



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**August 18, 2017**

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### **Partial Second-Round Leaderboard**

<b>Pos.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Scores</b>
1	Ken Looper	62-66—128 (-14)
2	Ben Taylor	66-67—133 (-9)
	Talor Gooch	66-67—133 (-9)
	Stephan Jaeger	66-67—133 (-9)

### **Ken Looper opens up five-shot lead with another bogey-free round at the News Sentinel Open presented by Pilot**

**KNOXVILLE, Tenn.** – Fourteen birdies. Zero bogeys. That’s been the formula for Ken Looper through 36 holes at the News Sentinel Open presented by Pilot, where he’s opened up a five-shot lead entering the weekend. Looper followed up his opening 62 with a 5-under 66 Friday that has him five ahead of Ben Taylor (67), Talor Gooch (67), and Stephan Jaeger (67) and chasing his first career Web.com Tour victory.

“Making 14 birdies in two rounds is pretty good. I can’t remember the last time I made 14 birdies in four rounds,” Looper said. “I just kept doing the same things and taking it one shot at a time. I didn’t make that many putts today and actually missed some fairways, but I made seven straight pars down the stretch and I could have holed some more.”

As the first grouping off in the afternoon wave after waiting out a 90-minute weather delay in the morning, no one had made a run at Looper’s lead when he teed off in the early afternoon. Playing with the lead, Looper striped a 5-iron to four feet on the second hole for his first birdie of the day and poured in another at the third after hitting his approach from the rough to six feet.

From there, Looper continued to build onto his lead with a 40-footer at the eighth, a two-putt birdie at the par-5 10<sup>th</sup> and a 12-footer for birdie at the last. Most importantly, he finished another round at Fox Den Country Club without a blemish on the card and remains a perfect 10 for 10 in scrambling.

“It was quite fun, but then I had a little stretch there where I wasn’t making much,” Looper said. “But I never got myself in real trouble. Never had any tough up and downs or any scares.”

Although Looper’s never held a lead after any round on the Web.com Tour, he did hold at least a share of the lead three times on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica a year ago but failed to convert. His eighth-place finish at the 69 Avianca Colombia Open presentado por BBVA was his best finish of the three times he held the 36-hole lead.

“Last year on [PGA TOUR Latinoamérica], I did it a bunch. I had a lot of leads going into the final two rounds,” Looper said. “I think I’ve learned from those experiences, and I think I can come through.”

Part of his confidence comes from the way he’s hitting it, a recently freed-up feeling in his inflamed shoulder, and a sense that last year prepared him for what he’s facing this weekend in attempting to lock up a berth in the Web.com Tour Finals and fully exempt status on the Web.com Tour for 2018 with a win.

“Do the same as yesterday. Same as today. Just keep on doing it,” Looper said. “I’m pretty confident in my game, so I don’t need to worry about anything. If I keep on doing what I’m doing, I should be fine.”

Jaeger, who is chasing his third Web.com Tour victory of the season, was hoping to get closer to Looper's lead after birdies on five of his first eight holes, but he played the back nine in a disappointing 1-over for a 4-under 67.

"The back nine got in the way but five shots? If he plays like he's played the last two days, we won't have a chance. We'll be playing for second." Jaeger said. "But game feels good. Made a couple bad mistakes on the back, but yeah, I'm in second so can't complain too much."

At No. 95 on the Regular Season money list with two events remaining, the last two rounds could be pivotal for Taylor in breaking into the top 75. Coming off a career-best T16 last week, the 25-year-old London native is hoping to play his way into fully exempt status next season and into a spot in the field in the Web.com Tour Finals.

"Obviously, I've played every event and haven't had a week off, and I really want to finish strong and perhaps even before the tail end of the regular season," Taylor said. "It would obviously be very huge, but I certainly won't be thinking about that. I'll just be trying to execute my game plan two more times heading into Saturday and Sunday."

Fresh off a runner-up finish last week, Talor Gooch is in prime position to lock up his PGA TOUR card this weekend. Nine months ago, the 25-year-old was heading into his third round at the second stage of Web.com Tour Qualifying Tournament wondering if he was going to have to go get a part-time job. Now, with this recent surge in play, he's two rounds from reaching his childhood dream of the TOUR.

"I'm swinging well. I've been close all year. My ball striking has just been lacking and in the last month or month and half it's finally started to click and it's paying some dividends," Gooch said. "Better late than never. Obviously top 25 is the goal. Would have been nice to lock it up halfway through the season, but hopefully I can finish up this weekend right and lock it up."

Play was suspended due to darkness Friday night with seven players remaining on the golf course. The second round will resume at 8:15 a.m. ET.

### **Friday Notes:**

\* Friday weather: Sunny, High: 87, Winds: W 6-12 mph.

\* This week's purse is \$550,000 with \$99,000 going to the champion.

\* Jonathan Hodge, who was born in Knoxville but now lives in Jasper, is in T5 after back-to-back 67s. Hodge is in 67<sup>th</sup> on the money list and is tied for the field lead in putts per round (24).

\* Matt Davidson, who has posted back-to-back 67s, is six shots back of the lead in T5 but is leading the field in greens in regulation (32/36).

\* Both Looper and Steve Allan could challenge the all-time Web.com Tour record for a perfect week scrambling. John Mallinger's 18 for 18 effort at the 2005 Cox Classic is the best perfect mark in Tour history, but Allan (13/13) and Looper (10/10) are in position to potentially supplant him this weekend in the record books.

\* Beau Hossler's streak of nine straight made cuts came to an end Friday with rounds of 85-71—156 (+14). Hossler's currently 24<sup>th</sup> on the money list.

\* Current bubble boy Roberto Diaz (No. 25 on the money list) opened with an even-par 71 but will play the weekend after rallying with a 6-under 65 Friday.

**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

Password: pgatour13

\* 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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