



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

| <b>Pos.</b> | <b>Name</b>   | <b>Scores</b>   |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1           | Carlos Ortiz  | 62-66—128 (-14) |
| 2           | Kramer Hickok | 66-63—129 (-13) |
|             | Rhein Gibson  | 62-67—129 (-13) |
|             | Adam Long     | 65-64—129 (-13) |

## **Mexico's Carlos Ortiz finishes in the dark to take lead at Lincoln Land Championship**

**Springfield, Ill.** – As darkness fell over Panther Creek Country Club, Carlos Ortiz was putting the finishing touches on his second-round 66 to take the outright lead at the Lincoln Land Championship presented by LRS. Ortiz, the new proud father of Sofia Isabel, is 14-under-par heading into the weekend, one clear of 2017 Mackenzie Tour – PGA TOUR Canada Player of the Year Kramer Hickok, Australia's Rhein Gibson and New Orleans native Adam Long, who grew up in nearby St. Louis.

"I didn't think we were going to finish," said Ortiz. "I was hoping to get through 16 holes and then at the end we just kept playing faster. It was pretty dark, but we made it."

Ortiz's continues to display complete control on the Hale Irwin design. Through 36 holes, the three-time Web.com Tour champion is bogey free for the first time this season. In two rounds, the 27-year-old from Guadalajara, Mexico has hit 31 of 36 greens in regulation and recorded 56 putts.

"The game is feeling great," he said. "I've been doing all the right things. I'm just hitting close and hitting it straight. It's fun right now."

In 2014, Ortiz was named Player of the Year, but never went lower than 14-under in any of his three victories. The courses he won on were ranked in the top-10 most difficult on Tour. This week's layout demands players to take more risk than normal. With that in mind, Ortiz's goal is to post something he's never done on the Web.com Tour.

"I'm trying to get in the 20s," he said. "If I get in the 20s I have a chance. That's my goal. I'm hitting it close and rolling it well. I know it's going to be a birdie fest the next two days."

Ortiz entered the week No. 16 on the money list and is posted to secure his PGA TOUR card once again. The 2014 Web.com Tour graduate has recorded four top-10s including a solo second at The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay, where he birdied the last two holes to breakout of a tie. Before the T8 at last week's Wichita Open Supporting Wichita's Youth, Ortiz missed four cuts in a row.

"I feel like I've been playing great all year but now everything is clicking," he said. "I have a clear head with everything that's going on. It's way easier to play golf when everything outside of golf is in great shape."

As he walked off the 18<sup>th</sup> green, Ortiz's playing partner, Steve Marino, pointed to the scoreboard to let the former standout at the University of North Texas know that he's alone at the top. Marino made the comment in jest, but showed his appreciation for the way Ortiz played the first two days.

"I'm grateful that they appreciate my game," said Ortiz. "I feel like my game has matured. I feel like I've always played well and now I'm taking a different mindset in how I play."

Hickok has competed in 15 events with his lone top-10 coming in Bogota. The 26-year-old from Austin hasn't contended since but at No. 49 on the money list, believes his game is rounding into the form that secured him fully-exempt status on the Web.com Tour this season.

"Everything is in a good spot but mentally is the most important thing and golf feels easy right now," he said. "That has not happened this year. It's kind of been a struggle for me, but it's starting to feel like it should, which is how it felt last year about this time."

Hickok honed his game on the Mackenzie Tour, where he recorded nine top-25s in 12 starts and won twice. His victories at the Players Cup and the Ontario Championship hosted by National Pines Golf Club secured him the top spot on the Order of the Merit and Player of the Year honors. Mackenzie Hughes, Joel Dahmen and J.J. Spaun were former Order of Merit winners to graduate from the Web.com Tour and have success.

Hickok is hoping to follow in their footsteps and earn his PGA TOUR card.

"Last year on the Mackenzie Tour was big for my game," said Hickok. "I learned a lot about my game and how to go low. A lot of the golf we play out here is similar and this course reminds me of Canada. I learned that I'm a good golfer and that I'm capable of playing on the PGA TOUR. You have those doubts coming out of college. You think you are, but you don't really know it until you go out and prove it."

Since turning pro in 2015, Hickok has kept in close contact with those that helped mold him during his time in Austin. There are a lot of people in his corner and none more famous than three-time major winner Jordan Spieth, who Hickok lives with.

"I've had so much support," he said. "From Cameron McCormick, Jordan Spieth, Coach John Fields giving me advice and letting me know that I am good enough. It's a long journey and everyone out here is so good."

"I try and learn as much possible from these guys and the best players in the world, which Jordan is one of them," Hickok continued. "Anything I can learn from him will give a competitive advantage out here. It's just such a small margin and I've learned so much, which I think has helped my game."

Burns made a charge late to pull within one of the lead. After a double-bogey on nine, the 21-year-old from Shreveport, Louisiana made four birdies in a row on the back to remain in the hunt.

Earlier this season, Burns made noise on the PGA TOUR with a T8 at the Honda Classic, playing alongside Tiger Woods in the final round, and a T12 the following week at the Valspar Championship. In all, Burns made 11 starts on TOUR, with his last coming at the United States Open a few weeks ago, where he placed T41.

Since his maiden Web.com Tour victory, the Savannah Golf Championship winner has dropped from No. 4 to No. 11 on the money list. The former All-American at Louisiana State University has turned his full attention to the Web.com Tour after failing to earn enough non-member FedExCup points to secure special temporary membership.

"It was kind of tough," he said, "You miss so many events out here, it's easy to get behind a little bit. It was nice to get a win earlier in the year to get a boost in the 25."

### **Friday Notes:**

\* Friday weather: Mostly sunny. High: 88. Winds: S-SE 6-12 mph. Afternoon thunderstorms.

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

\* Second-round play was suspended at 9:05 p.m. local time and is slated to resume at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday. The third round will begin at 9 am and players will go off No. 1 and 10 in threesomes.

\* **NEXT WEEK:** The Web.com Tour heads north to western New York for the LECOM Health Challenge where Chesson Hadley edged out Beau Hossler by one shot for the win, his third career Web.com Tour victory.

*For highlights from today's round, or any 2018 event visit <http://bit.ly/webcomtour2018>*

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