Sheshan Stands Up To The Best Of Them

[2019](https://www.hsbcgolf.com/latest-news/tag/2019/), [China Golf](https://www.hsbcgolf.com/latest-news/tag/china-golf/), [Sheshan Golf Club](https://www.hsbcgolf.com/latest-news/tag/sheshan-golf-club/)

Seldom can so many flattering remarks have been bandied around at a golf tournament. Li Haotong, when he opened with a 64, was being showered with tributes, while much the same applied to Victor Paris, who was one behind as he set out on his second round. Yet it has to be said that even the most fulsome of complements being visited on the competitors paled into insignificance as against those being directed at the golf course.

From the way the entire field has been talking, every blade of grass at the Sheshan GC is in its rightful position.

“Sheshan,” said Rory McIlroy, who was lying no more than four shots off the lead at the end of Round 1, “has probably become one of the best venues that we play every year…I started coming here in 2009 and, though I’ve never won, I feel like it suits my game. The course and the tournament have kept on improving and progressing.”

Matt Fitzpatrick summed up how the course does what it should do in rewarding good golf and punishing the less good by citing his scores from 2018: “I started with a 65 and was twenty shots more with a second-round 85.” This time around, he opened with a 66  and, at least at the start of his second round, there were no early pointers to any repeat of last year’s fall from grace.

Louis Oosthuizen, the former Open winner, drooled over the perfect greens and the questions they were asking. “They are very quick, very firm but there’s a lot of working out to do with your second shots. You need to leave yourself on the right side of the hole every time.”

Eugene Hennessy is the European Tour agronomist to have overseen the preparation of the venue. He paid the first of three visits to Sheshan back in June and will tell you that everything has run smoothly ever since. “The staff here have been brilliant.”

Hennessy was interested in a debate which had taken place on the range as to the respective merits or, rather demerits, of the way in which the players take their divots. The three ways under discussion were as follows: shorn squares, lines, or the scattered approach.

The shorn squares, said Hennessy, were the worst in that they take the longest to recover. Parallel lines, as used by Philip Eriksson, the second reserve, probably came second. Eriksson felt that the two lines, down rather than across and with two or three inches between the rows, would pave the way for one line of grass to grow towards the other.

Hennessy nodded at that before qualifying the Swede’s findings by pointing to how not all types of grass would react in that way.

To Hennessy, the top method, for professionals and club golfers alike,  is the “scattered” approach in which a player leaves a party of unrelated divots. It might suggest that the perpetrators are untidy in everything they do, but it seems that it offers the best chance of a quick recovery.

Yet even here, there is a drawback…

“If,” said Hennessy, “all of the players in a tournament field used the “scattered” approach, “we’d run out of hitting space by the end of the week.”

The good news is that the repair time for divot damage, when properly overseen, is not as lengthy as you might think. In not much more than three weeks, the area can be back to its unspoiled best.