

World Snooker Championship 2023 FAQ

Written by Warren Pilkington, 18th April 2023. Will be updated as the tournament progresses where possible.

Tournament

What is the World Snooker Championship?

The World Snooker Championship traditionally takes place in April and early May over a 17 day period with the final day being on the May Bank Holiday Monday. This year's tournament starts Saturday 15th April and finishes Monday 1st May 2023.

Who is the defending champion?

Ronnie O'Sullivan is the defending champion, who beat Judd Trump 18-13 in the final to clinch his seventh world title, equalling that of Stephen Hendry.

Where is the tournament held?

The tournament is held at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, and has been since 1977. It is often referred to as "the home of snooker" by fans, commentators and players alike. This year it's the 47th consecutive time it's been held there.

Why The Crucible Theatre?

When promoter Mike Watterson's wife saw a play at this intimate theatre in the round, she recommended it to him as an ideal venue. The closeness of the crowd to the stage (notably with two tables) and the 980 seated capacity gives it that special aura. Mike Watterson has passed away as of 2019, but his legacy is that the tournament found its spiritual home.

What is the Crucible Curse?

Since the World Championship has been held at the Crucible Theatre, no first time World Champion has gone on to win the championship the following year. This is known as the Crucible Curse.

The closest anyone has come to breaking the Curse was Joe Johnson, who after winning in 1986 against Steve Davis lost to Steve Davis in the 1987 final 18-14.

Who qualifies for the tournament automatically?

The top 16 ranked players at the final event ranking cut off (the Tour Championship Final) will qualify. You can keep an eye on this page for the provisional rankings:

<http://www.wpsa.com/rankings/latest-provisional-seedings/>

If the defending champion was outside the top 16 they would qualify as defending champion, and would also be a situation where it wouldn't automatically be the top 16. However, the defending champion is Ronnie O'Sullivan, so this won't apply.

How do the remaining players qualify?

The qualification tournament was revised for 2023. There are four rounds, with all rounds being best of 19 frames. Depending on the players' ranking, they may start in one of the first three rounds:

- Round One – Seeds 81-122, plus 16 amateurs and 6 from Q School order of Merit
- Round Two – Seeds 49-80 against Round One Winners
- Round Three – Seeds 17-48 against Round Two Winners

So therefore, anyone ranked higher needs to win at least two qualifying matches.

This year, a record five women also entered at the Round One qualifying stage. Ng On Yee came closest to reaching the next round, losing 10-8 to Michael Holt.

Where and when are the qualifying rounds held?

The qualifying rounds are held at the English Institute of Sport, located in Sheffield close to Sheffield Arena, between 3rd and 12th April 2023.

How does the final stage draw work?

For the final stages: the first round will see the 16 automatic qualifiers against 16 who have fought through the qualifying rounds. This draw is done after the qualifying rounds have completed and is a random draw (16 automatic qualifiers in one bag, the remaining 16 in the other.) The draw is scheduled normally for two days before the start of the tournament, ie: Thursday 13th April 2023.

What dates and formats are the rounds in the tournament?

First round (best of 19 frames – first to 10) - Friday 15th to Thursday 20th April

Second round (best of 25 frames – first to 13) – Thursday 20th April to Monday 24th April

Quarter final (best of 25 frames – first to 13) – Tuesday 25th and Wednesday 26th April

Semi-final (best of 33 frames – first to 17) – Thursday 27th to Saturday 29th April

Final (best of 35 frames – first to 18) – Sunday 30th April and Monday 1st May

A two table set up is in play up to and including the quarter finals, the semi-finals onward is one table.

So, which is table one and which is table two?

Table one is the right hand table as you look on the television – table two the left. Table one houses the number one seed and the top half of the draw, table two houses the number two seed and the bottom half of the draw.

What dates and times are the sessions?

For most of the tournament, there are three session times each day: 10am, 2.30pm and 7pm. The exceptions to this are Thursday 20th April, Monday 24th April and Thursday 27th April (1pm and 7pm sessions) and both days of the final, Sunday 30th April and Monday 1st May (1pm and 7pm)

It's worth noting that in recent years the evening sessions of the final have been played at 7pm instead of 8pm. This is due to many late night finishes of the final itself and thus otherwise frustrating television audiences who may have gone to bed before the final concluded.

How many frames are played in each session?

