



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 20, 2017

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Final-Round Leaderboard

| Pos. | Name | Scores |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Talor Gooch | 66-67-68-65—266 (-18) |
| 2 | Jonathan Hodge | 67-67-67-66—267 (-17) |
| 3 | Keith Mitchell | 68-68-65-67—268 (-16) |
| | Ken Looper | 62-66-68-72—268 (-16) |

Talor Gooch comes from five shots back for first career victory at the News Sentinel Open presented by Pilot

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – Talor Gooch came from five shots back to win the News Sentinel Open presented by Pilot by one shot with a final-round 6-under 65 Sunday. The 25-year-old’s first career Web.com Tour victory locks up his PGA TOUR card for the 2017-18 season and moves him to No. 3 on the Regular Season money list.

“It’s everything you’ve ever dreamed about,” Gooch said. “This is as much about my family, my friends, Kelsey [Cline], my coach and so many people along the way that have helped. This is a culmination of everything right now.”

Gooch’s 18-under 266 edged out Jonathan Hodge by one shot after Hodge’s chip from the greenside rough to force a playoff at the last came up just short.

“That chip on 18 was in the really thick rough, but it was a decent lie and a decent chance and had a shot,” Hodge said. “I would have liked it to hit it harder, but I can’t complain. I’m super happy with how I played all week.”

Gooch trailed Hodge, who was playing in the group behind him, by two with five holes to play. But he rolled in a six-foot birdie at the 14th to tie up the lead after Hodge three-putted the 13th. His first solo lead of the tournament, which he would never relinquish, came at the par-4 15th, where he hit it to five feet and rolled it in. It was that type of ball-striking day, hitting 17 of 18 greens in the final round.

“It was a really easy round to be honest,” Gooch said. “The toughest part of the day was I had about a 50-footer on the par-3 16th, and I left it about six feet short for par, but outside of that everything was pretty close and pretty easy. That’s the type of round you wish you could have a lot more often.”

Entering the 72nd hole with a one-shot lead, Gooch looked at a scoreboard for the first time and saw he had a one-shot lead to protect, and he went the safe route, hitting it to the middle of the green and two-putting to force Hodge to birdie the last.

“When I was walking down 18, I told [my caddie] I know we’re going to be in it,” Gooch said. “I saw where I was, and it was a tough pin. I told myself if I have a good number I’ll try to knock it close and if not hit it to the middle of the green and make him make birdie. Thankfully it worked out.”

The journey to get to the winner’s circle wasn’t quite as smooth. Gooch played the Mackenzie Tour – PGA TOUR Canada a year ago, where he posted four top-10s in 12 starts for a 15th place finish on the Order of Merit. At the second stage of Web.com Tour Qualifying Tournament last year, where he looked like he wouldn’t advance until a stellar third round, the former Oklahoma State Cowboy pondered whether he was going to have to get a part-time job and whether

he'd have enough money in his account to continue making a run at being a professional. Nine months later, he is a Web.com Tour winner and heading to the PGA TOUR after a runner-up and victory in back-to-back starts.

"From the beginning of the year not having much money in the account and needing to play well early to now, I think I can go have a nice dinner," Gooch said. "It's quite the opposite ends of the spectrum. It's been a crazy year."

Gooch credits people like Cline, who has been Gooch's mentor since he was 10 and caddied for him this week, for getting him here. Cline was the one keeping him calm down the stretch and preaching the same message of patience that he's preached for the last 15 years.

It was unusual circumstances that placed Cline in Knoxville in the first place. Gooch's usual caddie had a death in the family, and so Cline filled in. When Hodge's chip to force a playoff at the last came up just short, Gooch and Cline embraced on the putting green for 30 seconds -- the emotion of 15 years of work together pouring out.

"He's been there for me since I was 10 years old, and it's been a lot of hard work and sacrifice from him to come and take time with me over the years," Gooch said. "He caddied for me in all the U.S. Amateurs that I played in, and he hasn't gotten to caddie for me as a professional until now. I'm as happy for him as I am for myself that he was here for that."

Looper, who entered the day with a four-shot lead, came back to the pack immediately after losing his tee shot out of bounds at the first on the way to a triple bogey.

"It just went out of bounds. I cut it too far," Looper said.

By the time Looper hit the fifth tee, he was already trailing after Hodge made birdies on four of his first five holes.

"It was a dream start. I think I one putted like the first six or seven holes," Hodge said. "I didn't know where I was, but I had a good guess because of how well I started. I made a point of not looking at boards for my own sake."

Despite a disastrous start for Looper, he fought back to tie Hodge at the top again with birdies at No. 5 and 6, but two bogeys and two birdies over his last 12 holes weren't enough to get it done.

Still, the 28-year-old leaves with a career-best T3 finish and a jump up to No. 79 on the money list. That gives him a reasonable shot of jumping into the top 75 on the Regular Season money list and securing full Web.com Tour status next season at the season finale in Portland next week.

"It's my best finish ever, but I'm still bummed," Looper said. "With the way I started, it wasn't the way I hoped. If I don't start the way I do, I'm there all day and I can push forward. But my putter was ice cold today, and I couldn't get anything to go in."

Looper and Keith Mitchell both tied for third at 16-under 268. Rob Oppenheim and Brice Garnett tied for the round of the day with a 6-under 65 to move into a tie for fifth.

Sunday Notes:

* Sunday weather: Mostly sunny, High: 90, Winds: Light and variable

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

* Talor Gooch earns his first career win in his 18th start on Tour. His previous best finish was a runner-up at last week's Price Cutter Charity Championship.

* Gooch's victory comes at age 25 years, 9 months and 6 days.

* Gooch's victory is the largest come-from-behind victory of the season after entering the day five shots back.

About Talor Gooch

HEIGHT: 6-0 WEIGHT: 200

BIRTHDATE: November 14, 1991

BIRTHPLACE: Midwest City, Oklahoma

RESIDENCE: Midwest City, Oklahoma

EDUCATION: Oklahoma State University (Education, 2014)

TURNED PROFESSIONAL: 2014
JOINED TOUR: 2017

- * Hodge, a Knoxville native, moved up to No. 34 on the money list with a career-best runner-up finish.
- * Keith Mitchell's T3 finish was a career best for the Chattanooga, Tennessee native. Mitchell moves up to 36th on the Regular Season money list with one event remaining.
- * Stephen Jaeger, who lives just 90 miles down the road in Chattanooga, moved up to T2 on the Web.com Tour Regular Season money list with a T7 finish. Jaeger played in the final group on Sunday but couldn't challenge the lead with a final-round 1-under 70.
- * Knoxville native Wes Roach posted a 5-under 66 to lock up a spot in the Web.com Tour Finals after entering the week on the bubble at No. 71. Roach's T11 finish moves him to No. 61 on the money list.
- * Rob Oppenheim is once again on the bubble at 26th heading into Portland after a T5 finish. Oppenheim finished 26th on the 2015 Regular Season money list, 25th on the 2015 Web.com Tour Finals money list, and 26th on the 2016 Web.com Tour Finals money list.
- * Matt Harmon is heading to the Web.com Tour Finals for the first time after locking up a spot in the top 75 with a T7 finish. Harmon is 59th on the money list heading into the final event.
- * Four players in the top 11 this week either grew up in Tennessee or live in Tennessee now – Hodge (2), Mitchell (T3), Jaeger (T7), and Roach (11).

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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