

Masters Tournament

Event Assessment

ZeroFox Intelligence

Introduction

The 2023 Masters Golf Tournament is slated to occur on April 6-9, 2023, in Augusta, GA. The tournament will feature players from the PGA Tour as well as the LIV Golf Tour, which will likely lead to tension between officials, fans, and players.

Security for the Masters Tournament is always very rigid, and this year is no different. The Masters has very specific rules as to what can and cannot be brought into the tournament, and local regulations also uphold these parameters. While there have been fans and groups who have expressed displeasure at the inclusion of LIV Golf Tour players in the event, due to local restrictions, no disruptive activity is anticipated in the form of protests at the actual event. In addition, while play disruptions have occurred at other tournaments, given the Masters regulations (including a strict policy against electronics), as well as the decorum that surrounds the event, these types of disruptions are highly unlikely.

The cyber risk to the tournament is currently considered to be low; no threatening commentary was observed by ZeroFox Intelligence. However, given the prominence of this sporting event, the threat can never be completely ruled out.

Fraudulent activity impacting the Masters is likely to take the form of ticketing scams, as tickets are awarded through a lottery system. In addition, local law enforcement has warned residents and attendees about parking ticket scams, which gather payments and issue fake tickets



Source: [hXXps://www.theflyinggolfer\[.\]com/listings/us-masters-2024/](https://www.theflyinggolfer.com/listings/us-masters-2024/)

Key Observations



The participation of LIV Golf players has heightened tensions for participants.



Disruptive activity is considered to be a low threat given the tournament rules and presence of law enforcement.



The cyber risk to the event is considered low, as no threatening commentary has been observed.



Augusta, Georgia, is considered to be a high-crime area, although the tournament location is considered low.



Ticketing to the tournament is awarded through a lottery system.



No terroristic threats have been observed in association with the event.

Key Findings

- While the areas surrounding the Masters Tournament are considered to be high-crime areas, the tournament itself is considered to be at low risk of criminal activity due to the specific location, as well the increased security measures in place throughout the week.
- The threat of terrorist activity targeting the event is considered to be low, and no indications of threats have been identified, although the threat can never be ruled out completely in large spectator gatherings.
- The threat of disruptive activity impacting the tournament is considered to be low; however, given the tension surrounding the presence of LIV Golf participants and the publicity surrounding the event, it cannot be ruled out completely.
- The risk of a cyberattack impacting the Masters Tournament is currently considered low; ZeroFox Intelligence did not observe any evidence in support of such an attack. Nonetheless, the risk can never be completely ruled out given the visibility surrounding a major sporting event such as the Masters.
- Ticketing for the tournament is awarded through a lottery system, and applicants have already been informed if they have been awarded tickets. Although tickets are available on reseller sites, buyers should be aware of fraudulent ticket scams, which have occurred previously with this tournament.

SCOPE NOTE ZeroFox Intelligence is derived from a variety of sources, including—but not limited to—curated open-source accesses, vetted social media, proprietary data sources, and direct access to threat actors and groups through covert communication channels. Information relied upon to complete any report cannot always be independently verified. As such, ZeroFox applies rigorous analytic standards and tradecraft in accordance with best practices and includes caveat language and source citations to clearly identify the veracity of our Intelligence reporting and substantiate our assessments and recommendations. All sources used in this particular Intelligence product were identified prior to 5:00 PM (DST) on April 3, 2023; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.



Crime

The statistics provided by local law enforcement indicate the immediate area (one-mile radius) surrounding the Augusta National Golf Club is considered relatively safe with little to no reported violent crime in 2022 and 2023. However, the greater Augusta area is considered a high-crime area by multiple sources.[1,2] Additionally, local law enforcement statistics indicate a noticeable YTD increase in incidents of Aggravated Assault-Gun, Homicide, Rape, and Robbery.

