

The return to Riviera beckons – a look ahead to the Genesis Invitational.

The PGA Tour season is well underway in 2026, with Collin Morikawa the latest to join the winner's circle with his triumph at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am last weekend. We remain on the west coast this weekend for the second of the tour's signature events, the Genesis Invitational.

Ludvig Åberg returns as the defending champion at Tiger Woods' personal event, with the tournament back at Riviera Golf Club following the Palisades wildfire. The Swede took a one-shot victory over Maverik McNealy at Torrey Pines last February for his second win on tour, taking \$4 million in the process.

We will visit each of the key storylines heading into the week, including both Woods and Åberg, Morikawa's return to victory and the favourites to impress across the tournament.

Morikawa lights a spark by ending winless streak.

As most of you reading this will have seen, Collin Morikawa claimed his first PGA Tour win since October of 2023, holding off a supercharged Scottie Scheffler to take a one-shot victory on the Monterrey Peninsula. He produced a clinical performance, including making four birdies on the back nine, to surge clear of a congested leaderboard in difficult conditions at Pebble Beach.

The American began the final round two shots behind Akshay Bhatia but was forced to wait until the 11th hole to make his move to the top of the leaderboard. As a two-time major champion, his experience shone through on the closing stretch, holding his nerve over a 19-minute wait on the final hole to make birdie and avoid a playoff.

In victory, Morikawa removed the major burden to his game over recent years by finally claiming his seventh win on tour. At only 29 years old and a multiple-major winner, he has proven the talent is there to compete consistently for trophies. Could his Pebble Beach triumph see him take the fight to Scheffler and Rory McIlroy in 2026?

Tiger gives injury update, with Masters return not ruled out.

The 15-time major champion and all-time golfing great returns to the spotlight of the PGA Tour this week, albeit as tournament host for his personal event in Los Angeles. Speaking to the media on Wednesday, Tiger was questioned on his comeback from an Achilles rupture and a disc replacement last year, seeing him miss the entire season.

Now 50-years-old, Woods is eligible to compete PGA Champions Tour, but he has refused to rule out a return to Augusta National this April to compete in the Masters. When asked if the tournament was 'off the table,' he replied with a simple "No," giving fans across the world hope of seeing him back in competitive action in 2026.

His off-course responsibilities continue to grow, as a member of the PGA Tour Board of Directors, but he also left the door open to a Ryder Cup captaincy in 2027. The event returns to Europe, at Adare Manor in Ireland, with Tiger the favourite to lead Team USA across the pond.

Tour stars make return to contention at Pebble.

Just as Morikawa made it back into the win column last weekend, the first signature event of the year saw a host of the Tour's forgotten stars back at the top of the leaderboard. Bhatia put himself in prime position for victory after a blistering first 54 holes, while the likes of Jordan Spieth and Rickie Fowler were in contention for the weekend. We even saw former world number two Xander Schauffele in the top 20 despite a poor start to the year.

In Bhatia's case, the leftie superstar will be rueing a missed chance to earn his third PGA Tour victory as he fell away from the lead in a disappointing final round. Unlike Morikawa, he is at the beginning of his career and understandably lacks the experience of his American compatriot. His talent is obvious, and I have no doubt he is close to a breakthrough victory.

For the likes of Spieth and Fowler, the tournament will provide them with a base for 2026, with both falling short of the heights we expect over the last few years. Spieth will have yet another chance to complete the career Grand Slam in May, with the PGA Championship held at Aronimink Golf Club in Philadelphia. The chance for golfing immortality beckons, with the signs from Pebble Beach giving him hope for contention.

After a brilliant 2024, when he took two major championships and rivalled Scheffler all year long, Schauffele will be pleased to return to a form of contention. He has been out of the spotlight since a rib injury sustained in the 2025 off-season, struggling for form throughout last season and the beginning of 2026. If his Pebble

performance is a sign of things to come, 2026 could be the return of the X-man to full form.

Who are the favourites to conquer Riveria?

As we look ahead to this week's signature event, let us look into what could be crucial to victory. Weather is reported to play a part, as it did at Pebble Beach, with the ability to post a solid score in difficult conditions essential. As one of the hardest courses on the PGA Tour, experience and strategy is vital to success.

Based on this, I look immediately at the likes of Scheffler and McIlroy to be at the top come Sunday. While it seems an obvious assumption, particularly in the former's case, both have been playing phenomenal golf and had genuine chances to win last weekend despite slightly below-par performances.

Rory ended the weekend only five shots back from the lead, despite making a triple bogey and three doubles across the 72 holes. The world number two will be left rueing costly mental mistakes across his title defence. Those types of errors must be avoided at a test like Riviera, if McIlroy can reduce them, he is sure to be in the mix.

Recording his 18th consecutive top 10 (matching Tiger Woods' record), Scheffler was supreme in tricky conditions at Pebble, posting a nine-under score to set the clubhouse lead. His recent contention at tournaments have been derailed by slow starts, but he has proven his class by somehow still appearing at the sharp end of the leaderboard. If a fast start beckons, he will be the man to beat come Sunday.