



2009 The Honda Classic

(The 10th of 37 events in the PGA TOUR Regular Season)

Palm Beach Gardens, FL March 5-8, 2009
PGA National Resort & Spa

FedExCup Points: 500
Par/Yards: 35-35—70/7,158

Purse: \$5,600,000

First-Round Notes – Thursday, March 5, 2009

Weather: Partly cloudy. High of 72. Winds E/NE 15-25 mph.

Play was suspended due to darkness at 6:30 p.m., with nine players yet to complete their opening round. Those players will be back in position at 7:45 a.m. on Friday, with the second round beginning as scheduled at 7:00 a.m.

Robert Allenby posted a 4-under 66 on Thursday to take the clubhouse lead at The Honda Classic by one stroke over Stewart Cink, Charlie Wi, Jeff Overton, Angel Cabrera, Will MacKenzie and Sergio Garcia.

Four-under 66 represents the highest opening-round lead in relation to par in a non-Major Championship since Retief Goosen led the WGC-Bridgestone Invitational with the same score.

Without any players capable of surpassing Allenby when first-round play resumes on Friday, this will represent the fourth time in his career (311 starts) that he has held at least a share of the opening-round lead. Most recently, he carried the 18-hole lead on to a T7 finish at the 2008 British Open. His other leads led to a T3 finish at the 2007 WGC-CA Championship and a T8 showing at the 2007 Bob Hope Chrysler Classic.

Robert Allenby is well on his way to posting his 30th consecutive made cut, which would place him in a tie for the TOUR lead with Tiger Woods. Allenby is making his ninth start at this event, with three top-5 finishes (T5-2007, T4-2008, T4-2004) to his credit.

Six players sit just one shot behind Allenby's leading score. Listed below is the number of career appearances they have made at The Honda Classic (prior to 2009) and their best finish here: Charlie Wi (three starts, T13-2007), Jeff Overton (two starts, MC in 2006 & 2008), Stewart Cink (three starts, T12-1998), Angel Cabrera (three starts, T21-2002), Will MacKenzie (three starts, T22-2007) and Sergio Garcia (one start, T43-2008).

Shaun Micheel, making his first TOUR start since having left shoulder surgery after missing the cut last year in Memphis, opened with an even-par 70. The winner of the 2003 PGA Championship has 13 events to earn \$694,924, which coupled with 2008 earnings of \$157,828, would equal No. 125 from the 2008 money list and earn a Major Medical Extension status for the remainder of the 2009 season.

Charlie Wi posted five birdies in a row (Nos. 18-4) on his way to a 3-under 67. It fell just one shy of the tournament's best birdie streak of six, set by Fred Couples in the first round in 1985.

The last first-round leader/co-leader to carry that lead to the winner's circle here was Justin Leonard in 2003, when he carded an opening 63 en route to a one-shot win over Davis Love III and Chad Campbell.

The first-round leader/co-leader has gone on to win four of eight stroke-play events on the PGA TOUR this season, most recently by Phil Mickelson at the Northern Trust Open.

Defending champion Ernie Els, making his sixth career start at The Honda Classic, opened with a 3-over 73. He is looking to become just the second player to win the Honda Classic in back-to-back years (Jack Nicklaus, 1976-78).

Past champions of The Honda Classic participating this week include Ernie Els (73), Mark Wilson (75), Todd Hamilton (72), Justin Leonard (70), Matt Kuchar (71), Dudley Hart (WD during first round), Mark Calcavecchia (74), Stuart Appleby (74), Tim Herron (72) and John Huston (72).

Angel Cabrera's 3-under 67 was the only bogey-free round on Thursday.

As it stands right now, just 27 of 144 players are slated to break par during the first round, with Erik Compton and Jason Caron (both 1-under through 16 holes) still with work to do. Compton, a two-time heart transplant recipient, posted a triple-bogey on the par-4 11th hole (his second hole of the day), but bounced back with birdies on Nos. 13, 1, 2 and 3.

With 134 rounds posted, the par-4 first hole has played the easiest with a 3.731 average, while the par-4 sixth hole was the toughest at 4.530 – yielding just six birdies.

There was just one eagle posted on Thursday, with Scott Piercy performing the honors at the par-5 18th hole.

Steve Elkington withdrew prior to the start of the first round with an illness. He was replaced by Matt Weibring, who struggled to an 8-over 78.

Dudley Hart withdrew during the round with a back injury.