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2017 Sanderson Farms Championship pre-tournament notes

Dates: October 23-29, 2017

Where: Country Club of Jackson / Jackson, Mississippi

Par/Yards: 72/7,421 yards

Field: 132

2016 champion: Cody Gribble

Purse: \$4,200,000/\$756,000 (winner)

FedExCup: 300 points to the winner

Format: 72-hole stroke play

Twitter: @SandersonPGA

A look back at the 2016 Sanderson Farms Championship

After entering the final round of the Sanderson Farms Championship trailing Luke List and Chris Kirk by one stroke, then-PGA TOUR rookie Cody Gribble carded a bogey-free 7-under 65 Sunday for a four-stroke victory over List, Kirk and Greg Owen. The four-stroke win was one shy of the Sanderson Farms victory-margin record, set by Frank Conner in 1988. Gribble's week included a second-round 9-under 63, just one shy of the course record at the Country Club of Jackson.

More on Cody Gribble

- In two of his four starts following his win at the Sanderson Farms Championship, Gribble claimed top-15 finishes (T15 OHL Classic at Mayakoba, T14 Sentry Tournament of Champions).
- Gribble advanced to the FedExCup Playoffs, making it through the second of four Playoffs events, the Dell Technologies Championship.
- Gribble finished his rookie season 87th in the FedExCup standings.
- In three starts in 2016-17, Gribble's best finish was T32 at the CIMB Classic in Malaysia.

Sanderson Farms Championship and the FedExCup

Three weeks ago at the Safeway Open, the PGA TOUR began its fifth season featuring a wraparound schedule that bridges two years with 49 events including the four FedExCup Playoffs events. The 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season includes eight events during the fall of 2017, all of which will award FedExCup points. With a break after The RSM Classic, the season will resume in January with the traditional swing through Hawaii before moving to the West Coast.

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 (2016 Sanderson Farms Championship winner Cody Gribble, Brendan Steele, Rod Pampling and Mackenzie Hughes).

Earlier this year in May, FedEx extended its contract as sponsor of the FedExCup by 10 years through 2027. In 2015, Sanderson Farms also extended its contract as the title sponsor of the PGA TOUR's Mississippi through 2026.

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Field Notes

- Six past Seven Sanderson Farms Championship winners are in this year's field: Cody Gribble (2016), Peter Malnati (2015), Scott Stallings (2012), Chris Kirk (2011), D.J. Trahan (2006) and Luke Donald (2002). Donald is a former World No. 1 and a four-time European Ryder Cup Team member.
- The majority of the 23 rookies will compete at the Country Club of Jackson.
- Three major championship winners: Angel Cabrera (2007 U.S. Open, 2009 Masters), Retief Goosen (2001, 2004 U.S. Open), Davis Love III (1997 PGA Championship).

Players of Note

Davis Love III

- Poised to make his third start in the Sanderson Farms Championship, two decades after his first start in 1987 (T43). Finished T46 in 2013.
- Winner of 21 PGA TOUR events, including the 1992 and 2003 PLAYERS Championship and 1997 PGA Championship. Most recently at the 2015 Wyndham Championship.
- Winning Captain for the 2016 U.S. Ryder Cup Team.
- At 53 years old, will be making his 748th career start on the PGA TOUR (179 top-10 finishes).
- Son Dru will play at the Sanderson Farms Championship as a sponsor exemption.

Hunter Mahan

- On the comeback trail after a two-year dip in production, Mahan's T13 at the season-opening Safeway Open was his best finish since a T4 at the 2015 Dell Technologies Championship.
- A six-time PGA TOUR winner, Mahan is a veteran of four U.S. Presidents Cup Teams and three U.S. Ryder Cup Teams.

Smylie Kaufman

- Native of Birmingham, Alabama played collegiately at LSU.
- Winner in rookie campaign in 2015-16, posting a final-round 61 to win the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open; same season, was in second place entering the final round of the Masters Tournament, finished T29.
- Looking to rebound from a season that saw him finish outside the top 125 in the FedExCup standings, with one top-10 finish (T5 at Wells Fargo Championship).
- Point guard on Vestavia Hills High School State Championship basketball team as a junior in 2009.

