

SUCCESS FOR THE SIXES

SEPTEMBER 2017

METHODOLOGY

SMS INC. utilised their Sports Radar platform to collect, code and analyse commentary around the Golf Sixes tournament in May at the Centurion Club. www.golfsixes.com

Coding the data using the following criteria enabled us to look far beyond the noise being generated to understand sentiment in more detail and the key conclusions;

DATE

DOMAIN

COUNTRY

AUTHOR/
AUTHOR
TYPE

SENTIMENT

TOPICS

ABOUT SMS INC.

SPORTS MARKETING SURVEYS INC. is an experienced and focused sports research business servicing the sports event, sports equipment, sport venue, sports federation and sports goods industry for over 30 years.

We provide SMART data, analysis and insight for leading sports equipment manufacturers, sports federations, major sports events, speciality retailers, and venue operators to enable our clients to understand more about their customers, competitors and marketplace.

Through Sports Radar, SMS INC. are able to meet the increasing desire in the sports industry to gain intelligence and insight from online

commentary in real time. Sports Radar allows SMS INC. to identify and interrogate the sentiment & themes of the discussion whilst providing structure and meaning to this vast dataset.

Radar is a SaaS-based social and digital intelligence platform, efficiently delivering breadth and depth of coverage from a wide range of sources including;

- 85,000+ news sources, from over 200 countries
- Full Twitter firehose with 30 days of historical data
- 2 million+ articles a day
- 6,000+ social networks and 5,000+ forums
- Customer chosen public URLs added as additional data sources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GolfSixes, a new fast-paced golf tournament organised by European Tour, has proven to be a **ground-breaking success**. The reception was **overwhelmingly positive** across the board, with professionals, pundits and spectators all chipping in to congratulate the event. In terms of the **format** and **taking the sport forward**, it appears that the fundamentals of the concept work, and **engagement** with golfers and viewers was successful.

The event, however, was not without **hitches**. People expressed largely **negative** opinions about **celebrity commentary**, the **over-the-top show elements** and its failure to **look good on TV**, which means some of the elements **beyond the essence** of the event did not work.

The event was a success, exceeding expectations and is something that has a future in golf, with valuable learnings to be had regarding certain 'beyond the essence' elements.

"I don't really care that Denmark's Lucas Bjerregaard and Thorbjorn Olesen won the inaugural GolfSixes on the European Tour. I don't care about which country they beat (Australia). I don't even care about how it ended (with a missed putt instead of a make). What I do care about is what a thrilling success the introduction of this team event to the European Tour was last weekend."

KYLE PORTER, CBSSPORTS.COM

KEY POINTS

POSITIVE

- GolfSixes has proven to be a ground-breaking success, receiving an overwhelmingly positive reception across the board
- Conversation revolved around the concept, the format and how the event was run
- Unequivocal praise towards the introduction of a shot clock
- Live audience engagement was singled out as one of the positives
- The event has received resounding praise among professional players
- Laid out the groundwork for improving golf engagement at the grassroots, supported by clubs and organisations
- Made waves outside the event, reaching 450 million potential TV viewers
- End result: GolfSixes is here to stay

NEUTRAL

- Potential of the format drew cautious optimism and mixed reviews from pundits and amateurs alike, calling it a one/two-time a year event
- Amateur golfers and fans provided mixed opinions, with some criticising the format, lack of top golfers and atmosphere

NEGATIVE

- Largely negative opinions about celebrity commentary, the over-the-top show elements and mixed views on attempts to appeal to the public and TV audience
- Excess spectator-friendly aspects, such as pyrotechnics and 'razzamatazz' did not go down well with the masses

FINDINGS IN DETAIL

SENTIMENT

Negative 😞	56	21%
Neutral 😐	42	15%
Positive 😊	175	64%
Grand Total	273	

SOURCE

Facebook	48	18%
Forum	60	22%
Reddit	4	1%
Twitter	137	50%
Web	24	9%
Grand Total	273	

SOURCE: Forums, Twitter, Facebook, Reddit and other websites.

NOTE: Over 1.5 thousand entries were reviewed in determining usable entries.

