



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 3, 2017

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Third-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Eric Axley	66-71-65 (-8)
2	Edward Loar	67-70-67 (-6)
3	Ryan Yip	70-68-67 (-5)
4	Three players tied at	(-4)

Eric Axley captures two-stroke lead at Panama Championship

PANAMA CITY, Panama – After missing back-to-back cuts in the Bahamas, it was beginning to look like the start of the 2018 Web.com Tour Season was going to be an uphill battle for 43-year-old Eric Axley. A third-round 5-under 65 has shifted the tide for the former PGA TOUR winner, however, as he enters Sunday at the Panama Championship with a two-stroke lead over Tour veteran Edward Loar.

The Tennessee native began play on Saturday with a three-putt bogey on the opening hole but quickly bounced back with a birdie on the par-4 third. By the end of play, Axley had amassed seven birdies and just two bogeys, moving him to a tournament total of 8-under 202 heading into Championship Sunday. The former Web.com Tour winner attributed most of his success thus far in Panama to his putting – especially in mid-range situations. Axley's short game was an integral part of his game on Tour in 2017 as well, finishing the season ranked sixth on Tour in putting average (1.721) and seventh in putts per round (28.51).

Being in contention is nothing new for Axley, who has proven before he has what it takes to thrive in pressure-filled situations. In 2014, eight years after winning the Valero Texas Open by three strokes, Axley found himself in the Web.com Tour Finals. He made the cut in all four Finals events to earn the final spot in The 50, regaining his PGA TOUR card by a \$31.66 margin over current PGA TOUR member Rob Oppenheim. The veteran heads into Sunday with a game plan and a focused mentality.

"I think the main thing is just to not get ahead of yourself and be patient," Axley said. "I know it's cliché and everyone probably says the same thing, but... You know, I'm in a position with the lead where if I go out and shoot a couple under par, someone has to play a really good round to come up and beat me, versus if you're two or three back, you have to shoot the really low score."

Just behind Axley on the leaderboard heading into the final round is Texas native Edward Loar. The 40-year-old carded a 3-under 67 on Saturday to move to 6-under-par 204 and earn a spot in Sunday's final grouping. Loar, who won the event in 2012, is the only former Panama Championship winner to have made it to the weekend. A two-time winner on Tour, Loar spent most of 2017 competing on various mini-tours across the United States. Though he hasn't notched a top-10 finish on the Web.com Tour since 2013, he's confident the success he's experienced on various stages will help keep his nerves down as he chases his first title since the 2013 Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by NACHER.

“Winning is winning, no matter where you do it,” Loar commented. “You still have to do the things required to win. Anywhere you win playing golf these days is an accomplishment. I’ll certainly draw on [experience from mini-tours]. Shoot, I might draw on stuff from college, junior golf, who knows.”

Axley and Loar are just two of 17 veterans in the top 18 heading into the final round, with Kevin Dougherty being the sole rookie. Last year’s Panama Championship winner, Andrew Putnam, was also a veteran on Tour. As for what it is about Club de Golf de Panama that lends itself to veteran success, Axley and Loar both attribute the unique test of the course when compared to other locales on the Tour’s schedule.

“I think it probably just has a lot to do with the golf course,” Loar said about the veteran success. “I think this is my sixth time – only the second time I’ve made the cut – but I’ve logged enough rounds to know, just make some pars, and occasionally try to make a birdie. It’s just such a different golf course than what we play on a week-to-week basis. It’s a lot less attacking, a lot more strategizing, and just trying to keep the ball in front of you.”

SATURDAY NOTES:

- * Saturday weather: Partly/mostly cloudy, High: 86, Winds: 7-14 mph.
- * This week’s purse is \$625,000, with \$112,500 going to the champion.
- * The largest come-from-behind victory at the Panama Championship came in 2007, when Miguel Angel Carballo overcame a five-stroke deficit to defeat Hunter Haas, Jim McGovern and Patrick Sheehan by two strokes.
- * Northwestern University alum Scott Harrington moved into a tie for fourth after bouncing back from an up-and-down week. Harrington played his first 25 holes at Club de Golf de Panama at 7-under and his next 11 holes at 7-over. He then carded a 4-under-par round for his next 18, allowing him to enter Sunday just four back of the lead.
- * NEXT WEEK: The Web.com Tour travels to Bogota Country Club in Bogota, Colombia, for the Club Colombia Championship. The eighth-year event will be followed by two off-weeks.

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