



2018 The Honda Classic

(The 16th of 44 events in the PGA TOUR Season)

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Feb. 22 – 25, 2018

Purse: \$6,600,000 (\$1,188,000/winner)

PGA National (Champion Course)

Par/Yards: 35-35—70/7,140

First-Round Notes – Thursday, February 22, 2018

Weather: Partly cloudy. High of 83. Wind E 15-25 mph.

First-Round Leaderboard

Alex Noren	66 (-4)
Webb Simpson	66 (-4)
Morgan Hoffmann	67 (-3)
Justin Thomas	67 (-3)
Daniel Berger	67 (-3)
Mackenzie Hughes	67 (-3)
Louis Oosthuizen	67 (-3)

Alex Noren

Starting the first round off No. 10 in the morning wave, Sweden's Alex Noren made five birdies and one bogey (the par-5 18th) for a 4-under 66. This is only Noren's second start at The Honda Classic (MC/2013).

Noren, who is a first-year member of the PGA TOUR, has made four TOUR starts this season, highlighted by a playoff loss to Jason Day in the Monday finish at the Farmers Insurance Open. His only other lead on TOUR came in the third round of the Farmers Insurance Open.

In 17 rounds this season, Noren has only one over-par score (73 – Farmers Insurance Open/R4).

Noren, who played collegiately at Oklahoma State with teammates Hunter Mahan and Pablo Martin, has 10 victories worldwide, most recently the 2017 BMW PGA Championship on the European Tour.

Webb Simpson

In his first start at The Honda Classic since 2011, Webb Simpson posted a 4-under 66 in the afternoon wave for his seventh first-round lead/co-lead on TOUR. Simpson's most recent lead/co-lead on TOUR was at the 2017 TOUR Championship (finished T13 in his first start in the FedExCup Playoffs finale since 2014).

In three previous starts at PGA National, Simpson has two MCs (2009, 2010) and a T24 result in 2011. His only other under-par score was a 67 in round two of 2011.

The four-time PGA TOUR winner has one top-10 in six starts on TOUR this season. He finished T4 at the Sony Open in Hawaii after weekend rounds of 63-65. In his last start, Simpson missed the cut in Phoenix.

Simpson played his first 15 holes at 4-under before a bogey at the second hole of "The Bear Trap," the par-4 16th. He bounced back with a birdie on the 17th, sinking a 30-foot putt.

Simpson leads the field in Strokes Gained: Putting (3.718) and needed 25 putts to complete the round.

First-Round Lead Notes

Since 2000, the only players to convert an 18-hole lead/co-lead into victory at The Honda Classic were Dudley Hart (2000), Jesper Parnevik (2001) and Justin Leonard (2003).

Through 15 events on the 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season, five players have converted an 18-hole lead/co-lead into a win. Most recently, Jon Rahm did so at the CareerBuilder Challenge.

Since the tournament moved to PGA National in 2007, the lowest opening-round score belongs to Rory McIlroy, who opened the 2014 event with a 7-under 63. The highest 18-hole lead since 2007 was Spencer Levin's 3-under 67 in 2011.

Additional Player Notes

Morgan Hoffmann opened with a 3-under 67 in his fifth consecutive start at The Honda Classic. Hoffmann was 6-for-6 in Scrambling in round one. Hoffmann finished T2 at the 2017 Honda Classic, his best PGA TOUR finish to date. Hoffmann is coming off five straight missed cuts and a WD at last week's Genesis Open. In December, Hoffmann revealed he was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy in November 2016.

Justin Thomas opened with his career-low round at PGA National, a 3-under 67. It marked his 10th consecutive opening round of par or better on the PGA TOUR. Thomas has played his last 14 rounds par or better, the best current streak on TOUR. In three previous starts at The Honda Classic, Thomas has two missed cuts (2015 and 2017) and a T3 (2016).

Daniel Berger, who lost in the 2015 Honda Classic playoff to Pádraig Harrington, posted one of two bogey-free rounds, opening with a 3-under 67. Since his runner-up in 2015, Berger missed the cut in 2016 and 2017, opening with scores of 73 and 72, respectively. Berger is making his seventh start of the 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season, where his lone missed cut came at last week's Genesis Open.

Starting his round on No. 10, Mackenzie Hughes played the back nine at 2-over, then made six birdies in seven holes to tie the lead at 4-under. With a bogey at the par-4 ninth hole, Hughes posted a 3-under 67 in his second start at The Honda Classic (2016/T66). Hughes has missed eight cuts in as many starts on TOUR this season. Today's 67 is his low round of the season, and just fifth under-par.

In his season debut, Louis Oosthuizen birdied three of his final four holes en route to a 3-under 67. On his final hole of the day, the par-4 ninth, Oosthuizen holed out from the bunker to make birdie and move to T3.

Making his fifth start at The Honda Classic and first since 2014 (WD), Tiger Woods opened with an even-par 70. En route to his lone top-10 finish in the event, Woods fired a final-round 8-under 62 in 2012 (T2). Following a missed cut at last week's Genesis Open, Woods is playing in consecutive weeks on the PGA TOUR for the first time since 2015 (PGA Championship/MC and Wyndham Championship/T10).

Tiger Woods hit 7 of 14 fairways and 10 of 18 greens. He salvaged par or better on six of his eight missed Greens in Regulation. In 12 rounds at PGA National, Woods has hit 58% of Greens in Regulation on "The Bear Trap" (holes 15-17).

FedExCup leader Patton Kizzire's TOUR-leading streak of 16 consecutive rounds at par or better came to an end with his 4-over 74, his first over-par round since a 71 in the final round of The RSM Classic last fall.

Defending Honda Classic champion Rickie Fowler opened with a 1-over 71 in his ninth start at PGA National. Only Jack Nicklaus has successfully defended a title at The Honda Classic (1977-78).

In his second start at The Honda Classic (2017/MC), Thomas Pieters only missed one fairway (No. 2), the best performance of the day. He recorded a 1-under 69.

Russell Henley posted the best round by a past Honda Classic champion in the field, a 2-under 68 (T8).

This week is the final opportunity for players to qualify for next week's World Golf Championships event, the WGC-Mexico Championship. Players not previously eligible can qualify by being inside the top 50 in the Official World Golf Ranking or the top 10 of the FedExCup standings following The Honda Classic. Past Honda Classic and WGC-Mexico Championship winner Adam Scott (3-over 73) is currently No. 58 in the Official World Golf Ranking.

Three players withdrew Thursday: Martin Kaymer (after the round/right wrist injury), Danny Lee (during the round) and Bud Cauley (after the round).

Miscellaneous Notes

Scoring Averages at the par-70 PGA National:

	Front 9	Back 9	Total	Cumulative
Thursday	35.483	37.154	72.636	---

"Bear Trap" averages – No. 15 (3.371/Fourth-toughest), No. 16 (4.406/Second-toughest), No. 17 (3.594/Toughest).

Bogey-free rounds: R1: Daniel Berger (67), Adam Schenk (69).