



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **First-Round Leaderboard**

<b>Pos.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Score</b>
1	Keith Mitchell	65 (-6)
2	Abe Ancer	66 (-5)
	Sam Saunders	67 (-4)
	Alex Cejka	67 (-4)
5	Nine players tied at	68 (-3)

## **KEITH MITCHELL TAKES FIRST-ROUND LEAD AT NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Columbus, Ohio** – After falling just one-shot shy of securing his PGA TOUR card a week ago in Portland, Keith Mitchell showed no signs of an emotional hangover Thursday with an opening round 6-under 65 to grab the first-round lead by one over Abraham Ancer at the Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship. With 25 more PGA TOUR cards on the line over the course of the four-event Web.com Tour Finals, Mitchell knows he can easily atone for coming up shy as the No. 26 guy on the Regular Season money list, and that rebound started with seven birdies and a bogey at the Scarlet Course at The Ohio State University Golf Club.

"I mean the new system gives us a huge chance. I mean once you finish 26-75, everybody starts fresh," Mitchell said. "That can be a good thing or a bad thing, but this week we're trying to look at it as a good thing. We're here, and if we play good like we've been playing the last couple of weeks, I don't think last week is going to matter at all."

That doesn't mean it was any easier to sleep Sunday night. After failing to make birdie on any of the last three holes, he estimated he only slept about 45 minutes with the replays continually running through his head and in front of him on his TV.

"I stayed up all night until 5 AM watching the coverage. I think I was hoping maybe the guy out there would do something different," Mitchell said. "I didn't really sleep at all that night, thinking about it and all the scenarios that could have happened, but I think it's good for me in the long run. There's no way that I could learn that or teach that unless something like that happened."

He thought about the missed six-footer for birdie at the 16th and the 20-foot putt that came up just one revolution shy for birdie at 17. He thought about the 72<sup>nd</sup> hole, too, where he thought he needed an eagle at the last to get his TOUR card and subsequently tried to hole the chip, when he only needed a birdie to secure 25<sup>th</sup> TOUR card handed out.

"I knew I couldn't dwell on it because I still have a great opportunity to get my PGA TOUR card. I know I'm playing well, and I have four weeks to do it. So, I tried to focus on that as much as I could. Yes, everyone wants a putt to go to

the PGA TOUR, and unfortunately not only did I miss it but I didn't know it was to go to the TOUR. But now I have four more tournaments, so if I play like I'm playing I'll give myself plenty more chances."

Mitchell gave himself plenty of chances Thursday after opening with a bogey at the second. On the day, he hit 16 of 18 greens. With three more ball-striking days like that, he could have the immediate vengeance he seeks come Sunday.

"It was a nice round," Mitchell said. "Pete, my caddie, is always staying positive out there, and I needed that today. I really hit it well and was pretty stress free. Didn't have any par putts outside a couple feet. So I was very fortunate to get some good breaks and just execute what I needed to do."

If Mitchell's looking for an example of the model he hopes to emulate, he need look no further than Xander Schauffele, who finished in 26th on the 2016 Regular Season money list but secured his TOUR card in the Finals here in Columbus with a T9 finish and went on to win on TOUR this season.

Fresh off back-to-back top-10s, Mitchell feels like his game is in prime position to follow Schauffele's example in not letting the Regular Season bubble define his year.

"It's kind of easing a little bit just knowing that you still have a chance," Mitchell said. "I mean I'm playing the best I've played in a while coming into this week. So, I'm just trying to float on that."

Ancer, who opened with a bogey-free 5-under 66, arrives on the heels of his third runner-up of the season – and fifth top-five.

"Felt great. The course is in awesome shape," Ancer said. "The game plan was to hit as many fairways as possible and then really be very disciplined with the second shots. The greens are firm out there. So, you can't really short side yourself. So, I was able to do that for the most part and made some putts on both sides. So, it was a pretty solid round, not many mistakes. So, I'm pretty happy."

Sam Saunders and Alex Cejka opened with 4-under 67s to jump into a share of third after one round.

### **THURSDAY NOTES:**

\* Thursday weather: Mostly sunny. Wind N 8-16 mph. High of 78.

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

\* This is the first 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.

\* 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	Cody Gribble/Kelly Kraft*	\$35,125.00
<b>2017</b>	<b>No. 25</b>	<b>???</b>	<b>???</b>

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

\* Leading money winner Brice Garnett carded a first-round 3-over 74, which tied his highest opening-round on Tour since July (74 – LECOM Health Challenge).

\* Abraham Ancer arrived in Ohio No. 3 on the Tour money list, just a \$73,233 behind Brice Garnett. A solo second or better this week would place Ancer in the top spot if Garnett misses the cut. Ancer is the only player inside the top 10 on the money list without a Tour win this season. He has recorded three runner-up performances in 20 starts this season. The first-round 5-under 66 was his lowest round in seven trips around the Scarlet Course.

\* Ohio State Buckeye Ryan Armour opened with a 3-under 68, his lowest score on the Scarlett Course since 2009 (R4 – 68). Armour has missed the cut in his last six appearances in Columbus and has only broken par twice in that span. Armour played this season on the PGA TOUR and posted on top-10 in 20 starts (T4 – Wyndham Championship) and finished the season No. 160 in the FedExCup standings

\* Peter Uihlein is currently No. 12 in the European’s Tour Race to Dubai. Uihlein carded a first-round x-under 6x in his Web.com Tour Finals debut. In seven starts on the PGA TOUR this season, Uihlein made five cuts and posted three top-25s including a T5 at the Puerto Rico Open. Uihlein has made two appearances at the Nationwide Children’s Hospital Championship. In 2011, Uihlein recorded rounds of 69-67-70-68 for a 10-under-par score that placed him tied for ninth.

\* Former U.S. Amateur champion Curtis Luck made four birdies and four bogeys in his Web.com Tour Finals debut. Luck qualified for the four events series by finishing inside the top 200 in non-member FedExCup points thanks in large part to a T5 at the Quicken Loans National in July.

\* Former Nationwide Children’s Hospital Championship winner Andrew Loupe opened with a 2-over 73. In 2015, Loupe carded 71-70-68-70—279 5-under-par for a two-shot victory over Bronson Burgoon, Tom Hoge and Roberto Castro.

\* Charlie Beljan withdrew during the second round due to an injury.

\* Scoring averages for the week:

	Front (36)	Back (35)	Total (71)	Cumulative
<b>R1</b>	36.531	35.608	72.138	---

**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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