

COLUMN

Back in the USA

Compleat Golfer's playing editor Louis Oosthuizen talks us through his start to the year and what has changed from 2016



As you can see, this ball is buried in some of the thickest rough I've come across in a while. The ball is also above my feet. Most of the time the amateur will still go towards the left of the fairway, in the direction of the hole, and they'll try to keep the ball going forward. But what can, and often will, happen is the clubface will close on impact and you'll end up hitting it left into the bunker here (the 18th hole at Pinnacle Point). Take your punishment and go out sideways on to the fairway, even if it's on top of the rough, to give you a better lie for the next shot. Don't try to get too cute with this.



GARETH VON NELSON/ASPIR IMAGES

For 2017 I've decided to do things a little differently and you will see me concentrating on the PGA Tour a lot more.

That's always the toughest thing to do, getting your year's schedule right, and in 2016 I was on the European Tour playing at the Qatar Masters at the end of January.

I also teed up at the Dubai Desert Classic and February saw me go to Malaysia for the Maybank Championship, then it was down to Australia for the first time, where I won the Perth International.

That was a good start to the year for me but I immediately lost ground in the race for the FedExCup. I want to finish in the top 30 this year and give myself a chance at the big prizes at the end of the season.

It also makes a lot more sense for me to play on the PGA Tour because my family lives in Palm Beach Gardens in Florida. So, why should I be spending large chunks of time in other parts of the world away from them, when I could be competing on the PGA Tour and giving myself a better chance to be in the FedExCup Playoffs, which

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determine the season-long champion on the Tour? That's definitely my goal for 2017.

Also, playing almost exclusively on the PGA Tour means I get to go back home on the Sunday night, spend two nights there with the family - the kids are at school now, too - and then I can head off again on the Tuesday to start that particular week's tournament. It's easier on the family front and on the travelling side, so for me it was a no-brainer to make that decision for this year.

Instead of being in Qatar as I was last year, I started off at the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines. Last year, Brandt Snedeker won and pocketed the FedExCup points, and I hope to make a positive start.

I enjoyed a great break at the end of 2016, back at home around Mossel Bay and then going up to Namibia - I didn't

even have my golf clubs sent over from the US - and I'm raring to go.

After the Farmers Insurance I'll be going to the Phoenix Open at TPC Scottsdale in Arizona, on 2-5 February. Hideki Matsuyama is the defending champion there and he had a great 2016, so let's hope I can also find some form early in the season.

My world rating is important to me and I'm definitely looking to go back up the rankings after ending 2016 at 26th.

After the Phoenix Open I'm giving myself a short break and will be missing the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am and the Genesis Open. But I'll be in action again at The Honda Classic, which is almost in my back garden in Florida.

So, altogether I'm feeling good about the year and hopeful that I will be able to fly the South African flag with pride on the PGA Tour. ☺