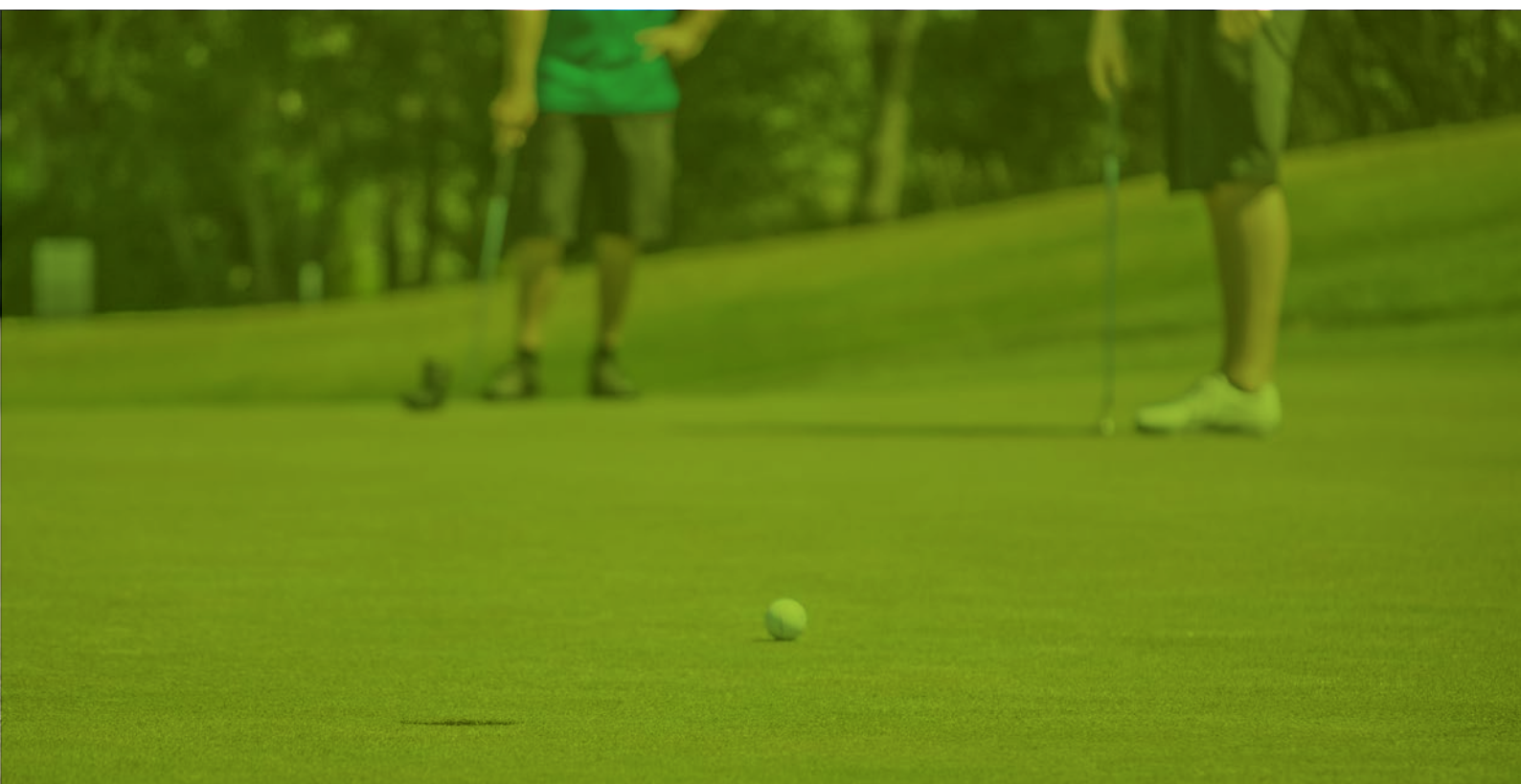
TALKING POINTS

Naturally, the biggest talking point was GolfSixes itself. Like Twenty20 cricket, and Rugby Sevens, GolfSixes sought to bring about a more fast-paced spectator-friendly approach to the sport.

The new concept making it to the mainstream may not have struck a chord with a few, however it incited ample discussion. Most conversation revolved around the concept, the format and how

the event was run. The format received generally positive opinions, save for traditionalists.

Interestingly, GolfSixes reignited an age-old debate over the **slow pace of golf**, with unequivocal praise being given towards the introduction of a shot clock. Even the traditionalists seemed to be supportive of its addition to the standard golf ruleset.



TOPICS	TOPIC 1	TOPIC 2	TOPIC 3	TOPIC 4	GRAND TOTAL	%
Concept	83	32	5	0	120	27%
Format	55	40	15	3	113	26%
Event	38	17	5	2	62	14%
Extras	27	8	1	0	36	8%
Shot clock	14	5	3	1	23	5%
Charity	11	7	1	0	19	4%
Engagement	12	3	1	0	16	4%
Results	9	4	2	1	16	4%
Field/Players	8	4	0	0	12	3%
Location	6	2	1	0	9	2%
Gameplay	5	3	0	0	8	2%
Duration	4	2	1	0	7	2%
Grand Total	272	127	35	7	441	

NOTE: Multiple topics (1-4) were allowed per entry. Because of it, concept & format often came in tandem with each other

Another big talking point was the excess **"razzmatazz"** surrounding the whole event. Pyrotechnics, celebrity commentators, walk-ins, countdowns, mascots, fan/pro meet-ups - the event had it all. The 'Hollywood glitter' did not go down well with the masses, as people clamoured to have the glitz toned down, calling the efforts "cringe-worthy".

Individual elements, such as **live audience engagement**, were singled out as some of the positives, but otherwise seemed detrimental to the viewing experience. The biggest backlash was reserved for the **celebrity commentary**, involving

celeb TV presenters Denise van Outen and Vernon Kay, and former star cricketer Kevin Pietersen.

