

US duo lead the field in Wyndham

US GOLF

AMERICAN duo Jeff Quinney and Tommy Gainey were tied for the lead after round one of the Wyndham Championship in Greensboro.

Both men made seven-under 63s, with Quinney shooting five birdies in his first seven holes before making his only bogey on the 18th. Gainey had a blemish-free round, capped by an eagle three on the fifth hole. Australia's Stuart Appleby was one stroke further back having signed for 64.

He also eagled the par-five fifth and collected four strokes on the back nine. A group of nine players were tied for fourth on four under, with England's Paul Casey, South Africa's Ernie Els and Fiji's Vijay Singh among the names.

Casey, who was ranked 147th in the FedEx Cup at the start of the tournament believes his lowly placing for that event benefited him here.

"I've got nothing to lose this week so I'm trying to put myself in a position to win this golf event. I believe I've got to be top four to seal a place for next week and there are top-10 situations, depending on what other guys do.

"I don't need to get too far ahead, don't need to start thinking about that on a Thursday. For me it's focusing on today and I did a very good job of that, actually, I didn't get too caught up in sort of worrying about FedEx stuff."

A dozen players signed for four under, including Jason Dufner, who lost in a play-off at the USPGA Championship having been set for victory in the final round.

Lawrie finds scoring touch

IRELAND'S Peter Lawrie fired a flawless round of six-under 66 on Thursday to take the lead following the opening round of the Czech Open.

Lawrie, who has succeeded before at Prosper Golf Resort with a runner-up finish last year, closed his round with three birdies in five holes to take a one-stroke lead over three players.

Only a one-time winner on the European Tour, Lawrie had a near-win at the China Open earlier this year, finishing second, and an eighth-place finish at his last event, the Irish Open. His lone victory came back in 2008 at the Open de Espana.

"No bogeys, which always helps," Lawrie said. "I played lovely, solid golf, and every chance I gave myself from short range, I holed it."

Lawrie is being chased by compatriot Damien McGrane, Victor Dubuisson and Pedro Oriol, all of whom carded five-under 67s. Shane Lowry and Mikael Lundberg share fifth at minus-four.

"The scoring conditions are perfect," McGrane said. "So it's possible to create a lot of

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chances. But creating them is one thing, converting them is quite another."

The 37-year-old Irishman Lawrie was one of the first groups out on the 10th tee Thursday, and he wasted no time getting into red figures with a birdie on the 11th.

Lawrie's only other birdie on the first nine holes came at the 14th before pitching to six feet at the par-five first for another birdie to get to minus-three.

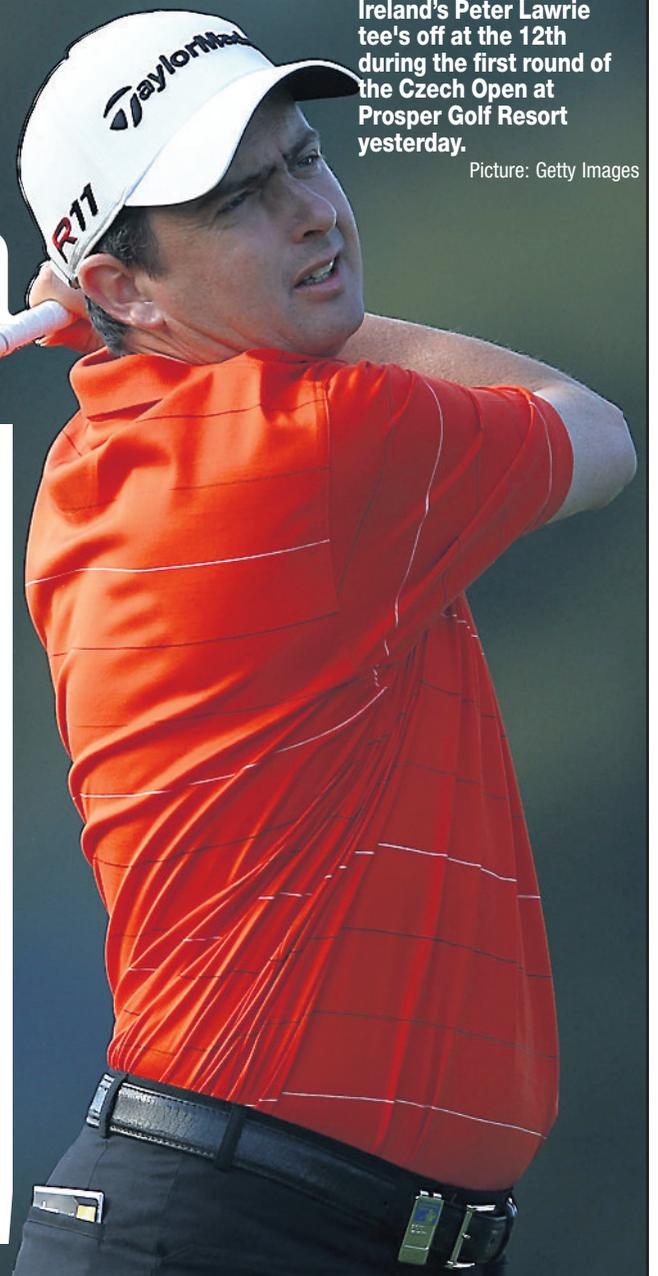
From the fifth, Lawrie had back-to-back birdies, including a 25-foot putt to get to five-under at the sixth. His approach at the eighth landed five feet from the pin and resulted in his final birdie.

