stroke play	Match play — until 1957; Stroke play —until today	Stroke play
Playoff format	Four holes	Two holes	Three holes	«sudden death»
Participants	Amateurs and professionals	Amateurs and professionals	Professionals	Amateurs and professionals
Selection of participants	Qualification competitions	Qualification competitions	Qualification competitions	By the invitation of the organization (by category)
Prize fund as of 2022	\$14 million	\$17,5 million	\$15 million	\$15 million
Additional measures	—	—	—	contest Par 3
Tours to which the tournament belongs	PGA Tour European Tour Japan Golf Tour	PGA Tour European Tour Japan Golf Tour	PGA Tour European Tour Japan Golf Tour	PGA Tour European Tour Japan Golf Tour
A spot on the PGA Tour calendar	4	3	2	1

An interesting fact is that the PGA Tour organizes none of the major tournaments, while all of them are in the structure of its calendar. At the same time, each of the four tournaments is held by a different organization (the association — the US Open and the PGA Championship; the club — The British Open and The Masters).

As for the location of the tournament, there are also differences. For example, The British Open, as the only non-American tournament, is held at locations around the world except the USA. While the US Open and the PGA Championship are held in different states and cities in the USA. Only one of the four tournaments — The Masters — is always held only in Augusta, on the territory of the Augusta National Golf Club. That is, the last one is actually non-touring, which is not typical of most popular competitions in general.

The studied tournaments are also interesting for their content: in particular, the format of the event. In three of the four tournaments, namely The British Open, US Open and The Masters, from the beginning, the format provided game according to the so-called «stroke play» system (game for the number of strokes on each hole with a total score at the end). Until 1957, the PGA Championship was held according to the match play system (a game against an opponent for elimination). However, until 1957 the championship has been held using the Stroke play system.

Although the format of the competition in all four tournaments is the same today, the approach to the playoff round is different. In the majors, the system of drawing this round changed regularly, but today the British Open playoff is played over four holes, the US Open — over two holes, the PGA Championship — over three holes, and the Masters playoff is played under the so-called «sudden death of the hole» (to win on one hole).

Regarding the status of tournament participants, three out of four tournaments have the same approach in this matter. The British Open, US Open and The Masters are open to both professional golfers and amateurs, but the PGA Championship from its beginning open only for professionals of golf.

This aspect works in accordance with the specific of the activities of the management organization of a particular tournament. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, which takes care of the British tournament, was formed in a society where professionals in sports were effectively second-rate, while amateurs were considered key persons in this field [21]. At the same time, the majority of golfers who participate in The British Open today are professional golfers.

As for the United States Golf Association, it began to develop its US Open tournament when there were no professional golfers in the United States (end of the 19th century), and therefore most of them were representatives of Great Britain, and American players were mostly amateurs. Only gradually, when the development of golf on the continent became more active (in the first half of the 20th century), the first professionals began to appear here and quickly enough their representation in the US Open expanded and they began to win over British athletes. Nevertheless, until nowadays both categories of athletes can participate in the competition.

The peculiarity of The Masters tournament in this context is that the Augusta National Golf Club has allowed both professional golfers and amateurs to compete since its inception. However, the participants of this tournament are exclusively invited players in both amateur and professional categories.

As for the Professional Golfers Association of America, this organization takes care of professional golf only and organizes its PGA Championship only for athletes with this status.

Not everyone can immediately take part in the majors. In order to get to the main rounds of competitions in The British Open, US Open, PGA Championship, sportsman must to qualify the day before.

The Masters tournament does not provide qualifying competitions, but instead, as already noted, participation in competitions for athletes is possible only if there is an invitation from the governing organization.

Another criterion we looked at as a benchmark for the majors was the availability of additional tournament events. We found that only The Masters tournament since

1960 has introduced an additional attraction the day before — the Par 3 Contest (a mini-golf competition for past champions and players in the current year's main event). This tournament has several other interesting traditions, including: awarding of green jackets to champions, dinner of champions, and other things, which additionally fascinates and motivates participation in it. The other three tournaments do not include additional events, but they do not cease to be interesting both to participate in and to watch.

