

# Analysis of the Development Path of Golf Events in China

Yujun Yang\*

Guangdong Country Garden School, Zhuhai, 519000, China

\*Corresponding author: haibei1028@hhu.edu.cn

**Abstract.** This paper examines the evolution and challenges of golf events in China through literature investigation and case analysis. Despite a relatively late start, China's golf industry has seen significant growth, marked by an increasing golfing population and the establishment of major tournaments. However, the industry faces challenges due to economic disparities, limited promotional efforts, and the absence of marquee players and events. To address these issues, the study proposes strategic solutions aimed at aligning China's golf events with international standards and elevating the sport's domestic profile. These strategies include grassroots promotion, talent development, and media engagement. The paper underscores the need for a multi-dimensional approach to overcome barriers such as elitist perceptions and promotional inadequacies. It advocates for democratizing golf's image, enhancing youth and amateur platforms, and leveraging media to reshape public opinion. The goal is to position China's golf events on a global platform, contributing to the sport's international diversity and competitive spirit. The paper concludes that with continued efforts in policy promotion and industry integration, China can make significant strides in elevating its golf events to global prominence.

**Keywords:** Event media, Golf events development, Golf training, Golf concept, Golf Culture.

## 1. Introduction

Golf, a sport that has captured global popularity, has a rich history dating back to 1457. It was officially recognized as a sporting industry in 1744, and the world's first golf tournament, the Open Championship, took place in 1860 in the United Kingdom. Over time, the continuous refinement of rules and the emergence of numerous golf events have not only propelled the development of the sport but also generated significant commercial value and profits. Events such as the U.S. Open, the Open Championship, the Ryder Cup, and the recent introduction of the Liv Golf League annually generate substantial revenue, with prize money increasing steadily, further enhancing the professionalization of golf in regions such as Europe and the United States. The opening of the Zhongshan Hot Spring Golf Course in Guangdong in 1984 marked the beginning of golf development in China. With the increasing number of golf courses, the golfing population in China has grown steadily. In 1993, China embarked on the path of professionalizing golf and, after a decade of professional expansion, successfully hosted its first world-class golf tournament, the Heineken World Cup Golf Tournament, at Shenzhen's Mission Hills Golf Club on April 17, 1995. Subsequently, events like the Volvo China Tour and the China Professional Golf Championship have emerged. However, these events still exhibit significant gaps in terms of promotional efforts, competitive standards, sponsorship, and organization when compared to the top-tier international golf tournaments mentioned earlier. The substantial disparity is intricately linked to China's golf development policies, the prevalence of golf in China, and the training of young golfers in the country. To align Chinese golf events with international standards and work towards the goal of reaching the level of top-tier golf tournaments, several key strategies need to be considered. Firstly, it is crucial to establish clear and supportive policies for the development of golf in China. This includes setting regulations and guidelines for the organization and management of golf events. Secondly, a focus on the training and development of young golf talent is essential. Establishing robust junior golf programs and academies can nurture a new generation of skilled golfers capable of competing at the international level. Thirdly, enhancing the promotion and marketing of Chinese golf events is vital to attract global attention and participation. Utilizing digital platforms and international media channels can increase the visibility of Chinese golf tournaments.

Furthermore, encouraging corporate sponsorship and professional event management is crucial for elevating the quality and prestige of Chinese golf events. Lastly, seeking partnerships and collaborations with established international golf organizations and events can provide valuable insights and support for the development of Chinese golf on a global scale. By implementing these strategies, Chinese golf can work towards aligning its events with top-tier international standards and furthering the professionalization and development of the sport in the country.

This paper using literature investigation and case analysis to explores the growth and challenges of golf events in China, noting significant development despite a late start. The goal is to position China's golf globally, contributing to international diversity.

## **2. The Current Status of Golf Events in China**

### **2.1. Golf Population and Number of Golf Courses in China**

Since the opening of the Zhongshan Hot Spring Golf Course in Guangdong in 1984, the number of golf courses in China has grown to approximately 380 [1]. Additionally, the golfing population (referring to individuals who play golf and follow golf events) has reached around 1 million, with approximately 300,000 core golfers (those who play at least one round of golf per week). On average, there is one golf course for every 3 million people in China. In 2014, over 400 professional golfers and more than 3,000 amateur golfers participated in various golf events. By 2021, the number of registered young golfers in China had reached approximately 20,000 and continues to grow. However, when compared to countries such as the United States, as well as smaller countries like South Korea and Japan, the disparity in the prevalence of golf in China becomes evident. In the United States, nearly 13% of the population plays golf. Nevertheless, with the continuous increase in per capita income and notable cases such as Feng Shanshan, who has transformed her future trajectory through golf, China's gap in golf prevalence is gradually narrowing.

