

Serapong's litmus test

The Singapore Open returns this week after a three-year absence and will be held at the Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong Course. Singapore's Lam Chih Bing, who will compete in his 11th Open, takes ST through three of the pivotal holes.

HOLE 3 Par four, 439m

One of the toughest holes. With the new tee box at the back, it could play up to 452m.

- The drive is quite intimidating with jungle on both sides.
- It's at least 230m to the fairway and with a strong headwind, some of the shorter hitters can't reach it.
- But if you do make it and get a good kick, the down slope lets your ball run another 20-30m.
- The front of the green is still 180-200m from here. I'll use a five-iron.
- There's not been a fixed Sunday flag placement. Seen it front left, back right. I'll aim for the centre of the green, make par and move on.

HOLE 15 Par four, 393m

Not a long hole but with water running all the way on the left, you have to be careful.

- I'll use my three-wood, aim at the bunker on the right (about 240-250m away) and try to draw off it.
- For long hitters, if you miss right with your driver, you'll be blocked by the trees and won't have a clear shot to the green.
- From the rough or bunker, the approach is about 140-150m, which is a seven- or eight-iron for me.
- The Sunday pin is usually back left. I'll aim at the middle of the green and try to catch the slope that feeds towards the hole.

HOLE 18 Par five, 496m

How you want to play this hole really depends on how aggressive you want to be as it could decide the championship.

Conservative play

- The safe play is to aim at the right bunker with my driver. But you don't want to hit it too long as the bunker comes into play at about 260m.
- I'll lay-up with my five-iron (185m), which will carry the second group of bunkers ahead. That leaves 90m to the flag.
- With my lob wedge, I'll go straight at the pin, hit slightly over. There's a slope 4.5 metres past it which I'll use to roll the ball close to the hole.

Go-for-broke play

- The aggressive play is to aim left, bringing the lake into play. You want to be as close to the water as possible.
- I can hit about 270m with a good drive with a slight downwind. From that angle, the hole is shortened by 10-15m.
- It's maybe 215m to the front of the green. The Sunday pin is usually on the left. I'll aim right with a three or five-wood.
- Even if I'm short, it's a short chip and putt for birdie.