A significant motivational incentive for participation and winning in majors is the prize fund of the competition. Today, it is the largest at the US Open (\$17.5 million). As of 2022, The Masters and PGA Championship tournaments have accumulated \$15 million in prize money, and The British Open — \$14 million. Accordingly, the highest share of the winner is at the US Open (\$3.150 million).

After summarizing information about the system of holding majors, it was noticed that since 1968, they have become part of the so-called PGA Tour, which today remains the pinnacle of the extensive golf tournament system.

The four most popular and largest tournaments in world golf were combined into the Grand Slam tournaments (Grand Slam) by analogy with tennis in 1979. These tournaments are the highest-ranking competitions of the major golf tours, namely the PGA Tour, European Tour and Japan Golf Tour, their features will be also discussed in this article.

Among other professional tours and tournaments held under the auspices of the PGA Tour are the following: The Players Championship (Florida, USA, since 1974); FedEx St. Jude Championship (USA, since 1967); BMW Championship (USA; formerly Western Open, since 2007); PGA Tour Championship (USA, since 1987); Korn Ferry Tour (Colombia, Panama, Chile, Brazil, Mexico City, Canada, since 1990); PGA Tour Canada (Canada, since 1971); PGA Tour Latino America (Latin American countries); PGA Tour China (China, since 2012); the annual Q-School qualifying tournament for the leading PGA and LPGA golf tours, as well as the European Tour.

In general, the golf competitions system, in particular on the example of the PGA Tour, is quite complex. It should be noted that not all activities that are part of the tour are conducted by this organization. For example, as already mentioned, all majors are overseen by different organizations (clubs or associations) or the so-called Ryder Cup (competition between American and European teams in odd-numbered years), which is jointly organized by the PGA of America and Ryder Cup Europe. Instead, in some sense, an analogue of the Ryder Cup — the Presidents Cup (competition between the teams of America and the World without Europe once every two years in an even year) is organized by the PGA Tour. At the same time, all these competitions are part of the PGA Tour. That is, in terms of the formation of the competition system, a large number of professional golf organizations cooperate effectively enough and distribute duties and responsibilities, as demonstrated by many years of practice.

In general, most professional golf tournaments and tours are played by stroke play, while team tournaments such as the Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup are played by match play system. Another feature is that most professional golf tournaments are played over 72 holes, while amateur golf tournaments can be played over fewer holes (18, 36, 54, etc.).

European Tour (today also known as DP World Tour). This tour is considered second in class after the PGA Tour. It is subordinated to the PGA European Tour (the organization also oversees the European Senior Tour for players aged 50 and over and the developmental Challenge Tour). This tour is the premier golf tour in Europe.

Until the 1970s, each of the tournaments held in Europe was organized by individual clubs/organizations without a common calendar and somewhat chaotically. The integrated European Tour was created only in 1972. At that time, it included eight major tournaments in continental Europe within the framework of the Order of Merit (1975–2008, from 2009 — Race to Dubai).

The first official tournament of the European Tour — Open de España — was held at Golf Club de Pals (Girona, Spain). The main

tournaments of the tour were and remain the Open championships of Italy (Italian Open), Spain (Spanish Open), Germany (German Open) and Switzerland (Swiss Open), in addition, the Dutch Open, Madrid Open and Lancia d'Oro are also included in the calendar tour.

In the first years of its development, the European Tour was held for 6 months (from April to October), mostly on the fields of Great Britain and Ireland. However, over the years, its globalization and spread to other territories of Europe took place. In addition, later, in 1982, the event was taken outside Europe, and the Tunisian Open was also included in the tour calendar as part of a program aimed at spreading the professional game around the world [5]. This year, the European Tour expanded to 27 tournaments and the season was extended to November. 7 years later, in 1989, the tour visited the competition in Asia for the first time (Dubai Desert Classic).

In 1984, responsibility for the development of the tour was transferred to the independent organization PGA European Tour.

