

PLAYER FORM GUIDE

SAPPHIRE COAST TOUR 2004

Written and researched for **The Happy Hackers** by **Wobby Rorterhouse**,
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Alan Bordina : Second tour of the South Coast and toured the Murray last year. Has an overall November tour average of 29.93 and is capable of good showing. Sneaky long for a 'little bloke' and does not over-indulge in any activity during the long week. Might find the higher scores necessary to win the champion's trophy difficult to maintain for a full week on previous form but could be each way chance. Very keen and fit.

Stewart Downing : Experienced campaigner (average 30.54) making a return from a serious work related back injury and missed last year. Playing well and has been consistent in club championships as a good pointer to the need to maintain form for successive rounds. Has the game to win the championship and has some good recent form on the board. Is always 'up there' and will be again and a win would not surprise.

Col Dunn : Former champion ('98) who has missed only the '94 tour. Has tour average of 32.16 as evidence of consistency. Very accurate off the tee with solid all round game and now has replaced the 10 year old 'blades' with a new set of Henry Griffiths irons. Has great temperament and tenacity and very fit. Always working at his game and has the form on the board. Currently playing well and has the desire to win. Will be hard to beat.

Graham Harrison : Fourth successive tour and won the champions trophy at his first attempt in 2000. Has not scored as well in three attempts since and will need to improve on last couple of efforts to have any chance. Has tour average of 31.91 and capable of bold showing. Keen to return to former glory and has trained for this. Very confident and says he has peaked at the right time and likes the coast courses. Strong chance.

Greg Henricks : Maiden performer and not much known about golfing skills here at Middle Bet. Scored about 40 points the week after the Club championship and may be set to spring an upset. Rumoured to be a 'bit up and down' and may lack the consistency and stamina to win here. Lack of experience in this type of event could be difficult to overcome but maidens have won before. Will need strong self discipline to avoid night traps.

Jim Hokin : Has toured eight times and no-one enjoys the trips more than O'Changi. Has never threatened to lift the champion's trophy but often shows flashes of winning form and can put a string of one good hole in a row together occasionally. Sprinkles in too many slits to be more than a very rough chance but will verbal partners without mercy. Tour average of 27.65 is fair indication of chances and I wouldn't back him with your money!

John Killin : Has not missed any tour since we started in '91 and has a November tour average of 29.96. That is not a true indication of his chances as the figure was dragged down by the year he won the NAGA when switching from left to right hand. Likely to be in the 30's at the end of the week and better suited by these courses. Plays regularly and has been in good form with some recent good scores and could get through the pack.

Keiran McGuire : Second tour and first trip to the coast. Did not handle the going last year on the Murray and broke down on 4th day. Battled on and came good in the morning round at Tocumwal before breaking down a second time in the afternoon. Recovered for good 38 points at Howlong at the end of the tour. Playing more regularly now and could be a threat. Improver with solid all round game who will be better for last year's run.

Keith McLaren : Has missed only this year's Canberra tour since '91 and recent form included leading the "B" Grade club championship after the third round before withdrawing in favour of the car races up north. Has drifted out in the handicap dept. but is capable of really good scores (had 47 individual points in competition once). Tour average of 30.04 and had best tour ever last year. Knows the ropes but can be a bit inconsistent.

Ross Natrass : Another newcomer to the long grind of the November tour but is a consistent and first class single

figure marker. Toured Canberra (average 31.0) and the Hunter Valley (average 28.3) this year and is a regular tourist to the Murray with another group in February so understands the rigours of the tour. Has not played these courses and will need to be at his best to take the big one. Capable and can win in this company.

Bob Norris : Toured the Murray last year in first November tour (average 25.2) and claimed the NAGA trophy. Should not be judged on that result as he broke down at Cobram-Barooga on the Wednesday and did not play again on tour. Until then had been scoring better than that and had an excellent 35 points at the tough Corowa layout on the Sunday. Keen to hand on NAGA trophy and should do that but could struggle to win the big one.

Trevor Porter : Last minute replacement having first 'Hackers' tour. No form to measure but known to have ability in earlier years in golf, cricket and soccer. Fifteen marker who has been Sec/Manager of Kogarah, Mollymook, Leura and now Carnarvon. Knows his way around a golf course but does not play regularly and has not recently honed his skills in tough competition. Unproven and could struggle at this distance. Each way bet.

Wayne Purcell : Second tour for the left handed 'gorilla' who launches the ball a prodigious distance. Can be erratic and plays the game at a furious pace but low single figure handicap proves he has heaps of skill. Finished the Murray last year with average of 32.25 but was headed for an ordinary score at Cobram Old Course before ailing 17 and getting birdie at 18. Temperament is volatile but in with a big chance if he can hold it together.

