



2017 THE PLAYERS Championship
(The 27th of 43 events in the PGA TOUR Season)

Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.
THE PLAYERS Stadium
TPC Sawgrass

May 11-14, 2017
Par/Yardage: 36-36—72/7,189

FedExCup Points: 600
Purse: \$10,500,000 (\$1,890,000)

First-Round Notes – Thursday, May 11, 2017

Weather: Mostly sunny with a high of 91. Wind WSW 8-16 mph.

First-Round Leaderboard

William McGirt	67 (-5)
Mackenzie Hughes	67 (-5)
J.B. Holmes	68 (-4)
Alex Noren	68 (-4)
Chez Reavie	68 (-4)
Jon Rahm	68 (-4)

William McGirt

William McGirt posted the best round of the morning wave with a 5-under 67 to share the lead with first-timer Mackenzie Hughes. This marks the fifth time McGirt has held the lead or a share of the lead after 18 holes. In four prior tries, he has failed to convert the opening round lead into a victory or top-five.

McGirt eagled Nos. 11 and 16, becoming the 27th player to record two eagles in one round at THE PLAYERS and the sixth to do so on the back nine. Last year, two players recorded two eagles in one round: Kevin Chappell (R3); and Louis Oosthuizen (R4).

In four prior starts at TPC Sawgrass, McGirt's only other sub-70 round was a 7-under 65 in the second round in 2016. In two previous made cuts, McGirt finished T43 both times, including his debut in 2013 and last year.

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The 37-year-old is in search of his second PGA TOUR victory after winning the 2016 Memorial Tournament. In 15 starts this season, he has three top 10s and is 52nd in the FedExCup standings.

Mackenzie Hughes

PGA TOUR rookie Mackenzie Hughes grabbed a share of the first-round lead with a bogey-free 5-under 67. This is the second time Hughes has taken a share of the 18-hole lead/co-lead on TOUR. The first came at The RSM Classic in November, where he shot a 9-under 61. The 2016 Web.com Tour graduate converted that lead into his first career victory in only his ninth TOUR start.

With a victory, Hughes would become the first rookie to win THE PLAYERS. David Lingmerth's T2 in 2013 is the best finish by a rookie at THE PLAYERS.

The 2013 Mackenzie Tour – PGA TOUR Canada Player of the Year and Order of Merit winner could join Stephen Ames (2006) as the only Canadians to win THE PLAYERS.

Hughes enters the week as the second highest-ranked rookie in the FedExCup standings at No. 20. In 19 starts, he's posted a victory and 12 made cuts, but he has missed the cut in three of his last four starts.

Hughes earned TOUR status for the 2016-17 season after finishing 17th on the 2016 Web.com Tour Regular Season money list. Hughes vaulted inside the top 25 on the money list in August with a win at the Price Cutter Charity Championship, making birdie on the 72nd hole to edge out Richy Werenski by a shot.

In the PGA TOUR era of the Mackenzie Tour (2013-present), Hughes is the only player in history to win on the PGA TOUR, Web.com Tour and Mackenzie Tour after emerging on the second hole from a five-man playoff at The RSM Classic.

First-Round Lead Notes

Fourteen first-round leaders/co-leaders have gone on to win THE PLAYERS Championship, including Jason Day in 2016.

Two of the last three winners have opened with a tournament-record 63 en route to their win: Martin Kaymer (2014) and Jason Day (2016). Both won wire to wire.

Only four out of 25 first-round leaders/co-leaders (stroke play) have gone on to win in 2016-17 and not since Justin Thomas won the Sony Open in Hawaii in wire-to-wire fashion.

J.B. Holmes

Despite hitting just three of 14 fairways, J.B. Holmes posted a first-round 4-under 68, one shot off the lead.

Holmes previously led THE PLAYERS after 18 holes in 2010 when he opened with a 6-under 66, his lowest score in 33 rounds at TPC Sawgrass. He went on to finish T13 that year.

Holmes is making his 11th start in THE PLAYERS, where he has two top-10s: 2008 (T10) and 2011 (T6). Last year's missed cut was one of four missed cuts at TPC Sawgrass.

Holmes opened last week's Wells Fargo Championship with a 67 and was one off the first-round lead. Ensuing rounds of 74-73-73 resulted in a T36.

Holmes' one top-10 this season came at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans, a T5 with partner Bubba Watson

Alex Noren

Sweden's Alex Noren posted the only bogey-free round of the morning wave, opening with a 4-under 68 in his tournament debut. Other than Jack Nicklaus, who won THE PLAYERS in its inaugural year in 1974, only Hal Sutton (1983) and Craig Perks (2002) have won the event in their first appearance.

Noren, who is No. 13 in the Official World Golf Ranking, is not a member of the PGA TOUR. At No. 9 in the Non-Member FedExCup standings, Noren has 206 points and is in need of 113 points as he attempts to earn Special Temporary Membership on the PGA TOUR.

Noren has eight international victories, four of which came in 2016.