In general, during its existence, the European Tour faced the risk that its best players prioritized participation in PGA Tour events, since the prize money is usually significantly higher. The best European players sought to participate in key American tournaments. Therefore, they tried to participate in American competitions as often as possible to adapt on these fields. At the same time, in order to reduce the risks of such losses, the PGA European Tour created the so-called «Volvo Bonus Pool» in 1988. This is a kind of fund with additional prize money, which at the end of the season was distributed among the most successful players of the year. This fund was relevant until 1998. After this year emphasis shifted to increasing the prize fund of each specific tournament.

By 1990, there were already 38 tournaments on the tour schedule, 37 of which were held in Europe, and the start of the season was moved to February.

An important year for professional golf in general was 1995, when the PGA European Tour began a policy of co-sanctioning tournaments with other PGA tours, including the PGA South African Championship on the South African Tour (now the Sunshine Tour).

This policy was extended to the PGA Tour of Australasia in 1996, and most widely to the Asian Tour. In 1998, the European Tour added three major competitions in the USA to its official schedule — Masters Tournament, PGA Championship and US Open [5].

The leading players of the tour compete in the majors and their prize money is counted towards the Order of Merit (since 2009 — Race to Dubai).

In 1999, the World Golf Championship (WGC) was established with three individual tournaments offering significantly more prize money than most European events added to the European Tour schedule and in addition, Europe's best golfers competed in four majors. That is, the seven competitions are those that brought the largest financial resource under the condition of a successful performance, and it remained to choose four more competitions within the tour to close the requirement for the number of participations.

However, in 2009, the minimum number of tournaments for participation increased to 12, and in 2011 — to 13 events [22]. At the same time, since 2013, team competitions such as the Ryder Cup and the Presidents Cup have been allowed to count towards the minimum. In 2016, in turn, the minimum number of tournaments was recorded at the level of five (from 2018–4) events, excluding majors and four WGC tournaments [13].

In 2009, the Order of Merit was replaced by The Race to Dubai with a prize fund of \$7.5 million (originally \$10 million) distributed among the top 15 players at the end of the season. At the same time, the winner receives \$1.5 million dollars (at the beginning, \$2 million). The name «The Race to Dubai» symbolizes the inclusion of a new final tournament of the season — the Dubai World Championship, which was held at the end of November in Dubai. The prize fund of the tournament is \$7.5 million and 60 leading golfers took part in the race after the penultimate event — the Hong Kong Open. The winner of The Race to Dubai receives the Harry Vardon Trophy. The winner of The Race to Dubai also receives a 10-year exemption from the European Tour, and the winner of the Dubai World Championship — a 5-year exemption, which allows such golfers to feel

free to shape their own competition calendar without burdening themselves with the demands of the tour.

For quite a long time, there was an economic recession in professional European golf, which led to the need to reduce the prize fund in 2009 to \$3.75 million. At the same time, the fund began to grow again later and in 2018, it reached \$8 million, with the winner's share \$3 million [23].

In 2017, the BMW PGA Championship, which is a European Tour competition, became the first tournament that was included in the so-called Rolex Series — a premium category of tournaments with high prizes (at least \$7 million). This series brings together only the best players on the tour today [5]. The first among the Rolex Series were: BMW PGA Championship, Open de France, Irish Open, Scottish Open, Italian Open, Turkish Airlines Open, Nedbank Golf Challenge, DP World Tour Championship [24]. In the 2019 season, another official Rolex Series event began to be the HSBC Abu Dhabi Championship.

Starting with the 2019 season, the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship became an official Rolex Series event, and the Open de France was relegated to the regular tour. In 2020, the season was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the Turkish Airlines Open and the Nedbank Golf Challenge were canceled and the Irish Open and the Italian Open were rescheduled.

In 2021, was made the decision to reduce the number of events in the Rolex Series to four tournaments: The Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship, the Scottish Open, the BMW PGA Championship and the DP World Tour Championship ending in Dubai. At the same time, the prize funds at these events were increased to \$8 million. In the 2022 season, the Dubai Desert Classic was also added to the series, i.e. the Rolex Series calendar expanded to five events.