Based on a potential maximum number of frames played per round, the split is like this:

First round: 9 in first session, 10 in second session

Second round and quarter final: 8 in first session, 8 in second session, 9 in third session

Semi-final: 8 in first session, 8 in second session, 8 in third session, 9 in fourth session

Final: 8 in first session, 9 in second session, 8 in third session, 10 in fourth session

In reality the final session of each round may have less than the allotted maximum number of frames. On rare occasions a second round or quarter final match has been completed without a final session being required (one player has to win 13-3 or better)

I want to see a certain player. When do I need to watch?

More becomes clear once the draw is made. About the only constant between every year of the tournament is that the defending champion and number 1 seed plays Table 1 on the first day at the 10am and 7pm sessions. So for this year, that's Ronnie O'Sullivan

World Snooker will also usually publicise the order of play on their website (as well as draw sheets once the draw is made) which will give you a good idea of who is on when.

Draw sheet for 2023 - https://mcusercontent.com/17bdd23358b4d4e5f9dae7a79/files/b2cc8900-85f5-6658-f654-ec4bfa478a0b/DrawSheet_Cazoo_World_Championship_2023.pdf

Draw format for 2023 - https://mcusercontent.com/17bdd23358b4d4e5f9dae7a79/files/34484867-e650-abc3-5dcd-b39c57b8c3d2/2023_WC_Format_v2.01.pdf

So for the first round, who will I see when?

The first round draw for the top 16 will be against the qualifiers, who will be drawn at random. Using the draw sheet and format means this is how it looks for the first round = * indicates to a finish:

Saturday 15th April

10am - Ronnie O'Sullivan v Qualifier (Table 1), Stuart Bingham v Qualifier (Table 2)

2.30pm - Luca Brecel v Qualifier (Table 1), Neil Robertson v Qualifier (Table 2)

7pm - Ronnie O'Sullivan v Qualifier (Table 1) *, Ali Carter v Qualifier (Table 2)

Sunday 16th April

10am - Ding Junhui v Qualifier (Table 1), Stuart Bingham v Qualifier (Table 2) *

2.30pm - Mark Williams v Qualifier (Table 1), Neil Robertson v Qualifier (Table 2) *

7pm - Luca Brecel v Qualifier (Table 1) *, Ali Carter v Qualifier (Table 2) *

Monday 17th April

10am - Ding Junhui v Qualifier (Table 1) *, Mark Allen v Qualifier (Table 2)

2.30pm - Mark Williams v Qualifier (Table 1) *, John Higgins v Qualifier (Table 2)

7pm - Mark Allen v Qualifier (Table 2) *

Tuesday 18th April

10am - Jack Lisowski v Qualifier (Table 1), Gary Wilson v Qualifier (Table 2)

2.30pm - Judd Trump v Qualifier (Table 1), John Higgins v Qualifier (Table 2) *

7pm - Robert Milkins v Qualifier (Table 1), Gary Wilson v Qualifier (Table 2) *

Wednesday 19th April

10am - Jack Lisowski v Qualifier (Table 1) *, Kyren Wilson v Qualifier (Table 2)

2.30pm - Judd Trump v Qualifier (Table 1) *, Mark Selby v Qualifier (Table 2)

7pm - Shaun Murphy v Qualifier (Table 1), Kyren Wilson v Qualifier (Table 2) *

Thursday 20th April

9.30am – Robert Milkins v Qualifier (Table 1) *

1pm - Mark Selby v Qualifier (Table 2) *

7pm - Shaun Murphy v Qualifier (Table 1) *

How does the prize money break down?

The prize money for the 2023 tournament is as follows.

Last 112: £5,000

Last 80: £10,000

Last 48: £15,000

First round (last 32): £20,000

Second round (last 16): £30,000

Quarter finals: £50,000

Semi finals: £100,000

Runner up: £200,000

Winner: £500,000

There is also a £40,000 bonus available for anyone who makes a maximum 147 break.

Who is refereeing the World Snooker Championship?

The referees for this year will be from a selection of the current professional roster. Brendan Moore has been confirmed to be refereeing his third final, and his final professional match before retirement from the World Snooker tour. When not refereeing the referees will also take turns to be the scorer (and operate the video equipment where needed to assist the referee with ball replacements following fouls.)

How likely will we see a maximum 147 break at this year's championship?

