



## 2018 Valspar Championship

(The 18<sup>th</sup> of 44 events in the PGA TOUR Season)

Palm Harbor, Fla.

March 8-11, 2018

Purse: \$6,500,000 (winner: \$1,170,000)

Innisbrook Resort & GC (Copperhead Course)

Par/Yards: 36-35 - 71/7,340

### First-Round Notes – Thursday, March 8, 2018

Weather: Partly cloudy, with a high of 64. Wind NW 15-20 mph.

#### First-Round Leaderboard

Position	Name	Score
1	Corey Conners	67
T2	Whee Kim	68
T2	Kelly Kraft	68
T2	Nick Watney	68

#### Corey Conners

PGA TOUR rookie and Canada native Corey Conners made four birdies and one bogey en route to a 4-under 67. When he blocked his approach shot into the greenside bunker at the par-4 18<sup>th</sup>, he was unable to get up and down to save par.

Conners, who came into the week as third alternate, received his spot in the field when Kyle Stanley withdrew. He learned of his spot in the field after shooting a 71 in the Monday Qualifier, which would have not been enough to play his way in. The last alternate to win on the PGA TOUR was Vaughn Taylor at the 2016 AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.

Before this week, Conners' best position after any round on the PGA TOUR was T17 at the 2018 Farmers Insurance Open. (T29).

In relation to par, Conners' 4-under 67 ties his low round of the season (40 rounds).

Conners is making his 11<sup>th</sup> start of the 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season, with a T29 at the Farmers Insurance Open being his best finish.

Conners made his way to the PGA TOUR this season by virtue of a 41<sup>st</sup>-place finish on the 2017 Web.com Tour priority list. On that Tour in 2017, he claimed three top-10 finishes in 23 starts.

Conners, 26, hails from Listowel, Ontario, Canada and joins fellow Canadian National Team and Kent State Flashes alum Mackenzie Hughes on TOUR this season.

While at Kent State, Conners studied actuarial math, which is the study of the financial consequences of risk.

#### First-Round Lead Notes

Following an 8-under 63 in 2002, K.J. Choi is the only first-round leader of the event to hang on for the win.

Through 17 events in the 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season, five players with at least a share of the 18-hole lead have converted for the win. The last to do so was Jon Rahm at the CareerBuilder Challenge in January.

#### Whee Kim

Making his third start in the Valspar Championship, South Korea's Whee Kim made five birdies and two bogeys to open with a 3-under 68. He comes to Innisbrook this week following a withdrawal in 2017 and T53 in 2016. Thursday's 68 marks his first sub-par score in the event (six rounds).

Kim, who lost in a playoff at the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open early in the season, comes into this week on the heels of six consecutive missed cuts.

Kim is in search of his first career PGA TOUR title in his 89<sup>th</sup> start this week.

**Kelly Kraft**

With five birdies and two bogeys, Kelly Kraft opened with a 3-under 68 in his second start at the Valspar Championship (T65/2017). This marks the fourth occasion (of 12) on which he has opened a PGA TOUR event this season with a sub-par score.

Kraft, who missed the cut in four of his last six starts, comes to this week's Valspar Championship after finishing T8 at The Honda Classic two weeks ago.

Kraft made a return to the PGA TOUR this season by virtue of a 72<sup>nd</sup>-place finish on last season's FedExCup points list. In 71 TOUR starts, Kraft's closest brush with victory was a solo-second at the 2017 AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.

**Nick Watney**

Despite a bogey at his first hole of the day, No. 10, Nick Watney used three birdies and an eagle-3 at No. 1 to post a 3-under 68. He took a second bogey at the par-3 17<sup>th</sup>.

After making five starts in 2015-16, Watney's season ended due to back injury. He played the 2016-17 season on a Major Medical Extension, with 21 available events to earn 355 FedExCup points or \$528,010. He ended up ranked 120<sup>th</sup> in the FedExCup standings to maintain his fully-exempt status for the 2017-18 season.

In eight starts this season prior to this week, Watney's best finish was a T26 at the Waste Management Phoenix Open.

