



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Maverick McNealy	64 (-8)
2	Brock Mackenzie	67 (-5)
3	Matt Harmon	68 (-4)
	Conrad Shindler	68 (-4)
	Dan McCarthy	68 (-4)

Maverick McNealy takes first-round lead with opening 64 at United Leasing & Finance Championship

EVANSVILLE, Ind. – Everything went right for Web.com Tour rookie Maverick McNealy Thursday afternoon at Victoria National Golf Club. Labeled one of the hardest golf courses on the schedule, the 22-year-old from Stanford, California navigated the daunting Tom Fazio design, opened the United Leasing & Finance Championship with a magnificent 8-under-par 64 and took the first-round lead. McNealy heads into the second round three clear of Brock Mackenzie.

“It’s just kind of one of those days where you can’t seem to do anything wrong,” said McNealy, who hit 15 of 18 greens in regulation on Thursday. “That being said, I know I have to be focused, ready and keep playing aggressively tomorrow.”

McNealy was one off the course record but set a new tournament-low first 18-hole score with his 64. The former Stanford University standout leads the Tour in birdie average (5.00) recording 75 in 15 rounds completed. After spending the last few weeks on Bermuda, McNealy is happy to be back on familiar putting surfaces.

“We were playing on Bermuda the past three tournaments,” said McNealy, who had 25 putts in the first round. “I don’t see that on the west coast with Bent and Poa annua. “I feel a lot more comfortable and tee to green I feel really good. I just haven’t been making the putts I feel like I should’ve been, and it was nice to see them drop today.”

Earlier this season, McNealy opened the El Bosque Mexico Championship by Innova with an 8-under 64 for a share of the first-round lead. The former Haskins Award winner followed up with 76-74-73 and ended the week tied for 43rd. During the break after Leon, McNealy worked with his instructor to clean up his swing and improve his ball striking.

“After Mexico, my swing coach Alex Murray and I figured that we weren’t working on the right things,” he said. “We got a little bit to technical in that sense. We were focusing a little too much on positions and lost the timing, posture and fluidity of the golf swing. I think I’m hitting it way better than I did in Mexico and I think that’s sustainable.”

McNealy had a great collegiate career and golf fans are waiting for it to translate to the professional ranks. In four starts on Tour this season, the former Walker Cup member has made every cut but is still in search of his first top-10.

When asked to assess the first year of his professional career so far, McNealy kept things in perspective.

“The dream was to be on the PGA TOUR as quickly as possible,” he said. “But it’s just one step at a time. I’ve learned so much every single week I’ve played out here. I’ve learned so much about my golf game, the preparation, the process.”

“I’m sure tomorrow and the next few days are going to be really good learning experiences too being back in this position,” he continued. “I’m just looking forward to that. I think every day that I’m having another learning experience is a good day. But at the end of the day after enough learning experiences I want to have good results to.”

Mackenzie’s view on the game is vastly different from that of McNealy’s. A few years ago, he was in peak form. Coming off a great 2016 Mackenzie Tour – PGA TOUR Canada season that placed him No. 2 on the Order of Merit, the 36-year-old from Coos Bay, Oregon finished T4 at the Web.com Tour Qualifying Tournament in December to secure eight starts at the beginning of the 2017 Web.com Tour season. Everything changed in the Bahamas during the opening event of the year.

During the third round of The Bahamas Great Exuma at Emerald Bay, Mackenzie dropped to the ground after a shot and couldn’t get up. He withdrew from the tournament and needed assistance getting off the golf course. He didn’t have surgery on the injured disk in his back and spent six months watching Netflix while it healed.

“Before my injury I was playing the best golf of my life, so it was kind of a blow,” said Mackenzie, who believed he was playing the best golf of his life before the back injury. “When I was lying in the fairway in the Bahamas I didn’t know what happened or if I was going to play competitively again.”

Being a “couch potato” and sitting on the sidelines was hard for the University of Washington alum but he’s happy to be back competing. After rehab and some swing changes, Mackenzie believes his game is starting to get back to where it was before that unfortunate afternoon in the Bahamas.

“I’m slowly getting more comfortable being in competition,” he said. “To be out here with a bunch of my friends and be able to compete and have some good rounds, hopefully get in contention, that’s as good as it gets.”

THURSDAY NOTES:

- * Thursday weather: Partly Cloudy, High 67, Winds N 6-12 mph.
- * This week’s purse is \$600,000, with \$108,000 going to the champion.
- * Seth Reeves carded a hole-in-one on the par-3 11th, using a 6-iron to clear the 211-yard shot. Reeves’s ace is just the fourth in tournament history and the second to occur during the opening round of competition (Tony Finau, Rd. 2, 2014; Jamie Lovemark, Rd. 1, 2015; Ted Potter, Jr., Rd.3, 2017).
- * Brock Mackenzie’s bogey-free first round was his first perfect round of the 2018 Web.com Tour Season since recovering from a debilitating back injury in 2017.
- * Maverick McNealy enters Friday with a three-stroke lead, tying the tournament record for largest 18-hole lead, (Bhavik Patel, 2016). Prior to this week the largest 18-hole lead in 2018 was two strokes, captured by Nelson Ledesma and Michael Johnson at the Panama Championship.
- * Two former champions are featured in this week’s field: D.H. Lee (2017) and Peter Tomasulo (2012). Lee opened with a 5-over 77 to finish the day at T18. Tomasulo posted a 9-over 81 and enters Friday T147.
- * The highest opening-round score posted by an eventual champion in Evansville occurred in 2014, when Englishman Greg Owen opened with a 1-over par 73. The highest start by a winner in the 2018 season belongs to Scott Langley, who opened play at the Panama Championship with a 1-over 71.
- * In his first Web.com Tour start of the year, Monday qualifier Bobby Wyatt opened with an even-par 72, good for T13 moving into Friday. Wyatt looks to become the second player this season to win tournament to earn Tour status (Martin Trainer, El Bosque Mexico Championship by INNOVA).
- * Of the 156-man field in 2017, only 24 sat under par following the first round. That number remained unchanged in 2018, with 24 players carding an under-par round on Thursday.
- * Victoria National Golf Club played to an average of 74.916 in 2017, with the first round averaging to 75.194.
- * Victoria National GC Scoring averages:

Front (36) Back (36) Total (72)

R1 37.284 37.200 74.484

* NEXT WEEK: The Web.com Tour takes a week off before heading to Fox Den CC in Knoxville, Tennessee, for the Knoxville Open.

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

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