Seeing a maximum 147 break at the Crucible is the Holy Grail. In the forty plus years that the championship has been held at the Crucible, there have been only twelve maximum breaks, so statistically that's around a 26% chance of it happening during the tournament. The odds to see that in the session you may be attending will be lower: there are 46 sessions, of which 34 of them have two tables, so in total 80 table sessions (34 x 2 = 68 + 12 for the two semis and final = 80). That means that per session you'd have a 0.32% chance of a maximum.

Add that to the fact that there's only ever been eight players who have made a maximum break, and you start to realise how special that is.

It's also worth noting that if Ding Junhui were to make a 147 break, he would become the first player to achieve a 147 break in all three Triple Crown events (UK Championship, Masters and World Championship). Ding made a 147 at the 2007 Masters and the 2008 UK Championship, so has been on this cusp of this achievement for some time.

So when were and who compiled the previous maximum 147 breaks?

Cliff Thorburn (1983, v Terry Griffiths, Table One, first ever at the Crucible)
Jimmy White (1992, v Tony Drago, Table One, longest period between maximums)
Stephen Hendry (1995, v Jimmy White, semi-final, only time ever on a one table setup)
Ronnie O'Sullivan (1997, v Mick Price, Table One, fastest ever maximum of 5 minutes 20 seconds)
Ronnie O'Sullivan (2003, v Marco Fu, Table Two, went on to lose the match)
Mark Williams (2005, v Robert Milkins, Table Two, to clinch the match)
Ronnie O'Sullivan (2008, v Mark Williams, Table One, to clinch the match)
Ali Carter (2008, v Peter Ebdon, Table Two, first time two maximums in major ranking tournament)
Stephen Hendry (2009, v Shaun Murphy, Table Two, went on to lose the match)
Stephen Hendry (2012, v Stuart Bingham, Table One, first time a maximum on the first day's play)
John Higgins (2020, v Kurt Maflin, Table One, no audience present due to COVID-19 measures)
Neil Robertson (2022, v Jack Lisowski, Table Two, went on to lose the match)

Only Ronnie O'Sullivan and Stephen Hendry (three each) have made more than one maximum 147 at the Crucible. Every single player who has made a maximum 147 at the Crucible has been at least a finalist twice or better. Only Jimmy White and Ali Carter have failed to win the title.

Six maximums have been made on Table One, five on Table Two, and only one on the one table setup.

What music do the players walk on to?

A full list is provided by WST here - <https://wst.tv/crucible-walk-on-music/> - note that some players do rotate their walk on tunes, whilst others have kept the same one for years. Mark Selby is good friends with members of the band Kasabian (they're both from Leicester) and Ding Junhui's music is actually Chaotic Superstar by Jordan Chan, not Breaking News.

Watching On Television

How do I watch the World Snooker Championship in the UK?

If you are a UK based viewer, you have three options:

Freeview: via BBC2, BBC1, BBC Four, BBC Red Button and BBC web site

Satellite and cable: as Freeview plus Eurosport 1 and Eurosport 2

Smart / connected TVs: via the BBC iPlayer app

How come the BBC broadcasts sometimes only show one table?

Mainly because of a cut back in the BBC Red Button broadcasts. In addition, online coverage switched to the BBC iPlayer app instead of the previous BBC Sport app in 2022.

If there's red button coverage for Freeview viewers, one table is normally chosen, and if that match finishes early, coverage then switches to the remaining table if play is still ongoing.

Who will be presenting and commentating on BBC and Eurosport?

BBC's main presenter is Hazel Irvine, universally praised by most fans for doing a very good job. Their backup presenters this year are Rishi Persad and (new for 2023) Catrin Heledd, with Abigail Davies doing the behind the scenes stories. Normally they will have the likes of John Parrott, Stephen Hendry, Ken Doherty, Shaun Murphy (provided he isn't playing) and Steve Davis in the studio (for the earlier rounds this is within the Winter Gardens in the centre of Sheffield)

BBC's commentary team consists of John Virgo, Dennis Taylor, Rob Walker (as well as MCing the event), Steve Davis, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Shaun Murphy and Joe Perry. Others may join if eliminated (such as Jack Lisowski) and Mark Allen also commentated early in the tournament.

