



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Third-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Eric Axley	71-65-68-204 (-12)
2	Willy Wilcox	72-71-64-207 (-9)
	Sebastian Munoz	67-71-69-207 (-9)
	K.H. Lee	69-66-72-207 (-9)

Eric Axley takes commanding lead at Web.com Tour's North Mississippi Classic

OXFORD, Miss. – Former Web.com Tour winner Eric Axley made the most of a chaotic moving day in Oxford, shooting a 4-under 68 in the third round to take the 54-hole lead heading into Championship Sunday at the inaugural North Mississippi Classic. Axley began Saturday one stroke shy of the lead, but six birdies alongside just two bogeys allowed the Tennessee native to open up a three-stroke lead over Willy Wilcox, Sebastian Munoz and K.H. Lee.

“With this game, you never know if it’s going to be a good [round],” Axley laughed. “I’m starting to feel more comfortable. I think we’re just getting it into play on the right holes and managing our way around the golf course. Nothing feels good right now, you know, but we’re getting it in the hole.”

Axley has his driver to credit for getting the ball in the right place this week, as he’s hit 36 of 42 fairways during the first three rounds, tied for seventh-most in the field.

With day-long storms forecasted for Sunday’s final round, Axley took an aggressive approach to moving day, knowing there was a small chance it could be his final chance to move atop the leaderboard should play get called due to weather.

“We talked about [that approach] last night,” the 43-year-old commented. “We saw the forecast and then when we saw they moved [final round] tee times up ... we kind of assumed we needed to play like it was the final round, which makes it gratifying that we went out and played so well, but you never know. The weather may miss, and we may be playing tomorrow. We have to assume we’re playing tomorrow and grind it out again.”

Sunday marks the second time this season and the fourth time in his Web.com Tour career that Axley has held the 54-hole lead/co-lead. While only one of the leads turned into an eventual title (Rex Hospital Open, 2005), Axley has never finished outside of the top 10 after holding a lead/co-lead going into Sunday.

The 2006 Valero Texas Open champion has spent most of 2018 splitting his time between the Web.com Tour and PGA TOUR. Axley has made three cuts in four starts on the PGA TOUR, with his best finish being a T34 at the Sanderson Farms Championship. He’s had more success on the Web.com Tour, however, having made three cuts in five starts, notching two top-25 finishes, including a T7 at the Panama Championship. With his ultimate goal being full status on the PGA TOUR, a win in Oxford could bring with it a change in approach for the remainder of the season.

“Right now, I think we are No. 45 on the Web.com Tour money list,” Axley said of his splitting-time philosophy, “but we’ve missed two or three tournaments, so it’s been an OK start missing that many tournaments. But if we keep getting closer [to the top 25], I think we’re going to stay out here more. Obviously to lock up a PGA TOUR card is a big deal for next year, so it’s basically money list-driven.”

Amidst the pack sitting one stroke back of Axley is Birmingham, Alabama, resident Willy Wilcox, whose third-round 8-under 64 set a new course record at The Country Club of Oxford. The 31-year-old almost didn’t make it to the weekend after an even-par first round and a tough start to his second. Birdies on his 34th and 35th holes to move inside the cutline by one Friday were followed by an errant tee shot that was headed for out-of-bounds to the right on his final second-round hole. In a twist of fate, however, the ball hit a tree and took a bounce back into the fairway. Wilcox was able to make par on the hole and enter weekend play at 1-under 143.

“Before Exuma this year, I hadn’t had a good break in about two years,” Wilcox commented. “I had been playing OK for a couple of years on the PGA TOUR and then I swear it was like there was a black cloud over my head for a good while, so now maybe now that’s changing.”

SATURDAY NOTES:

* Saturday weather: Partly cloudy, High 77, Winds SE 7-14 with gusts around 20 mph.

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

* Willy Wilcox posted an 8-under 64 during the third round to set a new course record at The Country Club of Oxford. Wilcox’s sole Web.com Tour victory came in 2013 at the South Georgia Classic Presented by First State Bank and Trust Company, where Wilcox also broke the course record during Saturday’s competition round.

* The largest 54-hole lead on Tour this season came at the Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by NACHER, where tournament champion Julian Etulain entered Sunday five strokes clear of the field.

* Only twice this season has the 54-hole leader entered Sunday with a two-stroke or higher lead (Ben Taylor, Country Club de Bogotá Championship; Julian Etulain, Savannah Golf Championship). In both instances, the 54-hole leader went on to be crowned champion.

* For the third time this season, at least four Monday qualifiers made it to weekend play: Alex Higgs, Richard Lee, Johnny Ruiz and Dan Woltman. Of the group, Johnny Ruiz is best positioned entering Sunday, sitting in a tie for 10th at 5-under 211.

* C.C. of Oxford scoring averages:

	Front (36)	Back (36)	Total (72)
R1	37.484	36.123	73.606
R2	35.770	36.184	71.954
R3	35.451	36.338	71.789

* NEXT WEEK: The Web.com Tour heads to Evansville, Indiana, for the United Leasing & Finance Championship, contested at Victoria National Golf Club. The 2017 Tournament of the Year will be followed by an off-week.

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

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