Ken Rogers : Serial 'Hacker' on ninth November tour who also never misses the shorter trips. Had best tour ever last year on the Murray (average 34.13) and finished Canberra tour in April with 33.25. Won NAGA on first trip but has scored well since then. Plays regularly, knows these courses and is capable of putting it together but is easily distracted at night. Will give the field a big start by missing the first game and little chance for that reason.

Des Thompson : Touring in November for 5th time and has tour average of 30.17 and has been consistently around that score. 'Slim' comes from the tough Cumberland track and is also a member of Antill Park but so far has failed to produce best form on tour. Has had some physical discomfort of late but confident of getting through the trip. Good golfer with plenty of experience and definitely has the game and distance to win. Chance.

Maurie Thompson : Toured the Hunter Valley in September for first Hackers tour finishing with average of 24.3 and 14th position. Has had experience with other tours and knows how it works although does not know these courses and has not gone this distance before. Good striker with solid all round game but can be very hard on himself. Scores are normally consistent and can win this if he can produce his best form. Good chance.

John Vallins : One of three left handers this year and backing up for eighth successive November trip. Has tour average of 30.0 and narrowly beaten on the last day at Gold Creek in '98 by Col Dunn in best performance to date. Good consistent striker who is sneaky long off the tee but has not consistently shown the form necessary to maintain the level of scoring required to lead this quality field. Cannot be discarded but will be tested.

John Vincent : Very experienced left hander who knows these courses and has been in good form for the last couple of months after going into semi-retirement in July. Is capable of playing good golf but has to overcome a very poor short game to be competitive. More relaxed these days and playing more often than at any time over the past 12 years. Recently tutored by Sam Wiggins and big chance here if the 'chilli dips' can be minimised.

Dave Walters : First November tour but did tour Canberra and the Hunter Valley with the Hackers in 2003. Has toured The Murray with another group and has some experience of a long tour but untried at this distance. Capable of scoring well enough to win this but consistency could be a challenge. Was affected by a previous back injury problem on last Murray River trip with other group and fitness could be suspect. Could lift. Each way.

Trent Wilson : Defending champion with impressive record. Won Tour Championship twice and beaten on a count-back once in three of last four starts. Has not finished worse than 8th including '98 when he battled a badly damaged ankle from a skate boarding mishap. Has tour average of 32.54 from 6 tours and won last year with record average of 37.75 to become the first Hacker to play to or better handicap. Selected and is the one to beat.

BETTING MARKET

	Previous Finishes	Starting Price 2003	Starting Price 2004
Trent Wilson	8,8,1,7,2 _{CB} ,1,	5/1	7/2
Stewart Downing	8,15,6,9,5,13	-	4/1
Col Dunn	2,9,9,1,3,4,12,3,10,	6/1	5/1
Ross Natrass			6/1
Wayne Purcell	7,	10/1	7/1
Graham Harrison	1,11,11,8,	7/1	8/1
John Vincent	1,12,1,3,8,8,3,20,12,	8/1	8/1
Maurie Thompson			10/1
Keiran McGuire	20,	15/1	10/1
Dave Walters			12/1
Des Thompson	14,19,6,15,	6/1	12/1
Trevor Porter			15/1
John Vallins	15,2,10,20,15,16,6,	15/1	15/1
Keith McLaren	7,10,2,13,6,21,5,22,5,	15/1	15/1
Greg Henricks			15/1
Bob Norris	N,	20/1	20/1
John Killin	6,2,12,N,13,6,10,17,13,	20/1	20/1
Alan Bordina	12,16,	20/1	25/1
Jim Hokin	8,14,18,22,23,14,14,	33/1	33/1
Ken Rogers	N,11,5,11,17,18,15,3,	25/1	100/1

At the end of the day this tour is an endurance test and a very tough mental trial. The winner will need to score consistently well and be able to withstand pressure. It is the closest you will come to experiencing tournament golf.

It's a big call to put nine consecutive good rounds together and until last year, no-one had ever managed to play to their handicap over the whole week and still only one player has managed that feat in 11 years.

And even if you can't win – remember at the other end of the field is the NAGA Award and everyone is keen to avoid picking that one up. No-one wants to hit off first at Gold Creek.

Good luck and I hope everyone has a wonderful week of golf and the weather is fine and mild.

Grip it! Rip it! And enjoy it!!!!

It just doesn't get any better than this!

Wobby Rortterhouse