Other topics included charitable activities, involving youth development and charity donations, the location, the atmosphere and the actual tournament itself. While the former were praised, the tournament played second-fiddle in the conversation. The results and the playing field were scarcely debated. However, some of the detractors expressed aspirations to have the upper echelons of the golfing world take part in such events as a potential drawing point in the future.

"England Golf chief executive Nick Pink has said here today he is encouraged by the feedback on the inaugural GolfSixes tournament held in St Albans last weekend, claiming the only negative cited was that it was "too razzmatazz"."

DANIEL ETHELLES, INSIDETHEGAMES.BIZ

AUDIENCE TALKING POINTS

AMATEURS

concept, extras
(gimmicks), format

MEDIA

concept, format,
results

ORGANISATION

extra activities
(charity work, youth
development), event

PROFESSIONALS

format and event

SPECTATORS

concept, format,
event

"GolfSixes is here to stay after a hugely successful inaugural event at Centurion Club, according to European Tour chief executive Keith Pelley."

SPORT-DAILY.COM

"#morethangolf conference, Fredrick Lindgren admits some elements of Golf Sixes didn't work at all but shot clock a big hit."

GOLFRETAILING, TWITTER.COM

"Just watching the @GolfSixes on the @EuropeanTour. Cheering for #GolfSixesENG. Looks brilliant! Top banter from @KP24 & @VinnieJones65 too. (...) Loving the commentary and new format"

JUSTIN ROSE, PROFESSIONAL GOLFER (PGA TOUR)

	☹️ Negative	☹️ Neutral	😊 Positive	Grand Total	%
Amateur	34	6	40	80	29%
Club		5	5	10	4%
Media	2	15	30	47	17%
Organisation			17	17	6%
Pro	2	1	12	15	5%
Spectator	18	13	70	101	37%
Unspecified		2	1	3	1%
Grand Total	56	42	175	273	

NOTE: For the analysis, the audience was divided into amateur golfers, professional golfers, golf club representatives, organisations, spectators and the media (bloggers and TV pundits included).

The event has proven a resounding success among **professional players**, with positive commentary coming from the greats of the game alongside the participants at the event. Certain aspects of gameplay and format were singled out in articles, but none diminished success.

From the point of view of the **spectator**, the event was well received overall, however there were differing opinions on the concept, the format,

the extra 'made-for-TV' glitter as well as the TV coverage/commentary itself.

Organisations and **clubs** were also positive, particularly regarding the potential of the format. However, the **media** did not want to be hasty in proclaiming this is the future. Purists viewed it as a once/twice-a-year event, while more positive pundits were cautiously hopeful, if willing to take more of a back seat with their predictions on the format's future.



Amateur players and **long-term golf fans** have been more prone to express their negativity. In fact, amateur players exhibited mixed reception towards both the concept of a six-hole format and the tournament as a whole. A healthy dose of criticism mentioned a lack of top-flight golfers, particularly members of the PGA Tour, with detractors mocking the European Tour on the whole. That said, the reception was still in favour of engaging a different audience, though people acknowledged it “lacked atmosphere” and “felt forced”.

	Amateur	Club	Media	Organisation	Pro	Spectator	Grand Total
Charitable activities	0	2	5	12	0	0	19
Concept	56	2	15	1	2	44	120
Duration	1	0	6	0	0	0	7
Engagement	5	0	0	0	1	10	16
Event	10	2	8	6	8	28	62
Extras	15	0	1	0	0	20	36
Field/Players	1	0	1	2	0	8	12
Format	20	4	32	2	14	41	113
Gameplay	6	0	2	0	0	0	8
Location	2	1	0	1	0	5	9
Results	0	1	13	0	0	2	16
Shot Clock	1	2	9	1	1	9	23
Grand Total	117	14	92	25	26	167	441

“The excellent @centuriongolf host of #golfsixes today. Great initiative by KP head of the @EuropeanTour, and well done to all at Centurion for pulling it off so quickly. Knowing who’s behind it, it’s gonna look great on TV too! This format is made for the fans and a TV viewers... right golfers, entertain us! #innovation #theendof72holestrokeplay?”

BOOMERS AND SWINGERS AT ASTLEY GOLF DRIVING RANGE, AMATEUR CLUB

LEGACY

What came out of it all?

As the president of the European Tour put it, GolfSixes "is here to stay". The resounding success of GolfSixes being "showcased to 450 million potential television viewers" set the stage for the future of the format. Fans of the format expressed support for having several events on the yearly calendar, whilst support from professional players added a little bit extra to give it the necessary backbone.

Most importantly, however, GolfSixes made waves outside of the Tour, making it to the amateur/pro-am calendar, with golf clubs across the United Kingdom deciding to stage their own version of the game (not to mention a special event with Rory McIlroy already scheduled), and becoming a potential new tool for grassroots golf development.

"Great to hear about @GolfSixes & the @GolfRootsHQ work on the Academy. Short team format gets kids playing (...)"

"We're giving this #golfsixes lark a go here at Bells. Be quick to register though as we only have space for 16 pairs! #golf #forestofdean #deanwye"

Email: richard.payne@sportsmarketingsurveysinc.com
Tel: +44 (0) 01932 345 539