"The course is playing totally different this year to last year," said Lawrie of the Miguel Angel Jimenez-designed course. "It's much softer. You're hitting your driver on pretty much every hole, and the ball's not running out in any shape or form."

Each of the players that share second all had six birdies to go with a lone bogey. Of the three, only McGrane has won previously, with a victory at the 2008 China Open and four international titles.

Ireland's Peter Lawrie tee's off at the 12th during the first round of the Czech Open at Prosper Golf Resort yesterday.

Picture: Getty Images



Verdasco pushes Nadal all the way in Ohio

SECOND seed Rafael Nadal was given a stiff workout by fellow Spaniard Fernando Verdasco but came through in three sets to reach the quarter-finals of the Western & Open Southern Open. Nadal won 7-6(5) (4)6-7 7-6(9) in three hours and 38 minutes to set up a last-eight meeting with seventh seed Mardy Fish. Nadal broke Verdasco on four occasions and was broken the same number of times, but was forced by his opponent to save six more break points. Fish earned his quarter-final

TENNIS

spot with a 7-5 7-5 defeat of 12th seed Richard Gasquet. Top seed Novak Djokovic had an easier time of it than Nadal, seeing off Radek Stepanek 6-3 6-3. Roger Federer, seeded third, was another straight sets winner - 6-4 6-1 over James Blake in 54 minutes. The remaining member of the top four, Andy Murray, settled an old score against Alexander Bogomolov - who knocked him out in the second round of

the Sony Ericsson Open in March - with a 6-2 7-5 win. Gilles Simon, rated 10th for the tournament, knocked out fifth seed David Ferrer 6-4 (3)6-7 6-4, while ninth seed Nicolas Almagro fell to eight seed Tomas Berdych 6-2 6-2. Sixth seed Gael Monfils won the remaining match 6-2 6-2 against Philipp Kohlschreiber. Four seeds fell in the women's draw. Number eight Marion Bartoli was the only one to fall to an unseeded opponent, losing 3-6 7-5 6-3 to Daniela

Hantuchova. Fifth seed Li Na was upset by 10th seed Samantha Stosur, who recorded a 6-4 3-6 6-4, win, Maria Sharapova (fourth) beat Svetlana Kuznetsova (14th) 6-2 6-3 and Jelena Jankovic bested Francesca Schiavone 6-3 5-7 6-4. Elsewhere Shuai Peng saw off Shahar Peer, Nadia Petrova beat Christina McHale and Andrea Petkovic defeated Petra Kvitova. Second seed and favourite Vera Zvonareva coasted to a 6-2 6-2 win over Petra Martic.



Rafael Nadal had it tough from fellow Spaniard Fernando Verdasco

Prepare for the odds to slash after my tip for the sash

THIS game is all about risk. Holding a docket up to the light and studying it for impurities.

Most people don't understand risk.

They are over-confident in things they have little information about and wary of things that are no danger whatsoever.

Last year, recovering from a hangover in a hotel room in Toulouse, I flicked on the television just as *Jaws* was beginning. I'd seen the film so many times the incomprehensible dialogue was not a problem and I stayed tuned in for two reasons: to see what the translation for Robert Shaw's toast of "Here's to swimmin' with bow-legged women" was ("Voici à la natation avec de femmes à jambes-bandy") and to see would the final credits be graced with the word "FIN" (they were not).

The condition I found myself in was due to the amount of beverage I had consumed the previous night and although I would recover after another 12 hour's sleep, it's worth noting that our A&E units are filled every night with people over-indulging on the sauce.

But do you know anyone who is actually afraid of a gin and tonic?

Now take sharks. There are plenty of people who are terrified of these "man-eaters" and it's mostly down to Steven Spielberg's movie.

Shark attacks always make the news headlines and this week has been no exception.

While it is certainly an awful way to die, on average, three people a year are killed by shark attacks (cobras kill around 50,000, so they're the suckers to



Robert O'Shea

THE LONGSHOT

be scared of).

And how many sharks are killed annually by humans?

Seventy-three million.

So if you are in the vicinity of a shark it is 25,000,000-1 times more likely that you will send him to meet his maker than he is to eat you.

Moving swiftly on from bow-legged women to those with lovely legs (which they all have), the Rose or Tralee festi-

al began last night and several bookies are offering odds on who is the fairest Irish maiden.

London go for three-in-a-row and favourite to stop them is the Dubai Rose (6-1), Donegal-born Grainne Boyle, who I am told is a keen triathlete.

My interest in the Race for the Rose is because I have a habit predicting the winner and collected money on Ireland's most watched TV show three times in the last decade.

Don't ask me how - I wish my talent was at poker or the gee-gees - but I just have it when it comes to Roses.

The Wexford Rose Mary Kehoe is top of the odds with the Irish bookies, but William Hill are offering 8-1 on the international softball player.

Dublin have racked up the most wins

with five and Siobheal Ní Eochaidh is 13-2 to bring another tiara back to the capital.

Next in the betting is Síle Ní Dheargain for Kerry at 10-1, but strangely the hosts have never won the title (except under the guise of the Tralee Rose in 1964, when Roses outside of Kerry were excluded).

Recommendation: While Kehoe and Boyle are justifiable favourites, I am going to go with Derry Rose Catherine Feeney. Ulster have not won a title since Belfast took their third in 1979.

This year saw the tragic death of the province's representative in 2004, Michaela Harte. It would be no surprise if the sash was to be cheered on the streets of Free Derry next Wednesday at 16-1 with Boylesports.