



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 21, 2018

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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Sebastian Cappelen	65 (-5)
	Ben Kohles	65 (-5)
3	Jose de Jesus Rodriguez	66 (-4)
	Kurt Kitayama	66 (-4)

Sebastian Cappelen and Ben Kohles tied after 18 holes of Wichita Open

WICHITA, Kan. – A pair of veterans outlasted tempestuous conditions to take a share of the first-round lead at the Wichita Open Supporting Wichita's Youth. With winds coming out of the North in excess of 20 miles per hour, 2014 Wichita Open champion Sebastian Cappelen and two-time Web.com Tour winner Ben Kohles posted matching 5-under-par 65s Thursday afternoon at Crestview Country Club.

United Leasing & Finance Championship victor Jose de Jesus Rodriguez and sponsor pick Kurt Kitayama are one off the lead heading into Friday.

"You couldn't tell whether it was helping or hurting at times," said Cappelen, about the adverse conditions. "You had to make some good decisions and execute. You could hit three different clubs depending on what shot you were going to hit. You had to pick the one you wanted to hit and commit to it."

"The wind is not the prevailing wind," he continued. "It's a little weird. It doesn't happen very often, but I was happy to get through the wind today the way it was."

Cappelen, who played right in front of Kohles, made a charge on the back nine with birdies on 10, 14, 15 and 16 to move into the lead. The former standout at the University of Arkansas found himself in trouble on 18 and was faced with a delicate shot on the right side of the grandstands. Cappelen pitched the ball to 20 feet below the hole and drained the par putt to remain on top.

"Doesn't really matter what round or what course, 65 is always going to feel nice," said Cappelen, who entered the week No. 94 on the money list. "I'm taking it like any other round and trying to carry that feeling into tomorrow morning and see where that takes me."

Cappelen admitted after the round that he appreciates coming back to a place he's enjoyed success. The 28-year-old from Odense, Denmark won the 2014 edition in his Web.com Tour debut. He went from no status to a full member and has been competing on Tour ever since.

Coming off four missed cuts and a T48 at the Rust-Oleum Championship, Cappelen decided to switch putters opting for a TaylorMade Spider Mini this week. The change proved to be the right move as the Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida resident needed just 26 putts in the first round and carded his best score on Tour this season.

"I feel like I always putt well here," he said. "I see the greens nicely which gives you some comfort. How the holes setup and how aggressive I can be off the tee suits my eye."

Being a low-ball hitter, Kohles felt the conditions favored his game and he was right. The 28-year-old from Dallas, Texas posted a career-best 65 and is poised to make the cut for the first time in Wichita in his fourth attempt. Kohles also made an equipment change in the past few weeks, ditching the 5-wood and putting a driving iron in the bag.

“I like when it’s windy,” said Kohles. “I feel like I have an advantage. I put a 2-iron in play last week, which has been useful especially today in wind like this. I feel like my game is on point and I just need to keep it rolling.”

Kohles has been on a tear lately. In his last four starts, the University of Virginia graduate has posted a T12 at the Knoxville Open), T9 at the BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by SYNEX Corporation, a T10 at the Rex Hospital Open and a T14 at the Rust-Oleum Championship. In the last quarter, Kohles has gone from No. 58 to No. 38 on the money list, which is a far cry from his last few seasons on Tour.

“The last few years have been stressful coming down the stretch,” said Kohles, who needed a T8 at the 2017 WincCo Foods Portland Open presented Kraft Heinz to keep his card. “It’s tough out here. Everyone is so good, and the fields are so good. You have to play solid golf and I’ve been able to do that the last four events. Just staying in it through Sunday and playing all four rounds, that’s really propelled me up the money list.”

Thursday Notes:

- * Thursday weather: Partly cloudy and breezy. High of 87. Winds were N/NW 15-20 mph with gust of 25-30 mph.
- * This week’s purse is \$625,000, with \$112,500 going to the champion.
- * The tournament course is playing to a par-70 this week. Officials are playing the 6th hole (495 yards) and the 18th hole (487 yards) as par-4s, but both normally are played further back and par-5s for the members.
- * One first-round leaders/co-leaders has gone on to win during the 2018 season (Julian Etulain – Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by NACHER).
- *The Web.com Tour has produced 101 first-time winners this year. With 54 holes to play at Crestview CC, there are currently 15 players inside the top 10 looking for their first Tour title.
- * Kurt Kitayama received a sponsor exemption into this week’s Wichita Open after ending last season No. 101 on the money list. The 25-year-old from Chico, California entered the WinCo Foods Portland Open presented by Kraft Heinz No. 99 on the money list and missed the cut to drop outside the top 100, which receive conditional status on Tour the following year.
- * In search of his second Tour win, Jose de Jesus Rodriguez opened with a 4-under 66. Rodriguez is making his third appearance in Wichita. On Thursday, the 37-year-old from Irapuato, Mexico recorded one eagle, four birdies and two bogeys en route to a tournament best score. Rodriguez has not posted a top-10 since his maiden Tour win in Evansville.
- * Charlie Beljan withdrew during the round with an injury.

Scoring Average for Crestview CC for the week:

	Front (35)	Back (35)	Total (70)
Round 1:	37.065	35.632	72.697

* **NEXT WEEK:** The Web.com Tour heads north to Springfield, Ill. for the third annual Lincoln Land Charity Championship contested at Panther Creek Country Club June 28 – July 1.

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

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