Billy Hurley III

- Winner of The National at Congressional Country Club in 2016, just down the road from adopted hometown of Annapolis, Maryland.
- A graduate of the United States Naval Academy in 2004, he served as a Naval officer from 2004-09. Hurley was a Lieutenant aboard a U.S. Navy destroyer from 2007-09, serving in the Persian Gulf to protect Iraqi oil platforms; spent time on the Red Sea and the South China Sea; served on the USS Chung-Hoon, a 10,000-ton guided-missile destroyer; worked on a cruiser in Jacksonville, Fla., and a destroyer in Pearl Harbor in Hawaii during his five-year obligation.

Luke Donald

- 2002 Sanderson Farms Championship winner and former World No. 1 set to make his third start in the event (T10/2003).
- Winner of five career PGA TOUR titles
- Finished solo-second at 2017 RBC Heritage

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- Advanced to FedExCup Playoffs for a 10th time in 2017 (105th in FedExCup points).

Jonathan Randolph

- Native of Brandon, Mississippi and a graduate of Jackson Prep, Randolph was an All-American at the University of Mississippi in 2009-10.
- Third stint on PGA TOUR, having also played in 2014-15 and 2016-17. Posted first career top 10 on the PGA TOUR with a T8 at the 2017 Wells Fargo Championship.
- Did not retain his PGA TOUR card after 2016-17, but earned TOUR status with a T2 finish at the Albertson's Boise Open during the Web.com Tour Finals.

2017-18 PGA TOUR Rookies Select Notes

Tyler Duncan

- In his first start as a rookie on the PGA TOUR, the 28-year-old product of Purdue University (2012) posted scores of 65-66-71-75—277 (-11) at the Safeway Open to finish T5. The outright leader after rounds two and three, he posted a final-round, 3-over 75 but remained among the top five. On the Web.com Tour last season, Duncan recorded four top-10 finishes, highlighted by second- and third-place showings in back-to-back starts. From 2014-2017, he split his time between the Web.com Tour and PGA TOUR Latinoamerica.

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.

Brandon Harkins

- In his first start as a rookie on the PGA TOUR, the California State University-Chico grad finished T9 at the Safeway Open three weeks ago. This week marks just his third start on the PGA TOUR (T59/2016 U.S. Open). Between 2011 and 2014, the 31-year-old competed on the Mackenzie Tour-PGA TOUR Canada and PGA TOUR Latinoamerica. On last year's Web.com Tour, he collected four top-10 finishes, highlighted by a second- and third-place showing.

Tournament Records and Notes

- Ten players have made the Sanderson Farms Championship their first TOUR win: Cody Gribble (2016), Peter Malnati (2015), Nick Taylor (2014), Chris Kirk (2011), D.J. Trahan (2006), Luke Donald (2002), Cameron Beckman (2001), Willie Wood (1996), Ed Dougherty (1995) and Brian Henninger (1994).
- Since its 1986 inception, only two players have won the Sanderson Farms Championship more than once; Brian Henninger (1994, 1999) and Fred Funk (1998, 2004).
- First-round leaders at the Sanderson Farms Championship since 2000 who've held on for the win: Bill Haas (2010), D.J. Trahan (2006), John Huston (2003) and Steve Lowery (2000).

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- Since 1990 - when the event was neither cancelled nor condensed in rounds, the 54-hole leader has held on for the win 10 times, but not since Scott Stallings in 2012.
- After 19 years at Annandale Country Club in Madison, Mississippi, the Sanderson Farms Championship moved to the Country Club of Jackson in 2014. Prior to that, it spent eight years in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Sanderson Farms Championship and charity

Century Club Charities, host organization for the Sanderson Farms Championship, continues to make a tremendous impact in the Jackson area, especially at the Friends of Children's Hospital. Friends of Children's Hospital is a nonprofit organization benefitting Blair E. Batson Hospital for Children at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Specifically, the funds raised through the Sanderson Farms Championship go to the Children's Heart Center, a comprehensive pediatric heart surgery program at Batson. Before its formation in 2010, patients had to leave the state for surgery. Since 1994, the Sanderson Farms Championship has raised nearly \$12 million for Friends of Children's Hospital and other area charities. Last year alone, \$1.5 million was provided to Mississippi charities, with a majority of that going to Friends of Children's Hospital.