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2017 Safeway Open Pre-Tournament Notes

Dates: October 2-8, 2017

Where: Silverado Resort & Spa (North Course), Napa, Calif.

Par/Yards: 36-36--72/7,166 yards

Field: 144

2016 champion: Brendan Steele

Purse: \$6,000,000/\$1,080,000 (winner)

FedExCup: 500 points (winner)

Format: 72-hole stroke play

Website: safewayopen.com

Facebook: [facebook/safewayopen](https://www.facebook.com/safewayopen)

Twitter: @safewayopen

Safeway Open and the FedExCup

This week, the PGA TOUR begins its fifth season featuring a wraparound schedule that bridges two years with 45 events leading up to the FedExCup Playoffs. The 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season kicks off with the Safeway Open and includes eight events during the fall of 2017, all of which will award FedExCup points. After a seven-week break, the season will resume in January with the traditional swing through Hawaii before moving to the West Coast. The FedExCup Playoffs once again features four events and concludes in September with the TOUR Championship and the crowning of the FedExCup champion.

Every week is significant in the race for the FedExCup – three of the seven winners from the fall calendar of 2016 (Justin Thomas, Hideki Matsuyama and Pat Perez) qualified for the TOUR Championship. The other four winners advanced through at least the second of four Playoffs events (Brendan Steele, Cody Gribble, Rod Pampling and Mackenzie Hughes).

Earlier this year in May, FedEx extended its contract as sponsor of the FedExCup by 10 years through 2027.

A look at the 2016 Safeway Open

At the 2015 Safeway Open, Brendan Steele took a 1-stroke lead into the final round at Silverado. Following a 4-over 76 Sunday, he finished T17. With unfinished business last season, Steele returned to post scores of 67-71-67-65—270 (-18) to claim his second career PGA TOUR win (2011 Valero Texas Open). Steele birdied his last three holes Sunday to claim a 1-stroke victory over Patton Kizzire.

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More on Brendan Steele

Following his win in Napa, Steele would play his next 12 events without missing a cut. He would miss only five cuts in 25 starts last season. In addition to his victory at the Safeway Open, he collected three top-10 finishes, including a T6 at THE PLAYERS Championship. Steele advanced through the first three of four FedExCup Playoffs events, before ending his season at No. 33 in the FedExCup standings.

Notables in the Field

Phil Mickelson

- Making third start at the Safeway Open (2007/MC, 2016/T7).
- As a Captain's Selection, competed last week in 12th consecutive Presidents Cup, compiling a 3-0-1 record for the victorious U.S. Team.
- Of 42 career PGA TOUR wins, California native has won 11 times in his home state.
- In search of first TOUR win since the 2013 Open Championship.
- Five top-10 finishes in 2016-17 season.
- 2012 World Golf Hall of Fame inductee.

Sangmoon Bae

- Following two years of mandatory military service in native South Korea, 2014 Safeway Open champion makes first return to PGA TOUR since the 2015 Presidents Cup.
- Of nine top-10 finishes in 109 TOUR starts, five came in 2015.
- First of two PGA TOUR wins came at the 2013 AT&T Byron Nelson.
- One of eight Korean-born players to win on the PGA TOUR.
- Became the third international winner of the Safeway Open (Mike Weir/2007), Jonas Blixt/2012). Emiliano Grillo became the fourth in 2015.

Emiliano Grillo

- 2015 Safeway Open champion and 2015-16 PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year finished T26 in his title defense last year.
- Captain's Selection by Nick Price for the International Team at the 2017 Presidents Cup (0-3-0).
- Advanced to the BMW Championship last season, the third of four FedExCup Playoffs events, before finishing his season at No. 67 in the FedExCup standings
- Missed just five cuts in 25 starts on the PGA TOUR last season

Kevin Na

- Has finished no worse than seventh in last three starts in the event; T3/2014, 2/2015, 7/2016.
- Collected five top-10 finishes in 2016-17 season to advance to the BMW Championship, the third of four events in the FedExCup.
- Finished season at No. 45 in FedExCup points.
- Searching for second career PGA TOUR win (2011 Shriners Hospitals for Children Open).

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Zach Johnson

- Poised to make first start in the Safeway Open
- 12-time winner in search of first victory since 2015 Open Championship
- Claimed four victories in Texas, three in Georgia, two in Illinois, two in Hawaii and one in Europe.
- In 2016-17 PGA TOUR Season, claimed four top-10 finishes, highlighted by a solo-second at the World Golf Championships-Bridgestone Invitational.
- Advanced to the BMW Championship, the third of four FedExCup Playoffs events, before ending season at No. 48 in final standings.

Maverick McNealy

- Former World No. 1 amateur making his first start as a professional at the Safeway Open (sponsor invitation).
- 21-year-old Stanford University grad claimed 11 school victories, tying the record for most with Tiger Woods and Patrick Rodgers.
- As an amateur, made eight starts on the PGA TOUR.
- Considered being a career amateur after college to pursue a career in business.

Adam Hadwin

- Making fifth start, and fourth consecutive, in the Safeway Open. Best showing was T7 in 2011, with a missed cut last season.
- Played last week for the International Team at the Presidents Cup.
- Enjoyed a banner year, highlighted by first career PGA TOUR win at the Valspar Championship.
- Posted a 13-under 59 in round three of 2017 CareerBuilder Challenge, en route to then-career-best finish of solo-second.
- Victory at the Valspar Championship, coupled with four additional top-10 finishes, resulted in his first appearance at the TOUR Championship.
- Finished 2016-17 campaign ranked a career-best 26th in FedExCup standings.

