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**First-Round Leaderboard**

**Syncrude Oil Country Championship**

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| **Pos.** | **Name** | **Scores** |
| T1 | P.J. Samiere (U.S.) | 33-32—65 (-6) |
| T1 | Jake Kevorkian (U.S.) | 33-32—65 (-6) |
| T3 | Ian Holt (U.S.) | 31-35—66 (-5) |
| T3 | Chris Williams (U.S.) | 31-35—66 (-5) |
| T3 | Jared Bettcher (U.S.) | 35-31—66 (-5) |
| T3 | Chelso Barrett (U.S.) | 31-35—66 (-5) |
| T3 | David S. Bradshaw (U.S.) | 31-35—66 (-5) |
| T3 | Matthew NeSmith (U.S.) | 33-33—66 (-5) |
| T9 | George Cunningham (U.S.) | 34-33—67 (-4) |
| T9 | Derek Bard (U.S.) | 34-33—67 (-4) |
| T9 | Ian Davis (U.S.) | 35-32—67 (-4) |
| T9 | Corey Pereira (U.S.) | 33-34—67 (-4) |
| T9 | Brett Coletta (Australia) | 34-33—67 (-4) |
| T9 | Tyler McCumber (U.S.) | 35-32—67 (-4) |
| T9 | Carter Jenkins (U.S.) | 35-32—67 (-4) |
| T9 | Zach Foushee (U.S.) | 33-34—67 (-4) |
| T9 | Charlie Kern (U.S.) | 31-36—67 (-4) |

[**Full leaderboard**](https://www.pgatour.com/canada/en_us/leaderboard.html)

**Kevorkian a surprise leader with Samiere at the Syncrude Oil Country Championship**

EDMONTON, Alberta, Canada—Jake Kevorkian made the cut at the 2017 Bayview Place Cardtronics Open in only his second Mackenzie Tour start. Kevorkian tied for 34th that week and his future looked bright. Since then? Kevorkian has missed 15 consecutive Mackenzie Tour cuts, and it’s been tough, as he says, “to stay the course.” But that’s what he’s done, and the reward came Thursday in the first round of the Syncrude Oil Country Championship. Kevorkian will start Friday’s second round in prime position to change his fortunes.

The St. Petersburg, Fla., native fired a 6-under 65 Thursday at the Edmonton Petroleum Golf and Country Club, and he shares the first-round lead with P.J. Samiere. They lead Chris Williams, Jared Bettcher, Chelso Barrett, David S. Bradshaw, Matthew NeSmith and George Cunningham by a stroke, with an additional nine players two shots back.

Kevorkian used a hole-out eagle on the par-4 seventh, his 16th hole of the day, to get to 6-under. He hit a choke-down 8-iron from 160 yards and watched the ball go in the hole. He then made par on the par-5 closing hole after his second-shot approach landed next to a tree, forcing him to creatively pitch onto the green and then two-putt from 25 feet.

“That was brutal making par from 200 yards,” Kevorkian said. “I had a perfect club. I told my caddie I thought I had a little bit of adrenalin. I hit the club I would normally hit without adrenalin and just bailed out of it.”

His caddie reminded him of how his season has gone and then asked him if he would have been happy with a 65 at the beginning of the day. “I said yes,” Kevorkian added. “Pars are good, and I can’t really complain about it.”

Samiere’s 65 tied for his lowest round of the year. He also had a 65 in the final round of the GolfBC Championship, where he tied for second. That remains the best performance for the San Diego State University alum who turned pro right after graduating. This is only his sixth professional start for the native of Tokyo, Japan, who grew up in Kailua, Hawaii.

**Key Information**

* P.J. Samiere’s eagle at No. 18 Thursday was only his second of the year. His first came in the third round of the Staal Foundation Open. In contrast, Michael Gellerman leads the 2018 Mackenzie Tour with 11 eagles.
* In his 14 rounds this season, Jake Kevorkian has only had three under-par rounds. His opening 65 bettered his best score of the season by three (68s in the second rounds of the Lethbridge Open and the Windsor Championship).
* Jake Kevorkian’s 65 was 8.14 shots better than his 2018 stroke average of 73.14.
* The first-round leader at any 2018 Mackenzie Tour event—tied or otherwise—has yet to go on to win this season. Most recently, Lee Hodges opened with a 10-under 62 at the Osprey Valley Open and led by one shot only to eventually tie for 28th.
* Zach Wright has been alone in first or shared the first-round lead three times this season—at the Bayview Place DCBank Open (solo) and at the GolfBC Championship and the Lethbridge Paradise Canyon Open, both three-way ties for first. The Order of Merit leader opened with a 2-under 69 and is tied for 33rd.
* The par-4 16th was the most-difficult hole in the opening round, yielding only nine birdies, 39 bogeys, six double bogeys and one triple bogey. The scoring average Thursday was 4.558. The par-5 ninth hole played the easiest, with eight eagles and 86 birdies and a stroke average of 4.417.
* Wil Bateman is playing a home game this week, and through 18 holes, he’s the low Canadian. The Edmonton native, who played collegiate golf at San Diego State University, shot a 3-under 68 and is tied for 18th with 14 others. Taylor Pendrith (Richmond Hill, Ontario) and Aaron Cockerill (Teulon, Manitoba) are both tied for 33rd, at 2-under.

**Quotable**

“I’m looking for that first cut, that’s for sure. It’s been a while. I’ve got a bit of a cushion. I think I can do it. But let’s not get ahead and just play well [Friday].” **– Jake Kevorkian**

“I’m sure most guys tied for the lead have not missed the last 15 cuts.” **– Jake Kevorkian**

“I knew I hit it well, but it was out of the first cut of the rough, so you never really know how far it’s going to go. I played for a little bit of a jumper, and I guessed it right.” **– Jake Kevorkian on his hole-out eagle from the fairway on No. 7**

“It’s good. I really like the layout. It has a lot of good tee shots, a lot of good second shots and the par-3s are fair. It’s a nice setup.” **– P.J. Samiere on the golf course**

“It softened a few greens up, which kind of leveled out the consistency of the firmness of the greens, which was nice.” **– P.J. Samiere about the overnight rain**

“It was kind of a weird day. I really didn’t have anything going early. I birdied 18, made the turn and birdied No. 1 and got something going on my back nine—the front nine.” – **Chris Williams**

“This is probably the toughest course we’ve played up here so far. The scores kind of reflect it. You’re usually seeing 8-, 9-, 10-under scores, and today 6 (-under) is probably going to lead it after the first round.” – **Chris Williams**

“Shooting double-digits just to keep pace every round was kind of getting old. You feel deflated after a 5-under round. So, it is nice to play something that’s maybe a bit more challenging that makes you think.” – **Chris Williams**

**Tournament Fast Fact**

In the first playing of this event, the 2016 tournament at Glendale Golf and Country Club, Aaron Wise finished at 19-under to win by a stroke. In 2017, with the tournament at Windermere Golf and Country Club, Patrick Newcomb and Max Rotluff finished regulation tied at 16-under, with Newcomb prevailing in the overtime session.

**Second-Round Weather**: Sunny and mild in the morning. Mostly cloudy in the afternoon, with intermittent showers. High of 25. Wind W at 19 kph.