Eurosport's commentary team includes Neal Foulds, Dave Hendon, Mike Hallett, Philip Studd and Joe Johnson. Foulds and Hendon are often very highly regarded as excellent commentators. Alan McManus is also working for Eurosport and is excellent.

What's the BBC snooker theme?

The current theme is a revision of the classic theme "Drag Racer", remixed by Timo Baker of T Minus 50. The original "Drag Racer", by the Doug Wood Band, is the iconic (and some would also say "proper") snooker theme, and is still often heard in between frames on the BBC Red Button.

If you're after the original "Drag Racer" on CD you can get it on the compilation album The Great Sporting Experience, which has thirty original sports themes from TV and radio. It also has Rugby Special, London Marathon, both versions of Match of the Day, Ski Sunday, Darts, Wimbledon and Superstars, so it's a pretty essential purchase if you're a fan. You can buy via Amazon here -

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Great-Sporting-Experience-Various-Artists/dp/B000026KKW>

Who are those people I always see on the telly every year?

Ah, the regulars. These are generally season ticket holders who go to every single session of the World Championship. They're normally in the same seat for most if not all of the tournament and are usually mentioned during commentary from time to time. You will recognise who they are.

Watching Live At The Crucible Theatre

How do I get tickets?

Tickets are normally available from two different outlets:

The Crucible Theatre box office – <http://www.cruciblesnooker.com> - 0844 6565 147

See Tickets – <http://www.seetickets.com/>

If at all possible it is highly recommended to use the Crucible box office.

When do tickets go on sale?

For the 2023 tournament, tickets went on sale the opening day of the 2022 final. Tickets for the 2024 tournament go on sale the opening day of the 2023 final, and you must register in advance before the on-sale date to receive an exclusive link.

Register here: <https://wst.tv/2024-cazoo-world-championship-priority-ticket-window/>

Tickets for 2024 then go on general sale the second day of the final, and it's worth noting that there are often queues outside the Crucible Theatre itself as well as online when this happens - and that the tickets sell out very quickly.

Do tickets sell quickly?

Yes, and very quickly. If you want to attend for 2024, it is highly recommended that you register for the priority on sale period as above.

What about the ticket price changes?

From 2017, the ticketing prices changed so that the front few rows were allocated as "premium" tickets, charging almost double the standard ticket price. There are also "VIP" and "Century Club" seats with all sorts of packages. This was primarily move to derail the regulars and season ticket holders so that the front row would not be occupied by the same people, but it has angered many who may have gone for a front row seat for one session alone. The premium price and above includes a programme and headphones, but most fans will have the latter anyway.

I've seen session tickets sell out and then some more tickets go on sale. Why is this?

This is due to The Crucible Box Office's very fair resale scheme. If for any reason someone wishes to re-sell a ticket, they return it to the box office. The Crucible then puts it back on sale and if the ticket is re-sold, the original purchaser gets their money back minus any booking fee.

Closer to the tournament, this often does happen (notably if certain players are eliminated at the qualifying round stages). During the tournament this can also happen if a player is knocked out and friends and family have purchased for later rounds. Sometimes you can actually purchase a ticket that was offered for resale on the day of the actual session.

Is there any dress code at the Crucible?

There wasn't, as such, until 2018, as World Snooker have made some changes. In effect, football shirts or other sportswear related to football cannot be worn in the theatre. World Snooker state this: "The Event Promoter requests that no sportswear or team sport shirts are worn. If in the opinion of the Event Promoter an item of clothing is not deemed suitable to wear in the arena the person will be refused admission until such time they have found an alternative item of clothing that is deemed acceptable." This appears to have been relaxed again in recent years, but will be interesting to note.

I have a ticket for a session. Where will I be sat?

When booking a ticket via the Crucible website, the online seating plan shown is as you walk into the theatre (opposite view to the TV) - so Centre Left is Table One, Centre Right is Table Two. (the tables are indicated before you click Buy for each match which should also help)

For the two table set up, Table One are the higher numbered seats and Table Two are the lower numbered seats. The Crucible has five doors which lead you to the seating areas – Blue, Orange and Red are for Table One, Red, Purple and Green are for Table Two.

Row A is the front row and normally sells quickly. Row P is the furthest row back, but even then it's not a huge distance away from the tables due to the way that the theatre is set up. The seating plan (as shown from the TV view) is here:

<https://wst.tv/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Seating-plan.jpg>

I am a wheelchair user. What is the access like?