2017 Web.com Tour Grad Select Notes

Marty Dou

- The 20-year-old became the first Chinese-born player to capture a Web.com Tour title when he won this year's Digital Ally Open. Before playing on Tour, Dou competed on PGA TOUR China, where he recorded four victories in 2016 to capture the Order of Merit. Dou will be joined on TOUR by fellow countryman and Web.com Tour graduate, XinJun Zhang.

Sam Ryder

- The Stetson University alum became the first Hatter to win on the Web.com Tour when he blitzed the field at the Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Heartland Chevy Dealers en route to an eight-stroke victory. Ryder, who ranked first on Tour in total driving, played consistently throughout the season, notching 10 top-25 finishes.



Keith Mitchell

- The 25-year-old University of Georgia alum finished the 2017 Web.com Tour season with six top-10 finishes, including a T3 finish at the News Sentinel Open presented by Pilot. After finishing the Regular Season at No. 26 on the money list, Mitchell went on to capture two sixth-place finishes in the Web.com Tour Finals and earn his first PGA TOUR card. Mitchell's first TOUR appearance came in March 2017, after Monday qualifying for the Valspar Championship. He finished T11.

Peter Uihlein

- Son of Wally Uihlein, chairman and CEO of the Acushnet Company (the equipment manufacturer that owns Titleist), Uihlein attended Oklahoma State University, where he competed on a winning 2009 Walker Cup team and became the fourth player in school history to win the U.S. Amateur. The Massachusetts native spent time as the top-ranked amateur in the world and was the recipient of the 2011 Ben Hogan Award. Uihlein was named the European Tour's Rookie of the Year in 2013 after picking up a win and eight top-10 finishes in his first season. A fifth-place finish at the 2017 Puerto Rico Open earned him a spot in the Shell Houston Open, where he finished 23rd. The two finishes were enough to earn him a spot in the Web.com Tour Finals, where he eclipsed Ryan Armour for a victory in his first start on Tour (at the Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship).

A broader look at the field

- Three players that qualified for the 2017 TOUR Championship (FedExCup rank); Webb Simpson (17), Tony Finau (19), Adam Hadwin (26).
- FedExCup champion: Bill Haas (2011).
- Three players who competed in last week's Presidents Cup; Phil Mickelson (3-0-1), Emiliano Grillo (0-3-0), Adam Hadwin (0-2-1).
- Four of the last five Safeway Open champions; Jonas Blixt (2012), Sangmoon Bae (2014), Emiliano Grillo (2015), Brendan Steele (2016).
- Multiple members of the 2017-18 PGA TOUR rookie class, including nearby Lafayette, California native Brandon Harkins, Mission Viego, California native Beau Hossler and former Stetson player Sam Ryder.
- ✓ Ryder claimed a convincing 8-stroke victory over four players on the Web.com Tour earlier this season at the Pinnacle Bank Championship.
- ✓ Four stop-10 finishes for Harkins was highlighted by a solo-second at the nearby Ellie Mae Classic in Hayward, California.
- ✓ Hossler finished solo-second in two of his first four starts on the Web.com Tour this past season. He will be making his ninth career start on the PGA TOUR.

Additional 2016-17 PGA TOUR season notes

- The top-3 finishers in the FedExCup this year were all members of the high school class of 2011: Justin Thomas, Jordan Spieth, and Xander Schauffele. The 2011 class accounted for a total of 11 PGA TOUR wins between the three players and Daniel Berger, who won the FedEx St. Jude Classic.

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- Justin Thomas' FedExCup title caps off an incredible 2016-17 season for the 24-year-old. He began the season by earning three victories in his first five starts: he successfully defended his CIMB Classic title and then earned back-to-back victories at the Sentry Tournament of Champions and the Sony Open in Hawaii. Thomas' 59 in the opening round of the Sony Open made him the youngest of seven players (eight times) to record a sub-60 round on the PGA TOUR (23 years, 8 months, 14 days). His four-day total of 253 also set a new PGA TOUR record.
- With his win at the TOUR Championship, Xander Schauffele became the first rookie to win the TOUR Championship as a FedExCup Playoffs event. Schauffele was one of only two rookies (Patrick Cantlay) at the TOUR Championship and one of only 11 rookies since the inception of the FedExCup in 2007 to qualify for the tournament.
- Six players won multiple events in 2016-17: Justin Thomas (5), Dustin Johnson (4), Jordan Spieth (3), Hideki Matsuyama (3), Marc Leishman (2) and Xander Schauffele (2).
- Jordan Spieth, a three-time winner in 2016-17 and an 11-time PGA TOUR winner, and Tiger Woods are the only players in the modern era with 10 or more PGA TOUR wins before the age of 24. Woods had 15 before he turned 24.
- In the 2016-17 season, 28 of the 47 PGA TOUR events were won by players in their 20s. Just five seasons ago, that number was just 11.
- Five rookies claimed victory in 2016-17: Cody Gribble/Sanderson Farms Championship, Mackenzie Hughes/The RSM Classic, Wesley Bryan/RBC Heritage, Grayson Murray/Barbasol and Xander Schauffele (The Greenbrier Classic and TOUR Championship). Bryan was one of three players to win on the PGA TOUR the season after earning Web.com Tour Player of the Year honors, joining Stewart Cink (1997) and Zach Johnson (2004).
- With 10 straight seasons of having collected at least one PGA TOUR title, Dustin Johnson owns the longest active streak of seasons with a TOUR victory.