1-Mile Radius of 2604 Washington Rd.		
Violent Crimes	2022	2023
Aggravated Assault	2	
Aggravated Assault-Gun	3	
Robbery - Street	2	
Total	7	

1-Mile Radius of 2604 Washington Rd.			
Property Crimes	2022	2023	Total
Auto Theft	22	2	24
Burglary 1st	11	3	14
Burglary 2nd	16	0	16
Larceny from Auto	19	5	24
Total	68	10	78

Violent and property crime statistics within a one-mile radius of Augusta National Golf Club

Source: Richmond County Sheriff's Office

Overall, violent crime for Richmond County from January to March 2023 has increased by 3 percent when compared to the first three months of 2022. Crime statistics indicate that Aggravated Assault with a Gun increased from 57 (2022) to 60 (2023). Further, homicides went up in 2023 by one case, and the county investigated eight rape cases in 2023 compared to two cases in 2022. Finally, Richmond County reported one kidnapping case in 2023, which brings the total of crimes investigated so far in 2023 to 121.

Violent Crimes	2022	2023	Total	Percent Change
Aggravated Assault	12	9	21	-25%
Aggravated Assault-Gun	57	60	117	5%
Homicide	5	6	11	20%
Kidnapping	0	1	1	0%
Rape	2	8	10	300%
Robbery - Business	13	5	18	-61%
Robbery - Other	8	16	24	100%
Robbery - Residence	9	9	18	11%
Robbery - Street	12	7	19	-42%
Total	118	121	239	3%

Violent crime statistics YTD for the entire Richmond County area (January 1, 2022–March 15, 2022, and January 1, 2023–March 15, 2023)

Source: Richmond County Sheriff's Office

Richmond County saw a decrease in property crimes from January to March 2023 as compared to the same period last year in 2022. Auto thefts decreased by 5 percent, while burglary in the second degree increased by 56 percent. Overall, property crimes have dropped by 26 percent from 2022 to 2023.

Crime	2022	2023	Percent Change
AUTO THEFT	110	105	-5%
BURGLARY 1ST	88	88	0%
BURGLARY 2ND	45	70	56%
LARCENY FROM AUTO	302	140	-54%
Total	545	403	-26%

Property crime statistics YTD for the entire Richmond County area (January 1, 2022–March 15, 2022, and January 1, 2023–March 15, 2023)

Source: Richmond County Sheriff's Office

According to CBS News in 2022, Augusta, GA, ranked #32 for the highest murder rate per capita in the United States. These rates are calculated using the latest statistics available—the FBI's 2019 Crime in the United States data, as well as data culled directly from city police officials and the U.S. Census Bureau.[3]

Terrorism

ZeroFox has identified no evidence of terrorist threats made against the Masters Tournament. Totemic targets of this nature with a global audience and that involve the mass-gathering of spectators represent an attractive target for terrorist actors. While there have been no previous incidents against the Masters, attacks against sporting events have occurred globally, including in Atlanta in 1996 and in Paris in 2015.

Assessment:

- While the areas surrounding the Masters Tournament are considered to be high-crime areas, the tournament itself is considered to be at low risk of criminal activity in light of that specific location, as well the increased security measures in place throughout the week.
- The threat of terrorist activity targeting the event is considered to be low, and no indications of threats have been identified; however, the threat can never be ruled out completely in large spectator gatherings.

Recommendations:

- When in the Augusta area (not just at the golf course), be mindful of surroundings, and travel in groups rather than by oneself whenever possible.
- If suspicious activity is observed, report it to law enforcement officials.

FOOTNOTES

[1] <https://crimegrade.org/safest-places-in-augusta-ga-metro/>
[2] <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ga/augusta/crime>
[3] <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/murder-map-deadliest-u-s-cities/35/>

Boycott and Disruptive Activity

Boycott and disruptive activity planned for the Masters Tournament center around the decision to allow LIV Golf Tour players to participate in the tournament. Legal disputes between the PGA Tour and LIV Golf are continuing, and fans remain divided over this participation. As a result, several social media posts have called for viewers to boycott watching the tournament or to at least boycott watching LIV golfers' participation. However, this is not anticipated to have a major or disruptive impact on the event.