Noren, who was in contention in last week's Wells Fargo Championship, has two top-10s on the PGA TOUR, most recently a T5 at the World Golf Championships-Dell Technologies Match Play.

Chez Reavie

Chez Reavie birdied his last two holes (Nos. 17 and 18) to post his first career sub-70 round at TPC Sawgrass. In three prior starts at THE PLAYERS, Reavie has made the cut just once (2009/T60).

Reavie has had success at TPC Sawgrass, finishing second at the 2015 Web.com Tour Championship at TPC Sawgrass' Dye's Valley en route to winning the Web.com Tour Finals money list.

In 15 starts on the PGA TOUR this season, Reavie's posted two top-10s and nine made cuts. The 2008 RBC Canadian Open winner is in search of his second career victory.

Jon Rahm

Jon Rahm posted one of four bogey-free rounds of the day in his first career round at TPC Sawgrass with a 4-under 68 to get within one shot of the first-round lead. The 22-year-old's first trip through the closing stretch – Nos. 16-18 – resulted in a birdie-par-birdie finish. His birdie at the par-4 18th was one of just 11 on the day and came at the toughest hole on the course at more than half a stroke over par.

With a victory at the age of 22, Rahm would surpass Adam Scott (23 years, 8 months, 12 days) as the youngest winner of THE PLAYERS. He would also become only the third player since the tournament moved to TPC Sawgrass in 1982 to win in their first start at THE PLAYERS and join Sergio Garcia (2008) as only the second player from Spain to win.

When he won the Farmers Insurance Open, he became just the second player to win in his tournament debut and first in 25 years.

Rahm arrives on the heels of a solo fourth-place finish at the Wells Fargo Championship, where he was one shot back entering the final round and fell two shots short of Brian Harman with a final-round 1-under 71.

In 12 starts on TOUR this season, Rahm has yet to miss a cut and has four top-five finishes in addition to his first career victory at the Farmers Insurance Open in January.

The Arizona State grad is No. 4 in FedExCup standings with six top-10s on the season, all of which have come in his last eight starts.

Additional Player Notes

Heading to the 17th tee with a one-shot lead at 6-under, Adam Scott hit his ball in the water moments after Sergio Garcia's ace. His double bogey at No. 17 and double bogey at No. 18 dropped him to 2-under 70, three shots off the lead. Following his third multiple-win season on TOUR in 2015-16, Scott has only two top-10s in eight starts on TOUR this season. Last season he ranked first in Strokes Gained: Approach the Green and first in Strokes Gained: Tee-to-Green. He is currently 61st in SG: Approach the Green and 40th in SG: Tee-to-Green.

Italy's Francesco Molinari shot a 3-under 69 Thursday in his bid to join Craig Perks (2002) and Tim Clark (2010) as the only players in PGA TOUR history to earn their first career victory at THE PLAYERS. Molinari has posted top-10s in back-to-back starts at TPC Sawgrass with a T7 in 2016 and T6 in 2014. Last year, he was inside the top 10 on the leaderboard after each round. In six career starts at THE PLAYERS, Molinari has three top-10s and three missed cuts.

In his first start at THE PLAYERS, Patrick Cantlay was one of just two players to hit 17 of 18 greens (Lucas Glover) on his way to an opening 3-under 69. Cantlay began the season playing on a major medical extension but satisfied the requirements of that extension with a solo second-place finish at the Valspar Championship in March and earned a spot in THE PLAYERS field.

Defending champion Jason Day played his first 14 holes (started on No. 10) at 5-under with no bogeys, before three bogeys in his last four holes to post a 2-under 70. No player has ever won back-to-back at THE PLAYERS Championship titles. Since THE PLAYERS moved to TPC Sawgrass in 1982, the best opening round by a defending champion is 68 by Craig Perks in 2003.

2008 PLAYERS champion Sergio Garcia aced No. 17 (52 degree wedge from 122 yards), marking the eighth hole-in-one at No. 17 in tournament history. This marked Garcia's second hole-in-one on the PGA TOUR (2008 – BMW Championship at Bellerive CC). Garcia owns the longest active-cuts-made streak at THE PLAYERS with 13 in a row, dating to a T53 finish in 2004. Today's 73 is his highest opening round at THE PLAYERS since a 73 in 2012.

Aces on the 17th during THE PLAYERS		
Year	Player	Round
1986	Brad Fabel	1
1991	Brian Claar	3
1997	Fred Couples	4
1999	Joey Sindelar	1
2000	Paul Azinger	3
2002	Miguel Angel Jimenez	1
2016	Willy Wilcox	2
2017	Sergio Garcia	1

Phil Mickelson opened with a 2-under 70. He has not recorded an opening round in the 60s since his win in 2007 and has missed the cut the last four straight years.

Reigning FedExCup champion Rory McIlroy birdied No. 16 and No. 18, highlighted by a 33'3" putt at the home hole, to post a 1-over 73. McIlroy has finished inside the top 15 the last four straight years: 2013/T8, 2014/T6, 2015/T8 and 2016/T12.