In November 2021, the tour was renamed to the DP World Tour as part of a sponsorship agreement with the Dubai company DP World [25].

In 2020, the European Tour entered into strategic alliance with the PGA Tour. As part of the agreement, the PGA Tour acquired 15% of the shares of European Tour Productions.

The alliance involved cooperation between two major golf tours in a number of areas, including global planning, prize fund management, playing opportunities for the respective members and commercial opportunities [5].

Competition Scottish Open received a new title sponsor and became co-sanctioned by the PGA Tour. Two other tournaments (the Barbasol Championship and the Barracuda Championship) have also been partially managed by the PGA Tour [26]. In the same year, as a result of the mentioned agreement, the prize fund of the Irish Open was increased.

In 2022, the share of the PGA Tour in European Tour Productions has already increased to 40%, which contributed to the further increase in the prize funds of the European Tour competitions, and the leading players in the DP World Tour ranking now receive PGA Tour cards for the following season [23].

In general, the European Tour is developing quite rapidly, constantly expanding its geography and attracting more and more new partners for cooperation. It should be noted that until late March, all events of the tour take place outside of Europe, and most of them are sanctioned with other tours. Further, the competitions usually continue in Europe and have a higher prize fund on the native continent than those held outside its borders. The only exceptions are major tournaments (majors, World Golf Championship events, etc.). For the most part, the tour competition calendar remains stable from year to year and is sanctioned with other tour events. At the same time, tournaments often change their names due to the appearance of a new title sponsor.

Japan Golf Tour. This tour was founded in 1973 because golf gained high popularity in Japan. A significant number of Japanese golfers became famous in the world as members of other tours.

The first golf club in this country, Tokyo Golf Club, was established in 1913 by Japanese golfers. In the 1950s-1960s there began extensive construction of special golf courses and Japanese golfers gradually created significant competition at the international sport golf arena [27].

In the 1980s, Japan witnessed rapid economic development, and passed a number of laws that eased restrictions on land use. This, accordingly, became an additional incentive for even more intensive construction of golf courses, which by the end of the decade was more than 1,000.

Official Japan Golf Tour tournaments add points to the WOGR for athletes. In addition, success on the tour can also qualify participants to play in major golf tournaments.

The number of events on the Japan Golf Tour varies from year to year. Therefore, in 1990, for example, there were 44 official tournaments within the tour, in 1999–32, in 2002–29, in 2007–24 tournaments. It should be noted that in the 90s, the tour was the third most profitable golf tour after the PGA Tour and the European Tour, but in the first decade of the 21st century it was overtaken by others due to the reduction of the number of tournaments in the calendar.

The season usually lasted about 10–11 months in this tour, but today its duration is slightly reduced — to 9 months (April–December). The 2020 and 2021 seasons were effectively combined into one, due to the COVID pandemic that was raging around the world. Due to the ban on mass events, many golf tournaments were either postponed or canceled.

Since 1998, the Japan Golf Tour, along with the PGA Tour and the European Tour, has been involved to sanctioning of four majors. However, these four events are considered unofficial in the tour, victories in them are respectively unofficial, and Japan Golf Tour participants do not receive official money for them.

PGA Tour Champions. This tour is a kind of offshoot of the PGA Tour. Its specific aspect is that only experienced athletes aged 50 and older can become participants.

The official year of establishment of PGA Tour Champions is 1980 (titles Senior PGA Tour — until 2002, Champions Tour — until 2015). The Senior PGA Championship was founded in 1937 and for several decades it was the only event for professional golfers over 50. The idea for a separate tour arose from the successful Legends of Golf event in 1978 that was held in Texas. Only the most

outstanding golfers of that time competed then [28].

Most of the tour tournaments are held in the United States, while there are a few tournaments, which are held outside of the USA. The number of events that were part of the tour in one season or another range from 26 to 29.

As for the competition system, most tournaments are held in three rounds (54 holes), which distinguishes them from tournaments on other professional golf tours. The field includes 81 players competing without «cuts». At the same time, the top five seniors play four rounds (72 holes) with the «Cut» on 36 holes.

