



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Henrik Norlander	64 (-7)
2	Robert Streb	65 (-6)
3	Kramer Hickok	66 (-5)
	Ben Crane	66 (-5)
	Denny McCarthy	66 (-5)

Henrik Norlander captures opening-round lead at Web.com Tour's Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship

COLUMBUS, Ohio – For some, the four-event Web.com Tour Finals series represents a chance to earn their first PGA TOUR card. For others it's a route to return to the TOUR and personal redemption for a season that might not have been to their liking. For Sweden native Henrik Norlander, it's a mix of both.

The 31-year-old has spent the past two seasons playing on the Web.com Tour after losing his PGA TOUR card following a rough 2016.

With his sights set on a TOUR return, Norlander wasted no time taking advantage of the opportunity, opening with a 7-under 64 at The Ohio State University Golf Club's Scarlet Course, good for a one-stroke lead over fellow past Web.com Tour winner Robert Streb.

Norlander was dialed in from the get-go in Columbus, carding a birdie on three of his first four holes. Despite stumbling at the par-5 sixth and walking away with bogey, the Augusta University alum still put together a strong round, following up pars on Nos. 7-9 with a string of birdies on five of the first six holes on his back nine (Nos. 10-12 and 14-15).

"I hit a lot of fairways, obviously," Norlander said of the stretch, "and then I hit a lot of iron shots. I had 200 yards into No. 11, hit it to a foot. Two-putted No. 12, and then hit it to seven feet maybe on No. 14, which is a hard hole. I was able to make that... I mean it's cliché, but I just tried to stay in the present. I felt like I did a really good job of that today."

The Atlanta, resident would go on to challenge the tournament record of 8-under 63 after his back-to-back birdies on Nos. 14 and 15, but a par-bogey-birdie finish would leave him one stroke shy.

"I got greedy on No. 17 and tried to go for the flag," he remarked. "I came out of it in the bunker and I was actually shocked by how easy that bunker shot was because I was on the upslope. Almost sort of took me out of my focus. I thought I was going to have a really tough shot and I got up there and it was sort of easy. I hit a pretty bad bunker shot, hit a decent putt. It was nice to bounce back and finish with a birdie."

In 20 Regular-Season starts this year, Norlander picked up seven top-25 finishes, including a runner-up at the Ellie Mae Classic at TPC Stonebrae. The performance was enough to earn him a Web.com Tour Finals berth for the sixth-straight year, but at No. 32 on the money list, it wasn't enough for a return to the PGA TOUR. Norlander isn't letting that stop him; instead, he feels freer than ever in his chase.

“I didn’t get in the top 25 [on the money list],” Norlander commented after his round, “which was the goal obviously for the season. So, I tried to regroup and had three goals the next four events: try to take it a little slower, have fun and just trust everything I’m doing. I only have an upside to play these four events. I have full status on the Web.com Tour next year, which obviously is not my ultimate goal, but there’s only upside playing these four events. I’m just trying to have fun.”

Streb falls into the latter of the two earlier mentioned categories as well, competing in this week’s event after finishing at No. 178 in the PGA TOUR’s FedExCup Standings this season.

Trouble struck early for Streb, who carded a bogey on the par-4 first.

A wayward tee shot left the 31-year-old in the immediate rough near a tree and a rough chip out of the area led to more trouble. Streb struggled on the green, missing a putt and ultimately walking away with a bogey on the opening hole.

The former PGA TOUR winner refused to let the hole define his round, however, bouncing back with a birdie on the second hole to shift the momentum.

“The birdie on the second hole after bogeying the first,” Streb said of the bounce back, “was a nice help. Kind of squashed that slow start, so that was good. Kind of kept it rolling after that... You know the weather today was going to be really good, so you’re going to get some chances. Had it been blowing 25, maybe that’s a little different, but with the good weather, if you keep hitting good shots, you’re going to get a lot of looks at it.”

Streb played clean golf after the opening hole, picking up birdies on Nos. 5 and 6 before making the turn and picking up four more on his final nine. The 66 was his lowest round in a PGA TOUR-sanctioned event since carding a 63 in the third round of the 2018 Barbasol Championship to take the 54-hole co-lead with eventual tournament champion Troy Merritt.

The Kansas State University alum has competed in this event twice before, carding a T22 finish in 2012 and ending 2013 tied for 28th. Streb credits his past experience with the course as a factor for his success on Thursday.

“It’s good,” Streb commented when asked about the Jack Nicklaus-designed course, “and this place is just a good test. If you’re playing well, you’ll do fine, and if you’re not, you’re kind of scrambling all day. So, it’s very fair and can be pretty tough when the wind blows and it gets bouncing.”

FRIDAY NOTES:

* Friday weather: Mostly sunny, High of 78, Winds N 5-10 mph.

* This week’s purse is \$1,000,000, with \$180,000 going to the champion.

* This week marks the beginning of the Web.com Tour Finals, a four-event series that concludes at the Web.com Tour Championship in Atlantic Beach, Florida, Sept. 20-23. 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.

* The highest start by an eventual tournament currently sits at even-par 71, with 2009 champion Derek Lamely and 2015 champion Andrew Loupe having both opened tournament play with the score. Eighty-one players currently sit at even-par or better heading into the second round.

* Only one 18-hole leader/co-leader has been able to convert their lead into a victory in Columbus (Bill Lunde, 2008). Through 23 events this year, three first-round leaders have captured a title at the end of the week, with the most recent being Martin Trainer at the Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr Pepper.

* This week’s field features two past champions, Ben Kohles (2012) and Daniel Summerhayes, who won the event as an amateur in 2007. Kohles and Summerhayes both opened play with an even-par 71.

* Leading the contingency of Mackenzie Tour – PGA TOUR Canada alumni in this week’s field is 2017 Mackenzie Tour Player of the Year and Order of Merit winner Kramer Hickok. Hickok, who was one of nine Mackenzie Tour alums to receive their PGA TOUR card last week in Portland, opened with a 5-under 66 to move to T3, just two strokes back of the lead.

* The Ohio State University GC's Scarlet Course scoring average:

	Front (36)	Back (35)	Total
R1	35.956	34.912	70.868

* NEXT WEEK: The Web.com Tour travels to Northeast Ohio for the DAP Championship presented by NewBrick, the second event of the Web.com Tour Finals. The Tour then takes a week off before traveling to Boise, Idaho, for the Albertsons Boise Open presented by Kraft Nabisco and then heads to Atlantic Beach, Florida, for the season-ending Web.com Tour Championship.

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