



## 2009 Shell Houston Open

(The 15<sup>th</sup> of 37 events in the PGA TOUR Regular Season)

Humble, TX                      March 30-April 5, 2009    FedExCup Points: 500                      Purse: \$5,700,000  
Redstone Golf Club-Tournament Course                      Par/Yards: 36-36—72/7,457

### First-Round Notes – Friday, April 3, 2009

*Weather: Cool temperatures in the morning reaching mid 70s in the afternoon with sunny skies and NE winds 5-10 mph.*

**The first round was completed at 5:15 p.m. Friday after being suspended at 12:50 p.m. Thursday due to high winds.**

The last time play was suspended due to high winds during play was round-four of the 2007 Verizon Heritage at Hilton Head. Boo Weekley was the eventual winner that week.

Nicholas Thompson, Briny Baird and John Senden shot 7-under 65 to share the lead after the first round of the Shell Houston Open.

Baird's round of 65 included seven birdies and an eagle at the 464-yard, par-4 sixth hole. Thompson posted eight birdies and a lone bogey at the par-3, 7<sup>th</sup> hole. Senden recorded a bogey-free 65 with seven birdies.

Thompson has held the first-round lead/co-lead once, Senden twice and Baird three times. Only Senden has gone on to a victory after holding the first-round lead/co-lead (2006/John Deere Classic).

Thompson played 36 tournaments on the PGA TOUR in 2008, the most of any player. This is Thompson's 11<sup>th</sup> event of the season, matching Brendon de Jonge, Alex Cejka and Johnson Wagner, the Shell Houston Open defending champion, with the most starts this year.

Thomson was keen to get an update on his sister Alexis' progress at the Kraft Nabisco Championship before starting the second round almost immediately after completing the first round. Alexis, who turned 14 two months ago, scored 72-72 and is in the top-20 halfway through the first LPGA major championship of the year.

Six players are tied for fourth at 6-under 66 – Paul Casey, Tommy Armour III, Scott Piercy, D.A. Points, James Nitties and Colt Knost.

James Nitties, the 26-year-old Australian, posted a seven-birdie, one-bogey, 6-under 66. It is his third-lowest round of the season (62/50<sup>th</sup> Bob Hope Classic, 65/FBR Open). Nitties finished second to Harrison Frazar at the 2008 PGA TOUR Qualifying Tournament and has already earned two top-10 finishes on TOUR (T4/FBR Open, T6 Mayakoba Golf Classic).

Six Australians have won the Shell Houston Open with Bruce Crampton and Stuart Appleby winning twice. There are 14 Australians in the field this week. Senden is the leading Australian after the first round. Appleby shot 70.

England's Paul Casey reeled-off four consecutive birdies (holes 15-18) in the middle of the first round to post 6-under 66. No European has ever won the Shell Houston Open. Casey's best PGA TOUR finish is second at the 2009 WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship.

Three players – Briny Baird, Billy Mayfair and Bubba Watson – have qualified for the Masters next week solely on their performance in the 2008 FedExCup. Baird (65) and Mayfair (70) are playing this week. Geoff Ogilvy has a 51-point lead

over Phil Mickelson in the FedExCup. Three players could pass Ogilvy (67) with a victory this week – Mickelson (77), Dustin Johnson (75) and Steve Stricker (72).

Colt Knost, a 2008 Nationwide Tour graduate and Dallas, TX resident started his opening round at the 10<sup>th</sup> hole and stormed to 6-under after eight holes with birdies at 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16 before a bogey at 18 derailed his momentum. Knost finished with 6-under 66.

Fred Couples, the United States Team Presidents Cup captain (1-under through seven holes when play was suspended Thursday) posted 4-under 68, including four birdies in a five-hole stretch (1, 2, 4 and 5). The University of Houston graduate is trying to add to his already impressive record at the Shell Houston Open. After missing the cut here in his first start (1981) Couples has made 15 consecutive cuts, with five top-10s, including an emotional win in 2003.

Former president George H.W. Bush was on site Friday and dined with Justin Leonard (68) and Davis Love III (73) at the completion of their round. Bush will be the ninth recipient of the PGA Tour Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding contributions to the game. He will be honored as part of a tribute to the military May 6 at the TPC Sawgrass, the day before the first round of THE PLAYERS Championship. President Bush, the honorary chairman of The First Tee since its inception in 1997, will be the first person outside the golf community to receive the award. Past recipients have been players or administrators: Gene Sarazen, Byron Nelson, Arnold Palmer, Sam Snead, Jack Burke Jr., Pete Dye, Deane Beman and Jack Nicklaus.

Speaking of Leonard, the Dallas, TX native has back-to-back top-10s (T4/2001, T6/2002) at the Shell Houston Open and is making his 14<sup>th</sup> appearance in the tournament. Leonard posted a bogey-free 68.

Defending champion, Johnson Wagner, (1-over through six holes when play was suspended Thursday) posted 2-under 70 when he bogeyed his final hole. The round marks Wagner's 15<sup>th</sup> sub-par round of the season.

Phil Mickelson shot 5-over 77 without making a birdie. The last time Mickelson recorded a birdie-free round was a 4-over 74 during the first round of the 2007 AT&T National in July, eventually missing the cut.

The Shell Houston Open has had 12 international champions, winning a total of 16 tournaments since 1946. A total of 39 players from 16 different countries (excluding the USA) will tee it up this week. Winners at the Shell Houston Open have hailed from Argentina, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and South Africa, but none from Europe.

The par-four, 488-yard, 18th hole at Redstone GC Tournament Course is one of 30 holes in the Kodak Challenge, celebrating beautiful holes and memorable moments on the PGA TOUR. In 2009, 30 PGA TOUR tournaments will feature a designated Kodak Challenge hole. Players must play at least 18 of the 30 Kodak Challenge holes throughout the season to compete for \$1 million and the Kodak Challenge trophy. A player's lowest score relative to par on his best 18 Kodak challenge holes will be counted. The player with the lowest cumulative score relative to par wins.

Texan Chad Campbell birdied the 18<sup>th</sup> to move into the co-lead of the Kodak Challenge.

Redstone's 18<sup>th</sup> hole was the third most difficult finishing hole on the PGA TOUR last year. Oakland Hills CC (South) for the PGA Championship was No. 1 followed by the 18<sup>th</sup> at TPC Sawgrass for THE PLAYERS Championship.

Last year, the 18<sup>th</sup> hole at Redstone ranked the most difficult for the week averaging 4.389 with a total of 29 birdies. In the first round this year 25 birdies were recorded at the 18<sup>th</sup> hole.

First round scoring average:	Front nine	Back nine	Total
	36.413	35.552	71.965

The early wave scoring average was almost three-strokes higher than the late wave scoring average – 73.35 to 70.56.

Bill Lunde withdrew with illness before beginning the first round and was replaced by James Oh (77). Chris Couch withdrew during round one with a shoulder injury.

**For more information please visit [www.pgatourmedia.com](http://www.pgatourmedia.com)**