The tour ends with the Charles Schwab Cup Championship draw. Until 2015, the field of players of these competitions included the best 36 and they were held on 72 holes without «cuts», since 2016 the number of holes has been reduced to 54.

Until 2015, the Charles Schwab Cup was a kind of seasonal point's race. These points were awarded to golfers who were in the top 10 (1 point for every \$1,000 won). During 1990–2015, the 30 best players competed in the Charles Schwab Cup Championship. It was held in four rounds, in which all participants received points, while the top five received annuities.

Since 2016, the format of these events has been changed to a playoff, similar to that used for the FedEx Cup on the main PGA Tour. Qualification for the playoffs is now based on cash prizes during the PGA Tour Champions season. From the total number of participants, the top 72 players on the prize money list advance to the first playoff event, the PowerShares QQQ Championship. In addition, the players who finished in the highest positions in the SAS Championship also enter this event.

Each golfer who has qualified receives a total of points equal to the season earned. Points in the first two playoff events, the QQQ Championship and the Dominion Charity Classic, are also based on money earned, except that the winner of each of these events receives double points. The playoff field in the Dominion Charity Classic round is reduced to 54 players and to 36 golfers in

the Charles Schwab Cup Championship. After the Dominion Charity Classic, field points are reset so that each of the remaining 36 players could theoretically win the Cup.

As for the possibilities to get to the PGA Tour Champions, the criteria are predetermined. These include: the top 30 players in the previous year's PGA Tour Champions rankings, the top 30 players in the top 70 on the combined PGA Tour and PGA Tour Champions money list, members of the World Golf Hall of Fame who are 50 years old and over, PGA Tour Champions winners for the previous 12 months, etc. This is an elite tour, which accordingly presents a high level of competitions spectacle.

Asian Tour. The Asian Tour is essentially the third largest men's professional golf tour in the world. Most of its tournaments are concentrated in Asia, with the exception of coverage of Japan, which has its own golf tour. Points scored within the official Asian Tour tournaments are included in the World Golf Ranking.

The tour was founded in 1994, but the first season began in 1995 as the APGA Omega Tour (named after the title sponsor). Already in 1998, the Asian Tour became the sixth member of the International Federation of PGA Tours [29]. Under a new sponsorship deal, the tour was known as the Davidoff Tour between 1999 and 2003 before adopting its current name in 2004.

The Asian Tour has had a competitor in its sport business since 2009 — OneAsiaTour. Relations between the leadership of both are quite hostile today.

Among the world's four major golf tours, only the Asian sports market has such competition. At the same time, today the Asian Tour remains higher in the rating and, accordingly, more interesting for both athletes and spectators. In addition, this tour, through its membership in the International Federation of PGA Tours, is the only recognized Pan-Asian professional golf tour in Asia. In 2010, the Asian Tour launched the Asian Development Tour (ADT) as a kind of development cycle. Five events were played in the first year. By 2015, the tour had expanded to host 28 tournaments with \$2.2 million in prize money.

Mostly Asian athletes take part in this tournament, although there is a constant increase in participants from other countries. The largest number among foreign athletes is golfers from Australia.

The Asian Tour changes the number of events in the calendar practically every year. Therefore, in 2004 there were 21 of them (total prize fund \$11.4 million), in 2008–32 (total prize fund \$43.55 million). At the same time, discussing the current calendar of the tour competitions, it can be noticed that the number of competitions has somewhat decreased. In recent years it is probably connected with the consequences of the COVID pandemic, which has gained the most mass distribution precisely in the territory of Asia. Thus, in the 2020/2021 season, out of 20 planned tournaments, 12 were not held. In addition, two competitions took place in 2022. That is, this season actually occupied 3 years. In addition, 20 tournaments are planned for 2022 within the Asian Tour.

Ways to get an Asian Tour card include being in the top 35 at the Tour's qualifying school, finishing in the top five in the Asian Development Tour Order of Merit, and finishing in the top 60 of the Asian Tour in the previous season.