Disruptive activity in the form of protests had been indicated by 9/11 Families United, a group made up of September 11, 2001, survivors and family members. The group had publicly stated in December 2022 that they would be protesting at the "door step" of the Masters Tournament due to the LIV Golf circuit's ties to Saudi Arabia.[4] However, as part of local restrictions for security during the tournament, protests are not permitted; thus, no protest activity is anticipated at the Masters Tournament, although 9/11 Families United is planning a protest in Atlanta during Masters week.[5]

Physical Security Preparations

Security at the Masters Tournament is multi-pronged, with local law enforcement taking the lead. While security is primarily local due to their familiarity with the area, local law enforcement also liaise with larger state patrols and agencies such as the North Augusta Department of Public Safety, as well as private security.[6] Security for the golf tournament also has specific rules in place on what is and is not permissible on the grounds. Most notably, no electronics are allowed; this limits the attention that a would-be disrupter would receive should they take action during the tournament.[7]

Georgia Firearms and Weapon Permits

In 2022, the State of Georgia enacted permitless carry legislation that authorizes any "lawful weapons carrier" to carry handguns openly or concealed in most public spaces without any permit required. A person is a lawful weapons carrier if they would be eligible for a weapons carry license under Georgia law (whether or not they have a license) and are not otherwise prohibited by law from possessing a handgun or long gun; if they are a resident of any other state who would otherwise be eligible to obtain a weapons carry license under Georgia law but for the residency requirement; or if they are licensed to carry a weapon in any other state.

Additionally, any person 21 or older or 18 to 20 if they carry proof they have completed basic training and are active military/an honorably discharged veteran can carry a firearm openly or concealed without any type of permit or license.[8]

Course Intrusion Risk

ZeroFox notes that there was a recent course intrusion at an Arizona golf course. On February 10, 2023, an individual wearing nothing besides his underwear rushed onto the green on the 16th hole at the Waste Management Phoenix Open in Scottsdale, AZ. The individual danced on the flag pole before dodging security staff and leading multiple security officers on a foot pursuit down the fairway of another hole. The trespasser was eventually taken into custody after jumping into a pond on the golf course.

Streaker steals the show at 16th hole of Waste Management Phoenix Open

The 16th hole is maybe the most notorious hole in golf

<https://www.cbssports.com/golf/news/phenix-open-streaker-released-from-jail-after-five-days-fired-from-day-job/>

A similar incident happened on the same hole in 2018, when a naked individual rushed onto the course. The individual danced and rolled around for nearly two full minutes uninterrupted with no visible event security presence nearby.[9]

Phoenix Open streaker released from jail after five days, fired from day job

It was not the best week for this Arizona man



By Kyle Porter Feb 7, 2018 at 12:01 pm ET · 1 min read

Source:

<https://www.cbssports.com/golf/news/phenix-open-streaker-released-from-jail-after-five-days-fired-from-day-job/>

These intrusions did not appear to have any political or protest-related purpose; rather, they appear to have been attention seeking. While ZeroFox Intelligence has not identified any plans to interrupt the Masters Tournament, the risk of a course intrusion remains, although the likelihood is low given security at and the decorum of the event.[10]

Assessment:

- The threat of disruptive activity impacting the tournament is considered to be low; however, given the tension surrounding the presence of LIV Golf participants and the publicity surrounding the event, it cannot be ruled out completely.

Recommendations:

- Should any disruptive activity occur, attendees should follow security instructions as well as look to relocate to a different area.

FOOTNOTES

- <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/golf/masters-protest-911-families-liv-28785283>
- <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/columnist/brennan/2023/03/01/masters-9-11-families-rip-augusta-saudi-liv-golfers/11675231002/>
- <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/392782-9-11-families-will-protest-saudi-liv-golf-tour-on-masters-week>
- <https://www.cbssports.com/golf/news/phenix-open-streaker-released-from-jail-after-five-days-fired-from-day-job/>
- <https://golf.com/news/2023-masters-guarantees-drama-liv-golf/>
- <https://www.augustachronicle.com/story/news/local/2023/03/26/more-law-enforcement-brought-in-to-patrol-masters-tournament-traffic/69980419007/>
- <https://www.augustachronicle.com/story/news/local/2023/04/02/rules-patrons-must-follow-at-the-2023-masters-tournament-augusta-national/7001788007/>

Cybersecurity Threats

ZeroFox Intelligence has not identified any specific cybersecurity threats targeting the Masters Tournament. While a cyberattack during the tournament is unlikely, the tournament does represent a lucrative target due to its attendee and membership lists and the fact that it does not disclose its income, holdings, or ticket sales.[11] Over the past few years, several golf clubs all over the world have been hit with cyberattacks, including a 2021 ransomware attack on Wentworth Club in Surrey, England; a 2018 ransomware attack on the PGA; and a 2022 hacking of a golf club executive, which resulted in the executive's contact list receiving expletive-filled emails.[12,13] As a result, many golf clubs have taken proactive steps to shore up their infrastructure in order to prevent similar attacks from occurring.