### **2.2. Types of Golf Events in China**

Official events organized by the China Golf Association generally include men's professional events, women's professional events, amateur and coaching events, youth events, and club events. Men's professional events, such as the Volvo China Tour, account for 35.7% of the total events. Women's professional events, including the World Women's Championship, account for 13.4% of the total events. Amateur and coaching events, including the National Amateur Golf Hope Series, account for 30.3% of the total events. Youth events, including the HSBC National Junior Golf Championship, account for 12.6% of the total events and club events make up the remaining 8% [1]. From the data, it is apparent that men's professional and amateur events account for a significant portion, while youth events are nearly on par with women's professional events.

### **2.3. Prize Money for Chinese Golf Events**

The total prize money for the 2023 Volvo China Open has reached \$1.5 million, making it one of the highest-paying events in China [1]. However, the minimum total prize money for one stop of the 2023 PGA Tour has also reached \$1 million, and the total prize money for the U.S. Masters has reached \$18 million. This indicates that major international events offer significantly higher prize money than Chinese tournaments.

### **2.4. Media Influence of Chinese Golf Events**

Golf event media plays a significant role in the development of sports projects, enabling public opinion guidance and information dissemination for these events. However, some challenges exist where certain aspects of event media work may struggle to accurately grasp the depth of information dissemination and values, resulting in a decline in the impact of media work. With the continuous advancement of information technology and the increasing attention to sports events, the

specialization and digitalization of golf event media work are constantly improving. Golf event media needs to utilize different platforms to expand the breadth of information dissemination and enhance its influence on public opinion [2]. In the economic market, golf event media serves as an important driver for the continuous development of the golf industry, showcasing the value of golf activities. It enables the evaluation of golf events and encourages greater attention to golf-related activities from various sectors of society. Additionally, efficient and high-quality social information dissemination plays a crucial role in event tracking, and golf event media can promote the influence of information dissemination and facilitate the sustained development of related industries.

### **3. The Problems and Reasons of the Development of Golf Events in China**

The population of golf in China is small and have misconceptions and prejudices about golf. The development of an event in a country is closely related to the popularity and popularity of the sport in this country. In Europe and America, the golfing population can occupy 13% or more of the total population, while in China it only accounts for less than 1%. Moreover, most of the golf courses in China are built according to the high star standard, which leads to the obvious deviation in the positioning of golf in China, which is defined as a sport for the rich. The number of courses also has a big impact on the golfing population in China. If there are more courses, people will have more choices, so the price of playing will continue to fall in this competitive market. Golf originated among the nobility in Britain and initially served a small minority of wealthy individuals. As a result, many Chinese people hold biases against the sport, viewing it as an activity reserved for the privileged and as a symbol of the extravagant lifestyle pursued by Westerners. This sentiment is especially prevalent today, as the implementation of long-term "partial affluence" policies has exacerbated wealth disparities. Some individuals who adhere to traditional egalitarian ideologies even harbor resentment towards the affluent, ultimately directing their anger towards the sport of golf [3]. Clearly, there exists a contradiction between the two perspectives.

China's golf lacks internationally representative events, top players, attention, has a small scale, less sponsorship, and lower prize money.