The Asian Tour cooperates with the European Tour and the Japan Golf Tour. In particular, separate tournaments are jointly held with the European Tour, which offer higher prize money compared to the Asian Tour's domestic competitions. Sometimes the three tours (including the PGA Tour or Sunshine Tour) jointly sanction individual golf events.

The Asian Tour receives support from various organizations. Thus, since 2008, 50% of the players' earnings at the US Open and the Open Championship are included to the Order of Merit in the Asian Tour. These two tournaments have been singled out from the other majors because they have an open qualifier for golfers from the Asian Tour.

The richest golf event in Asia, the HSBC Champions, was first held in November 2005 with a prize fund of \$5 million. Another cash golf event, but for a limited number of participants in Malaysia, the CIMB Classic, was launched in 2010 with a prize pool of \$6

million. It was the first Asian Tour tournament jointly sanctioned with the PGA Tour. It began as an unofficial event on the tour, but offered official money and FedEx Cup points in 2013. In 2016, the tour's richest single event was the Venetian Macao Open with a prize pool of \$1.1 million.

The Asian Tour has its own qualifying school, after passing which the best 35 of its best golfers can get a card to the tour. The qualification school takes place in total in 5 stages from mid-November to mid-January. At the end of these stages, there is a final selection stage of 5 rounds, where the 35 best players remain in the last one. These golfers are ranked for performances in the new season of the Asian Tour [30].

In general, the Asian Tour with all its tournaments has a valid place in the system of golf competitions. A large number of professional and highly qualified athletes are natives of this tour. Today, the Asian Tour actively cooperates with other world leaders in the organization and holding of golf tournaments, its tournaments attract a wide audience and bring quite significant profits to their leaders.

Among the listed and described professional golf tours, not even half are indicated, since there are many of them. Other important ones include: PGA Tour of Australasia, Sunshine Tour (Africa), Canadian Tour, Tour de las Américas (Latin America), PGA Tour China, the Korean Tour (South Korea), the Professional Golf Tour of India etc. (more than 20 in total). Instead, the PGA Tour, European Tour, PGA Tour Champions, Japan Golf Tour, Asian Tour are the most prestigious and profitable today.

Most tour organizations cooperate closely and often jointly sanction tournaments. In particular, the cooperation between the PGA Tour and all other elite tours is close. In fact, it can be said that PGA Tour provides patronage and promotes a large number of tournaments thanks to its authority and influence.

Members of the tours are athletes who have achieved a high level of golf performance at lower levels (e.g. a qualifying school). Each tour has a certain number of competitions in which each member must participate each year.

The competition in professional golf today is a large-scale, extensive system that has

its «roots» in every corner of the world. Professional golf is one of the most profitable professional sport in the world, and its best athletes often lead the list of richest athletes.

Conclusions

The modern system of competitions in professional golf is built on the basis of tours and tournaments. Today there are more than 20 golf tours. Each of them includes a different number of tournaments, which can change annually within a tour.

The leading tours in professional golf today are: PGA Tour, European Tour, Japan Golf Tour, PGA Tour Champions, Asian Tour (ranked according to the amount of prize money they have), which have been developing for a long time.

The most important tournaments in men's professional golf today are the four so-called majors: The British Open, the US Open, The Masters, the PGA Championship, where sportsmen can get the most points for the World Golf Ranking, as well as big prize winnings. These tournaments are currently sanctioned by the three main tours PGA Tour, European Tour, Japan Golf Tour, but for the last one they are unofficial and do not bring prize money to the participants. At the same time, majors are held under the auspices of other organizations, not the organization of the tour (The British Open — by Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, US Open — by United States Golf Association, The Masters — by Augusta National Golf Club, PGA Championship — by Professional Golfers Association), which is a rather specific aspect of functioning in professional golf.

Today a large number of governing bodies in professional golf are working effectively together at the global level. Their interaction is well-coordinated, which allowed to build a complex, multi-level system of competitions, characterized by a high level of organizational and economic efficiency.

Conflicts of interest

None of the authors have any competing interests concerning the review.

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