Fraud and Scams

Ticketing at the Masters Tournament is based on a lottery system, and there are 20,000 tickets available. If applicants do not receive tickets through the lottery, they may be available via secondary means, such as online resellers.[14] However, buyers should be aware that fraudsters may also look to take advantage of the limited ticket availability to market fake tickets. The Masters Tournament did experience an issue back in 2019 where a family attempted to circumvent the lottery system, which resulted in charges against them.

The Richmond County Sheriff's office has also warned residents and attendees about parking scams in the area; fake parking tickets are being issued, and the scammers are accessing the provided payment information to take advantage of the victims.[15]

Assessment:

- The risk of a cyberattack impacting the Masters Tournament is currently considered low; ZeroFox Intelligence did not observe any evidence in support of such an attack. Nonetheless, the risk can never be completely ruled out given the visibility surrounding a major sporting event such as the Masters.
- Ticketing for the tournament is awarded through a lottery system, and applicants have already been informed if they have been awarded tickets. Although tickets are available on reseller sites, buyers should be aware of fraudulent ticket scams, which have occurred previously with this tournament.

Recommendations:

- Anyone looking to attend the event should be wary of scams by sellers indicating that they have tickets. While ticket-holders can legitimately sell them online via resellers, the closer it gets to the tournament, the higher the prices typically are—as is the prevalence of fraud.
- Should attendees receive any sort of parking infraction, contact local law enforcement prior to paying the indicated amount.

FOOTNOTES

- [11] <https://golfincmagazine.com/content/risin-cyber-threats-demand-cybersecurity-measures-golf-clubs-2/>
[12] <https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/the-pga-possibly-infected-with-the-bitpaymer-ransomware/>
[13] <https://handgunlaw.us/states/georgia.pdf>
[14] https://en.as.com/other_sports/is-it-possible-to-get-tickets-for-the-2023-masters-n/
[15] <https://www.wfxt.com/story/48523820/sheriffs-office-warns-about-parking-ticket-scam-in-downtown-augusta>

APPENDIX: Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination

TLP: RED

HOW IT IS USED

Sources may use TLP: RED when information cannot be effectively acted upon by additional parties and could lead to impacts on a party's privacy, reputation, or operations if misused.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Recipients may NOT share TLP: RED with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.

TLP: AMBER

HOW IT IS USED

Sources may use TLP: AMBER when information requires support to be effectively acted upon but carries risks to privacy, reputation, or operations if shared outside of the organizations involved.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Recipients may ONLY share TLP: AMBER information with members of their own organization and its clients, but only on a need-to-know basis to protect their organization and its clients and prevent further harm.

Note that TLP: AMBER+STRICT restricts sharing to the organization only.

TLP: GREEN

HOW IT IS USED

Sources may use TLP: GREEN when information is useful for the awareness of all participating organizations, as well as with peers within the broader community or sector.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Recipients may share TLP: GREEN information with peers and partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.

TLP: CLEAR

HOW IT IS USED

Sources may use TLP: CLEAR when information carries minimal or no risk of misuse in accordance with applicable rules and procedures for public release.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Recipients may share TLP: CLEAR information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.

About ZeroFox

ZeroFox (Nasdaq: ZFOX), an enterprise software-as-a-service leader in external cybersecurity, has redefined security outside the corporate perimeter on the internet, where businesses operate and threat actors thrive. The ZeroFox platform combines advanced AI analytics, digital risk and privacy protection, full-spectrum threat intelligence, and a robust portfolio of breach, incident, and takedown response capabilities to expose and disrupt phishing and fraud campaigns, botnet exposures, credential theft, impersonations, data breaches, and physical threats that target your brands, domains, people, and assets. Join thousands of customers—including some of the largest public-sector organizations, as well as finance, media, technology, and retail companies—to stay ahead of adversaries and address the entire lifecycle of external cyber risks.

See ZeroFox in action

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