Although China has hosted a series of influential golf events and invited famous players such as Tiger Woods to China, compared with the famous four major golf majors that have formed a unique tournament culture, China's local brand golf events are still blank [4]. For China, what is currently lacking is a high-level, high-investment professional tour, which is the most basic in developed golf countries. The competition that attracts the international big golf stars to participate spontaneously generally has two characteristics: First the tournament prize money is high. Second High attention and honor of the event. And China's game can be said to have nothing to do with these, honor and heritage cannot be created, to use money to create a big golf events, it work, but who sponsors is a serious problem. The holding of professional events must be linked to enterprises, especially the need for strong enterprises to do strong backing, which is also a prerequisite for the success of the event [5]. However, most domestic companies have shown little interest in sponsoring golf tournaments because the sport is not popular in China and many worry that they will not get the return on their large investments [6]. At present, according to the analysis of the training system of domestic golf players, a large proportion of professional athletes are trained outside the system, mainly by family training. The family training mode mainly relies on family funds for training, and players rely on bonuses to pay for training fees, coaching fees and a series of expenses. Due to the low prize money and few matches in China's professional events, many professional players have turned to amateurs without maintaining prize money. Although in recent years, China has continuously improved the athlete training system, and actively reformed the training mode, adopted the policy of "take in first, then go out", combined with the actual situation in China, mainly myself, and actively adopted various forms of learning advanced international experience, but China's professional athletes are seriously faulted and the backbone is insufficient [6]. The scarcity of youth reserve strength is the fundamental reason leading to a small number of professional athletes in China.

Chinese golf does not have its own representative players and the competitive level is low. The development of a sport is closely related to the athletes. Simply put, sports stars can greatly improve the popularity of sports. Some scholars also pointed out that the current situation of golf talent training and China's booming golf market is extremely disproportionate, how to train golf talents suitable for social needs has become an urgent practical need and the focus of theoretical circles [7]. Top star players can not only increase the popularity of the tournament, but also bring a huge boost to the entire golf industry. The United States broadcast media has used 60% of the golf game coverage time to report Tiger Woods, the golf superstar, in order to increase the spectator value of the event, it can be seen that the power of sports stars cannot be underestimated. At present, China is also lacking such players, so that they can participate in the attention of the tournament and increase the visibility of the tournament. The cost of golf training in China is also high because of the high cost of training courses, many of which are built to serve the upper echelons of society rather than for the development of players.

China's golf media lacks excellent brands and columns. Chinese golf enthusiasts cover a wide range, but domestic sports media have a clear tendency to focus on economic events. There is a high degree of attention to basketball and football, and a lack of attention to Golf, which leads to obvious constraints on development. At the same time, most of the coverage in the Chinese golf media is about international events and top players in the world, which has resulted in the domestic attention of the game falling short of expectations [2].

## **4. Development Path and Suggestions**

### **4.1. Popularize the Healthy Golf Concept among the Public**

The negative impact of public misconceptions, lack of support, and excessive commercialization has put golf in an awkward position in China. Popularizing the healthy golf concept among the public can improve the stereotypical view of golf and encourage more people to participate in the sport. By analyzing the deep cultural similarities between golf and Chinese culture, such as "self-cultivation," "integrity and discipline," "fairness and equality," "emphasis on cooperation and win-win," and "emphasis on rituals," it is feasible to promote the essence of golf culture and achieve a prosperous development of golf in China [3]. To enhance the cultural foundation of golf in China, golf culture should be promoted and popularized through three aspects: 1) integrating foreign golf culture into the education and popularization of young people's understanding of golf culture; 2) actively organizing mass golf competitions and promoting standardized golf etiquette and spectator etiquette during the competition; 3) establishing a golf event system with a wide mass base and creating a golf cultural festival with Chinese characteristics [8].

### **4.2. Create Internationally Influential Golf Events**

Although the development history and background of golf events in China cannot match that of developed golf countries in Europe and America, China can increase the influence of golf events through significant investment in the later stage. After popularizing the healthy golf concept among the masses, the number of golfers in China is expected to increase significantly. With more people participating in the sport, golf events held in China will naturally attract more attention, leading to increased investment from companies and sponsors. As a result, the tournament prize money will increase, and international golf superstars will be attracted to participate in tournaments in China. With the participation of top golf stars, the influence of golf events in China will gradually approach that of top-level events in developed golf countries in Europe and America.

