

editor's  
**letter**

BY  
**BENNY TEO**

# DARREN CLARKE TALKING PINTS AND PUTTS ON THE CHAMPIONS TOUR



IN TIME WITH  
  
**ROLEX**

**Darren Clarke (left)  
won the British  
Open in 2011.**

When I first spoke to Darren Clarke, it was back in 2012, a year after his euphoric victory at the 140th Open Championship at

Royal St George's. We were sitting together in the lounge at the very chic clubhouse of the Chateau De Bonmont, an upscale golf club near the outskirts of Geneva in Switzerland.

Beer in one hand, cigar in the other, this was a 44-year-old, who had finally gotten the Claret Jug after more than 20 years and 54 attempts.

It was a new lease of life for a man who has had great success on European soil as well as winning two World Golf Championships but approaching the tail end of his professional career.

One would imagine, after seven years, that life would have slowed down for Clarke. It could not be further from the truth. This year, the now 51-year-old began life on the Champions Tour and has attacked it with the vigour and excitement normally expected of rookies. In a way, he is one now.

On that Tour, Bernhard Langer currently leads the Charles Schwab Cup points table with earnings of US\$2.52 million (\$3.5m) from 24 events. Clarke is at 90th place with winnings just shy of US\$60,000 from the six events he has been eligible for since joining the Tour.

**SWING: Are you enjoying life on the Champions Tour?**

**DC:** I just turned 50 last August and my first event was in Calgary. All the guys were asking me before, 'are you going next week?'. They were all excited about it, saying it's such a great tournament.

When I got there, I was taken aback by how big the crowds were. I was staying downtown at the Westin which was great because, and most importantly, there are a lot of Irish pubs within walking distance which obviously help me out no end! It's that kind of atmosphere on the Champions Tour, it's very sociable compared to the main PGA Tour.

**We heard you were asked to pull pints for the crowd?**

The Champions Tour is more relaxed, you get asked to do stuff you probably wouldn't on the PGA. That week in Calgary, I was asked to go to a pub and pull a load of pints. I can pull a mean pint of Guinness, don't you worry about that, I have a bit of experience in that area, shall we say.

The challenge really was having to pull the pints and not drink them! The only problem was that it was a Thursday night event called, 'A Night Of Drinks with Darren Clarke'. On a Thursday night! The tournament starts on Friday, what were they thinking?

**So is it all play and a bit of golf when necessary?**

Golf takes a lot of discipline, practice and hard work, but you've always

seemed to be aware of the need to keep it fun also and that has to be something to strive for.

In golf, if you don't work hard you're never going to achieve anything and at the end of the day that's what we're all out here for, to be the best we can be and win things. So while I've enjoyed myself a lot off the golf course I've put a lot of hard work in.

**Your reputation precedes you though.**

Most people seem to perceive me as a guy who just hangs out in the bar all the time which, to be fair, I do quite a bit, but I put a lot of practice in as well and put a lot of time into playing because I love the game, especially when I'm holding a few putts – not so much when I'm not.

The game demands a lot of dedication and practice but I've always tried to draw a line and say, 'this is my work time and this is my fun time'. Maybe down the years there have been periods when I've had a little more fun time than work time but that's the way I've always been.

**Does it feel like eight years ago that you won The Open?**

No, it doesn't. It feels much more recent than that. I remember that pretty well but, if I'm honest, the two weeks after I won the 2011 Open at Royal St. George's, well, talking about having fun, those two weeks are a bit of a blur. The Open is the biggest event in

our sport and to end up with my name on that Claret Jug is something I'll always treasure and something I'll never forget.

**And now, when you're back with familiar faces on the over-50s, how is it going?**

Make no mistake, the guys might be over 50 but we all desperately want to win. We've grown up playing golf to the highest level possible so we can make a career out of it, trying to get into contention and

win tournaments. Nothing has changed with our desire to win.

It might be more relaxed and chilled during the week leading up to the tournament but come Friday morning it's game-face on and everyone wants to win. That's the wonderful side of our sport

**Tom Watson however, has stated he won't be back next year.**

One of the great things about the Senior Tours is that you get to tee it up with some of the legends of the game again. I got to play with Tom Watson at Lytham (at this year's Senior Open) and that was just such a pleasure.

He's nearly 70-years-old now but he's just as determined as he was in his day. It was brilliant to watch him for those two days and now it turns out that's his last professional tournament so that was just such an honour for me to be a little part of that.

**How do you rate your rookie season on the Champions Tour?**

I've been hitting the ball great all season but just not been putting well. Nothing changes as you get older though, you still feel gutted that you've taken as many shots as you could; that you left putts out on the golf course. I don't think that feeling will ever change. That's professional golf for you, you just keep going at it and waiting for the day when everything clicks and you'll get what you think you deserve and everything is wonderful again.

**SWING  
TEAM**

**SUPERVISING EDITOR**  
S. Murali  
muralis@sph.com.sg

**CREATIVE EDITOR**  
Jacqueline Wu  
jacquwu@sph.com.sg

**EDITOR**  
Benny Teo  
bennyteo@sph.com.sg

**WRITER**  
Jeremy Theseira

**SUB-EDITOR**  
Ida Karsia

**CONTRIBUTING  
EDITORS**  
Godfrey Robert  
Spencer Robinson  
Ven Sreenivasan  
Rohit Brijnath  
Rahul Pathak

**MARKETING AND  
PARTNERSHIP ENQUIRIES**  
Vivien Cham Business Director  
9746 0379, champs@sph.com.sg  
Daphne Tay Business Director  
9620 1418, taykhd@sph.com.sg