



DAP Championship



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 21, 2017

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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Score
1	Nicholas Lindheim	64 (-6)
	Matt Atkins	64 (-6)
3	Andrew Putnam	65 (-5)
	Brett Stegmaier	65 (-5)

Nicholas Lindheim and Matt Atkins open with 6-under 64s to take the lead at the DAP Championship

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Nicholas Lindheim and Matt Atkins posted a pair of opening 6-under 64s to take the 18-hole lead at the DAP Championship, the third of four Web.com Tour Finals events. After beginning on the back nine, Lindheim recorded the only eagle of the day at the par-4 10th, holing a 96-yard approach shot on his opening hole to get his round rolling and then rolled in four more birdies for an opening 6-under 29. Atkins' eagle came on his last hole of the day, stripping a 5-iron to 10 feet at the par-5 ninth, which he holed to tie Lindheim for the lead.

Lindheim has made just one cut in his last five starts on the PGA TOUR and Web.com Tour combined, but form doesn't matter when he shows up to a course that fits his eye like Canterbury Golf Club does. A year ago in his first start at the former major championship host, he played his way into a four-way playoff on his way to a T2 finish, and he found similar form Thursday.

"I think I read the greens really well, and I think that's first and foremost," Lindheim said. "Secondly is just being comfortable in what I'm doing."

Lindheim, who finished 197th in the FedExCup standings as a rookie on TOUR, had been frustrated enough with his play recently that the self-taught player brought in a coach, Brian Creggan, he had seen every now and then on a more full-time basis the last couple of weeks to help coach and caddie for him the home stretch in order to try to regain his TOUR card. He thinks it has freed him up to pick a line and just swing down the line. The work has mostly been on his setup, but it has helped in his short game and game management as well.

"Well, as we all know, golf is hard, and I've been struggling a little bit. It's nice to have him with my golf swing, short game, pretty much any aspect, he's overseeing it, and it's nice to know that what I'm doing is proper."

For a self-taught player, the fear is always that a coach will force them to get too technical and they'll regress even further. He was concerned, too, but he didn't see much of a downside.

"I think it all boils down to how much information you can take and what can they say without it being too technical, and that's the thing I've always been scared of is being too technical, and that's something that he's done a great job

with me with,” Lindheim said. “I was struggling so bad that it couldn’t have gotten worse. I called him because I was playing bad and not playing my game.”

Atkins arrived in a similar slump. Despite locking up his PGA TOUR card for next season at the Regular Season-ending WinCo Foods Portland Open presented by Kraft Heinz, he’d missed the cut in three of his last four starts on the Web.com Tour. He found something at last week’s Albertsons Boise Open presented by Kraft Nabisco, though, that had him thinking his game was due for the type of turnaround he showed Thursday.

“I’ve been struggling for quite a while,” Atkins said. “It’s kind of tough to admit because it makes my caddie, Chris, right, but he’s been heckling me for a while telling me to get my lie angles checked on my clubs and I guess I was being lazy; I was blaming me versus blaming my equipment. I went and got them checked in Boise and they were maybe 2-3 degrees flat, which is significantly flat for me because I’m a little bit upright.”

After getting his lies changed in Boise, he thought there was a hangover of sorts where some of the swing errors that he’d started to adjust to the lie angles remained, but he arrived in Boise confident that he could correct them. He did Thursday with his best score since the third round of the Digital Ally Open in late July.

“It sounds kind of silly that something like that can make a difference, but that’s a significant difference in the way you’re set up and the way you hit a shot. So I came in here with a lot of confidence even though I missed the cut in Boise and didn’t score well on an easier golf course than this. But I just came in here with a lot of determination to play well this week. It’s been a while since I’ve been in contention and that’s what we all want.”

More than his ball striking, though, it was his putting that was the star of the show Thursday. He hit 11 of 18 greens but needed only 23 putts, tying Beau Hossler for the lowest amount in the field, to get around Canterbury.

