



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Sebastian Munoz	64 (-8)
	Maverick McNealy	
3	Edward Loar	65 (-7)
	Ben Kohles	
5	Five players tied at	67 (-5)

Sebastian Munoz and Maverick McNealy claim early lead at Web.com Tour's El Bosque Mexico Championship by Innova

LEON, GTO, Mexico – Making the transition from college golf to the professional ranks can prove to be a challenge for even the most accomplished golfers but for Stanford University standout Maverick McNealy, there's no challenge too big to tackle. In his first professional start on the Web.com Tour, the California native posted an opening-round 8-under 64 at the El Bosque Mexico Championship by Innova to tie Tour winner Sebastian Munoz for the 18-hole lead. Web.com Tour veterans Edward Loar and Ben Kohles sit one back of the duo.

McNealy carded nine birdies and only one bogey during play Thursday at El Bosque Country Club to tie the tournament record for lowest opening-round score. While all aspects of his game seemed to be in perfect form, it was the putter that proved to be the true distinguishing factor for the 2015 Haskins Award winner, who only needed 22 putts to navigate the Mexican terrain.

"This was probably one of my top-10 putting rounds ever," the 22-year-old commented. "It's exciting because I think when I'm putting well, that's my biggest weapon."

McNealy has made five starts on the PGA TOUR this season, with his best finish coming at the Farmers Insurance Open (T29). Though McNealy says that experience has given him a level of comfort with his game he might not have had before, he claims his stress-free round today came because his entrance into this week's field was something he himself had earned (McNealy finished T10 at the 2017 Web.com Tour Qualifying Tournament).

"This was the first round I've played where it's been status that I've earned," McNealy remarked after play. "Not playing on a sponsors exemption, I think that adds a certain amount of comfort. If you're comfortable and confident on the golf course, it's going to shape up to be a good day, and I was happy with today."

Joining McNealy atop the leaderboard is Bogota, Colombia, native Sebastian Munoz. Munoz opened his 2017 Web.com Tour Season in Mexico, holding the 18-hole lead before eventually carding a solo-second place finish.

The 25-year-old, who entered the week No. 39 on the Regular Season money list, credits his success in Leon to the nature of the course.

"I really like it," Munoz said of the Steve Newgent design. "It kind of tests you off the tee, and it just invites you to play aggressively, which I like."

Aggressive is exactly how the University of North Texas alum played Thursday. After paring his opening hole, Munoz picked up his first birdie on the par-4 second. He went on to card four more birdies on the front nine, including one on the par-4 ninth, a hole which played the second-hardest of any test on the Web.com Tour schedule in 2017. Munoz made the turn at 6-under 31 before picking up his first bogey of the day at No. 13. A second bogey on the following hole didn't discourage Munoz, however, as he closed out his round with three-consecutive birdies on the closing stretch.

"It's important to start well," Munoz remarked regarding the round. "Just to position yourself and make a move whenever you can. I'm happy with today's round. There is still a lot of golf left to play, so I'm just staying positive and take it one day at a time."

After finishing T47 at the Club Colombia Championship in his hometown of Bogota, Munoz spent two weeks back in his home country, spending time with family and friends before jetting off to Dallas, Texas, to spend a week practicing and preparing for this week in Mexico.

While Munoz was working on his swing in Dallas, Web.com Tour veteran Edward Loar was also hard at work in the city, though instead of working on the links, he was hard at work at home, helping his wife take care of the couple's 6-year-old triplets, Collins, James and Liam.

"When I'm at home, I'm mostly a dad and a husband," Loar said of his off-weeks. "I'll get my work done, but I mostly do that since I spend so much time out here. I was gone for 34 days, so I really needed a break, like most guys probably, especially the ones with families, so it was nice to get away."

University of Virginia alum Ben Kohles also used the time to step away from the game for a little bit, instead choosing to celebrating his bachelor party with friends in Austin, Texas.

Time away served both players well as they enter Friday just one-stroke back of the leaders.

THURSDAY NOTES:

- * Thursday weather: Mostly Sunny, High: 83, Winds: W/NW 4-8 mph.
- * This week's purse is \$650,000, with \$117,000 going to the champion.
- * This week's field features four past champions – Matt Atkins (2017), Wes Roach (2015), Carlos Ortiz (2014) and Michael Putnam (2013). Of the past winners, Carlos Ortiz opened with the best round, ending Thursday with a 4-under-par 68 (T10).
- * Four tournament winners have gone on to be named Player of the Year during the season of their victory (Wesley Bryan – 2016, Carlos Ortiz – 2014, Michael Putnam – 2013, Jamie Lovemark – 2010).
- * In 2017, eight players who finished T19 or better went on to earn their PGA TOUR card at the end of the season (Matt Atkins, Austin Cook, Ted Potter, Jr., Nate Lashley, Denny McCarthy, Keith Mitchell, Abraham Ancer and Ben Silverman).
- * There have only been two international winners in tournament history: Carlos Ortiz (Mexico) and Jarrod Lyle (Australia).
- * The highest start by an eventual tournament winner in Mexico came in 2014 when Carlos Ortiz opened with a 2-over-par 74.
- * There are 17 Mexican players in this week's field: Rodolfo Cazaubon, Raul Cortes, Roberto Diaz, Armando Favela, Oscar Fraustro, Andres Garcia, Santiago Gavino, Juan Pablo Hernandez, Nicholas Maruri, Carlos Ortiz, Pablo Rincon Gallardo, Jose de Jesus Rodriguez, Alfredo Ruiz, Gerardo Ruiz, Luis Felipe Torres, Sebastian Vazquez and Armando Villarreal.
- * University of Virginia alum Ben Kohles carded five-consecutive birdies on Nos. 11-15, tying the 2018 Tour record for longest birdie streak.
- * The first four events of the 2018 season have all been won by first-time Tour winners. Should another first-time winner capture the title this week in Mexico, it would be the first time the season opened with five-consecutive first-time winners since 2002.

* El Bosque CC scoring averages:

	Front (36)	Back (36)	Total (72)
R1	36.294	35.818	72.112

* NEXT WEEK: The Web.com Tour takes one week off before traveling to Le Triomphe Golf and Country Club in Broussard, Louisiana, for the Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by NACHER.

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