Bernhard Langer extended his tournament record for most birdies at No. 17 with his 26th birdie coming in today's first round. Langer, who is the oldest player in the field at 59, is making his 26th career start in THE PLAYERS Championship. He also holds the record for longest putt made at No. 17 (59 feet, 9 inches) in round two of 2008.

Aaron Baddeley, who has the most total balls in the water at No. 17 since 2003 with 13, birdied 17 in the first round. Baddeley was 5-under through 15 holes before a triple bogey-7 at No. 7 en route to a 2-under 70. Baddeley has failed to make the cut the last five consecutive years.

Eight Jacksonville residents are in the field this week and seeking to join three who have already claimed THE PLAYERS Championship title – Mark McCumber (1988), David Duval (1999) and Fred Funk (2005).

Jacksonville residents leaderboard:

Player	R1
David Lingmerth	69
Vijay Singh	70
Cameron Smith	71
Jim Furyk	73
Matt Every	74
Billy Horschel	75
Russell Knox	76
Jonas Blixt	77

For the third year, Billy Horschel has pledged to raise funds during THE PLAYERS Championship to help #DriveOutHunger and support Feeding Northeast Florida Food Bank. Horschel will donate \$1,000 for every birdie he makes and \$5,000 for every eagle he makes at the tournament. In the first round, Horschel made four birdies, bringing his total to \$4,000.

Lake City native Blayne Barber (70) is playing in his first PLAYERS Championship but has a unique history at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course. Barber grew up attending THE PLAYERS as a kid and won the 2009 Florida State Amateur on the Stadium Course. Barber’s mother, Terri, is also a volunteer at this year’s PLAYERS and is taking part in the PGA TOUR’s Volunteer Challenge, a competition amongst volunteers at tournaments nationwide to raise money for local charities. From now until 2 p.m. ET on May 13, people can vote at www.tourchallenge.com. The volunteer team with the most votes will present a \$10,000 check on behalf of Astellas Pharma US, Inc., to its chosen charity. Terri Barber (Team Barbershop) is currently in 3rd place and has chosen The First Tee of North Florida as her primary charity.

Morgan Stanley will make a donation of \$5,000 to Ronald McDonald House Family Room at Wolfson’s Children’s Hospital for every eagle made at THE PLAYERS Championship (Thursday-Sunday). Through the first round, 12 eagles were made totaling \$60,000.

Kevin Na (illness) withdrew after two hole. David Toms withdrew prior to the start of his round.

Past Champions

Nine players who have won THE PLAYERS are participating this week. Here’s a look at their first-round results:

Player	Year Won	R1 Score
Jason Day	2016	70
Rickie Fowler	2015	70
Martin Kaymer	2014	72
Matt Kuchar	2012	73
K.J. Choi	2011	72
Henrik Stenson	2009	72
Sergio Garcia	2008	73
Phil Mickelson	2007	70
Adam Scott	2004	70

Miscellaneous Notes

Bogey-free rounds

R1 – Alex Noren (68), Mackenzie Hughes (67), Jon Rahm (68), Lee Westwood (70).

No player has gone all four rounds without a bogey at THE PLAYERS Championship. Greg Norman came the closest in 1994 with a single bogey in the final round on No. 13.

Twenty-six players went for the green (hit 3-wood or drive) on the par-4 No. 12 with only three hitting the green: Tony Finau and Derek Fathauer in the morning, and Freddie Jacobson in the afternoon.

There were 19 balls in the water at the par-3 17th hole Thursday. Here’s a list of balls in the water on the 17th hole

since 2003:

Year	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Cumulative
2017	19				
2016	6	9	17	4	36
2015	21	16	3	5	45
2014	12	12	1	3	28
2013	15	9	7	13	44
2012	18	11	4	6	39
2011	12	14	8	6 (in regulation)	40
2010	7	8	5	9	29
2009	16	6	4	6	32
2008	20	18	10	16 (in regulation)	64
2007	50	21	10	12	93
2006	19	17	12	9	57
2005	7	8	25	28	68
2004	9	10	4	7	30
2003	6	10	3	10	29
Total	191	144	93	125	553

Scoring Averages at the par-72 TPC Sawgrass:

	Front 9	Back 9	Total	Cumulative
Thursday	36.764	36.056	72.819	--

Early Scoring Average: 72.22

Afternoon Scoring Average: 73.49

There were 35 sub-par rounds in the morning wave, compared to 15 in the afternoon.

First-round scoring average since 2004

Year	Avg.	Sub-par	Sub-70
2017	72.819	50	17
2016	71.014	82	40
2015	72.385	59	24
2014	71.993	67	28
2013	72.007	67	33
2012	72.373	54	27
2011	72.222	60	24
2010	71.103	86	36
2009	72.379	52	25
2008	74.478	23	2
2007	73.387	41	11
2006	73.308	46	15
2005	71.364	83	37
2004	73.548	45	16