“I’ve always felt like I’ve been a really good putter and that’s what I’ve been struggling with a lot,” Atkins said. “Kind of going back to the club stuff, the way I had to set up to see the club square, it was more shaft lean and a little more shut. It’s been a while since I’ve putted well, and I’m not used to missing the hole from 10 feet and in, and that’s what I’ve been really struggling with all summer. I’ve been hitting putts from 8-10 feet and not even sniffing the hole. So it’s been nice to have a good two weeks of putting.”

Despite having his TOUR card locked up, there’s still a lot on the line for Atkins in the Finals. At No. 21 on the Regular Season money list, he knew he needed to play well in the Finals to move up the final Priority Ranking and ensure that he’d have a spot in the field in each of the fall events.

“These four events are so huge, even for a guy like me that’s finished inside the top 25. I think no matter what position you are on this Tour, you feel like you have to play really good, and you’re never secure. Even Chesson (Hadley) who separated himself, he still has to go out and play good golf and get that No. 1 spot. Where I’m at on the Priority Ranking, that’s not going to get you into all the fall events. I don’t want to miss an event out there. I want to be in as many events as I can, and be able to pick the weeks that I take off.”

Andrew Putnam and Brett Stegmaier are one shot back entering the second round after a pair of 5-under 65s.

Thursday Notes:

* Thursday weather: Mostly sunny; High of 85; Wind N 6-12 mph.

* This week’s purse is \$1M with \$180,000 awarded to the champion.

* This is the third tournament in the Web.com Tour Finals, a series of four events that will conclude at the Web.com Tour Championship in Atlantic Beach, Fla., Sept. 25-Oct. 1. Twenty-five PGA TOUR cards were awarded last week following the WinCo Foods Portland Open presented by Kraft Heinz. An additional 25 cards are up for grabs during the four Finals events, as well as positioning for all 50 cards.

* Roger Sloan had his first child, Leighton, a baby girl, on Tuesday afternoon in Houston but made it in time for his tee time Thursday. He opened with a 4-under 66 in his first round since becoming a dad.

- * Lindheim hit 12 of 14 fairways and 16 of 18 greens Thursday, which tied the best in the field for both statistics.
- * Mexico's Roberto Diaz, Carlos Ortiz, and Abraham Ancer are giving \$100 per birdie and \$200 per eagle to earthquake disaster relief in their native country. Ortiz had five birdies, Diaz added two, and Ancer failed to make a birdie Thursday night.
- * Ryan Armour, who was born in nearby Akron, Ohio, opened with a 4-under 66. Armour missed the cut in his only prior appearance at the DAP Championship with rounds of 72-69 in 2016.
- * The lowest round in DAP Championship history is Bobby Wyatt's opening 7-under 63 a year ago. 2016 winner Bryson DeChambeau was one shot back after 18 holes a year ago after shooting a 6-under 64.
- * Corey Connors, who went to nearby Kent State, opened with a 1-under 69 and is five shots back of the lead.
- * This is the third year of the Finals format and it's difficult to estimate exactly how much money it will take to finish in the top-25 on the Finals money list and collect one of the remaining 25 PGA TOUR cards that will be handed out in a few weeks.

Here's how much money the No. 25 man on the money list earned in each of the past two years:

2013	No. 25	Bobby Gates	\$33,650.00
2014	No. 25	Eric Axley	\$36,311.66
2015	No. 25	Rob Oppenheim	\$32,206.00
2016	No. 24	Tim Wilkinson*	\$27,425.00

*denotes three events played (Web.com Tour Championship was cancelled)

Scoring Averages at the par-70 Canterbury Golf Club:

	Front 9	Back 9	Total	Cumulative
R1:	35.008	35.916	70.924	

HIGHLIGHTS AND INTERVIEWS from today's play are available via the following FTP site:

website: <https://moveit.pgatourhq.com> <<https://moveit.pgatourhq.com/>>

Username: webcom_Highlights

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* First click on "FOLDER" on the top left of the main page. From there, navigate to the following folders:
/Home/Highlights and then locate the event folder of your choice.

* All footage is HD and use is free.

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