### **4.3. Improve Player's Competitive Level and Strengthen Training of Domestic Players**

To improve the competitive level of Chinese golf, it is necessary to strengthen the development of domestic players. Only with local star players can a project effectively progress. Taking Chinese tennis as an example, Li Na's emergence has brought global attention to Chinese tennis and attracted

more stars to participate in Chinese professional tennis events. Liu Xiang's Olympic gold medal in track and field showed the world that Asians can achieve remarkable results in athletics. Chinese golf also needs such star players to promote the sport internationally. Currently, Chinese golf suffers from a gap between retiring veteran players, a lack of experience among the middle-aged players, and insufficient reserves. Therefore, China need to strengthen the training of professional athletes. First, China should focus on the development of frontline players and increase the number of professional players. The existing system of only one professional player examination per year should be changed to provide regular opportunities for players to apply for professional exams, allowing more players to choose a professional career path. Secondly, China need to strengthen the training of young players. Due to the high cost of golf courses, families may face pressure in nurturing their children and even give up halfway. Therefore, China need to fully utilize the "nationwide system" policy to select outstanding young people for professional golf sports and accumulate sufficient reserves [9]. Finally, China need to broaden the channels for cultivating golf talents, not only by selecting outstanding players but also by improving the overall level of coaches. Coaches need to have standardized technical movements and advanced training concepts to cultivate excellent professional golf players and promote the development of professional golf events in China. In summary, to improve the competitive level of golf in China, China need to strengthen the training of domestic players, including frontline player development, youth player development, and expanding channels for cultivating golf talents [9]. This will help China find star players and enhance the international reputation of golf. Additionally, with the rise of indoor golf in China, the cost of playing golf can be significantly reduced, providing better resources for youth training [10].

#### **4.4. Deeply Explore Well-known Media Brands and the Cultural Value of Golf Event Media**

Currently, there are few well-known golf event media brands or related media brands in China, despite having many potential golf enthusiasts. With the increasing pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, media analysis should pay more attention to market demand, refine market demand, and create a large number of professional programs with high professional standards. These programs should present golf event media information from different perspectives, not limited to event broadcasts, but also covering event background analysis, individual athlete analysis, and skill analysis [2]. While optimizing the dissemination of content, golf event media needs to highlight self-promotion and increase the visibility of programs to expand the market, making it easier for the market to be recognized by the audience and promoting the long-term development of golf event media. In terms of exploring the cultural value of golf event media, sports event media should continue to explore and report on the historical and cultural value of golf events, avoiding lowbrow or vulgar content [2].

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, golf in China stands at a crossroads of opportunity and challenge. Rapid expansion in tournaments and facilities indicates a growing interest in the sport, yet issues such as elitist perceptions, economic imbalances, and promotional inadequacies impede its potential. Overcoming these barriers requires a multi-faceted approach focused on democratizing golf's image, enhancing youth and amateur platforms, and leveraging media to reshape public opinion. With strategic initiatives in talent development and market system establishment, China is poised to elevate its golf events to global renown, contributing to the sport's international diversity and competitive spirit. The future promises significant strides if persistent efforts in policy, promotion, and industry integration continue.

## **References**

- [1] Xu Peidong, and Zhang Xiaobo. The development status and trend of golf events in China. *Sports Culture Guide*, 2014, (7): 79-82.

- [2] Li Jia. Research on the current situation and countermeasures of China's golf competition media. *Contemporary Sports Technology*, 2020 10 (7): 240-240.
- [3] Zhou Xiaoqiong. Compatibility of golf culture with Chinese culture and suggesting ways to promote its development. *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, 2014.
- [4] Li Yongqin. Research on the dynamic analysis of China Golf Professional Tour and its sustainable development strategy selection. *Journal of Nanjing Institute of Physical Education: Social Science Edition*, 2009, 23 (6): 113-116.
- [5] He Mang, and Chen Xiaoya. Research on the development status, problems and formation mechanism of China Golf Professional Tour. *Journal of Beijing Sports University*, 2012, 35 (9): 45-48.
- [6] Zhang Jianhui, and Sun Banjun. 30 years of golf development in China: review and outlook. *Journal of Shenyang Institute of Physical Education*, 2015, 34 (3): 49-54.
- [7] Wang Qifeng. Research on the development of youth golf in China. *Sports Supplies and Technology*, 2015, (2): 34-34.
- [8] Jiang Xiaohong, and Taifeng. Research on countermeasures for the development of professional golf events in China. *Journal of Shenyang Institute of Physical Education*, 2014, (2): 53-58.
- [9] Qin Qingfeng, and Xiang Xiaoming. Research on the selection method of young golfers. *Thought Front S1*, 2011, 524-525.
- [10] Yang Ligu. Analysis of Volkswagen Golf Project - Indoor Golf Simulator. *Sports-Leisure: Popular Sports*, 2021, (20): 0139-0141.