The Crucible is fully accessible, and on the seating plan the grey seats are spaces for wheelchair users and carers. There is also a lift from the ground floor which takes you to the foyer level and also to the upper level for the blue door entrance (the back row are moveable chairs which can be moved to create wheelchair user and carer space) and when you head through the other doors, the spaces are almost in front of you by the aisles. There are also fully accessible toilets, and the staff are normally really friendly and helpful.

Wheelchair spaces can now be booked online - or by calling the Box Office. If you live locally and turn up in person to the Box Office they have a lower counter for access. Car parking spaces are in some of the larger car parks nearby, and some on-street parking close by is available. The trams are also wheelchair accessible, so Park and Ride from Meadowhall to Cathedral station is also possible if you don't want to park in the centre of Sheffield.

Where and when can I see the players?

The players often enter and exit via the stage door, on Norfolk Street, at the side of the theatre. Sometimes they'll even go in the front entrance. It's not an exact science when to spot them though, so keep your eyes peeled. You will see some wait by the stage door to get autographs and pictures etc. The players can arrive on foot (if staying in Sheffield itself) or by taxi if staying outside Sheffield.

It's well worth noting that some players are more accommodating than others and sometimes if they are in the zone it's best leaving them be, wishing them good luck as they enter.

Where can I see Hazel Irvine and the BBC team?

Their studio is in the Winter Gardens and they then move inside the Crucible from the semi-finals onward. From the front of the Crucible Theatre, it's straight ahead of you across Tudor Square. They'll often broadcast in the afternoons, and occasionally they'll interview players too.

What facilities are available inside the Crucible Theatre?

There is a full bar available, and also a few pop up stalls that sell coffee and soft drinks. There is also a merchandising stall selling ear pieces, t-shirts, cues etc.

Please note that you are not allowed to take alcoholic drinks into the theatre - generally only tea/coffee cups with lids on, and soft drink bottles.

Can I enter / exit the theatre during a session?

The Crucible staff are normally instructed to keep the doors closed in between frames, and will only open them for a short time in between frames. Generally you will only be allowed to enter / exit the theatre either in between frames or at the mid-session interval, for your table only (in a two table setup). There's normally a fifteen minute mid-session interval which is usually enough time to go to the toilet and get a soft drink or coffee. If you are planning to have a pint, you're most likely going to miss one frame of the session.

In a two table setup, my table has finished play for the session. Can I watch the other table?

If the other table is still playing their session, normally the dividing partition is lifted at the end of the frame that the players are playing (normally in agreement with the match referee) and so you can

stay in your seat and watch. The electronic scoreboards above the tables will update you in any case, so you will be able to work out if it's in the final frame of that session or not. On very rare occasions in a break of play during a frame, the referee can instruct that the dividing partition be lifted earlier.

How far is the Crucible Theatre from Sheffield train station?

Not that far. When you leave the station front, follow the Cutting Edge sculpture uphill to a pedestrian set of lights with the Showroom cinema on the opposite left side of the road. Cross the lights and go straight up the hill towards Sheffield Hallam University. Cross a pedestrian set of lights and go uphill along Surrey Street. Tudor Square with the Crucible is to the right.

Your public transport alternative if you find the hill steep is to take the Sheffield tram from the train station. Take the purple line (terminus: Cathedral) or blue line (terminus: Malin Bridge), and get off at either Castle Square or Cathedral. Both stops are close to the Crucible.

I have a ticket for an evening session. Can I get the train home late in the evening?

It depends how far you have to go. The last trains back to major towns and cities from Sheffield during the week, according to National Rail, are as follows. Note the much later final train to Manchester especially:

Destination	Mon-Fri	Sat	Sun
Manchester	2328	2224	2216
Nottingham	2338	2342	2330
Leeds	2315	2231	2321
Derby	2330	2320	2236

Can I stay in Sheffield close to The Crucible Theatre?

Yes you can. The closest to the theatre itself is the Mercure St Paul's which has their breakfast bar area face into the Winter Gardens. Some of the BBC staff stay at this one and players have also been known to stay here. It's not cheap though as you can imagine.

Within walking distance you have chain hotels Novotel, Travelodge, Premier Inn, Best Western and Ibis which offer a reasonable rate.