Watney is the winner of five PGA TOUR events, but hasn't won since THE NORTHERN TRUST in 2012.

**Tiger Woods**

In his first start at the Valspar Championship, Tiger Woods made five birdies (Nos. 1, 8, 10, 11 and 17) against four bogeys (Nos. 4, 9, 12 and 13) to open with a 1-under 70.

In four starts this season, this marks his first occasion to open with a sub-par score.

Woods played the "Snake Pit" holes, Nos. 16-18 in 1-under (par-birdie-par).

In rounds one and two, Woods is paired with Henrik Stenson and Jordan Spieth. The last time Woods and Spieth were paired together was the second round of the 2015 Waste Management Phoenix Open, when Woods posted a then-career-high 11-over 82 (in a non-major and as a professional).

Woods is making his fourth start of the 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season; T23/Farmers Insurance Open, MC/Genesis Open and 12<sup>th</sup>/The Honda Classic.

Woods is searching for his 80<sup>th</sup> career PGA TOUR title and first win since the 2013 World Golf Championships-Bridgestone Invitational. His last top-10 finish, a T10, came at the 2015 Wyndham Championship.

Of 79 PGA TOUR wins in 331 starts, 16 have come in the state of Florida (more than any other state).

In 40 PGA TOUR tournament debuts, Woods has won nine times. The last time Woods won an TOUR event in his first start was the 1999 World Golf Championships-Mexico Championship.

**Miscellaneous Notes**

Defending Valspar Championship winner Adam Hadwin opened with an even-par 71. En route to his win last year, Hadwin was six strokes back after round one at 3-under 68.

Following a birdie at the first hole, 2015 Valspar Championship winner Jordan Spieth took six bogeys en route to 5-over 76. He has now posted an opening-round score of par-or-higher in four of five starts at the Valspar Championship. Last year, he also posted 76 before ultimately finishing T18. Thursday's 76 also marks his fifth consecutive opening round in the 70s on TOUR this season.

In his first start at the Valspar Championship, Rory McIlroy opened with a 3-over 74. He opened with 10 straight pars, before taking a bogey at the par-4 second hole, a double-bogey-seven at No. 5, a birdie at the par-4 seventh and a bogey at the par-4 ninth. He hit just six of 13 fairways and found only seven of 18 greens in regulation. McIlroy has now opened with an over-par score in five of his last seven starts on the PGA TOUR.

Making his 750<sup>th</sup> career start on the PGA TOUR this week, 53-year-old Davis Love III opened with a 6-over 77. Love is making his sixth start in the Valspar Championship and first since 2014. His lone top-10 finish came in his first start of 2003 (T6).

There are two amateurs competing in this week's Valspar Championship, Dylan Meyer (70) and Ty Strafaci (75).

This week's Valspar Championship marks the last chance for players to get inside the top 64 in the Official World Golf Rankings and qualify for the World Golf Championships-Dell Technologies Match Play. The event will be contested the week of March 19-25 at Austin Country Club in Austin, Texas.

Nine past champions of the Valspar Championship in this week's field; Adam Hadwin/2017 (71), Charl Schwartzel/2016 (70), Jordan Spieth/2015 (76), Kevin Streelman/2013 (73), Luke Donald/2012 (70), Gary Woodland/2011 (71), Jim Furyk/2010 (70), Retief Goosen/2009, 2003 (75) and Sean O'Hair/2008 (71).

The last eight winners of the Valspar Championship all finished the season of their win inside the top 30 in FedExCup standings and advanced through all four FedExCup Playoffs events, highlighted by Jim Furyk (2010) and Jordan Spieth (2015), who went on to win FedExCup title the year of their win in Palm Harbor.

Kevin Na withdrew before his first round with a neck injury and was replaced in the field by Adam Schenk (71).

Bogey-free rounds:

R1: Jimmy Walker (69), Luke Donald (70).

Scoring Averages at the par-71 Copperhead Course:

	<b>Front 9</b>	<b>Back 9</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
R1	36.931	35.931	72.861	--

Snake Pit Statistics:

<b>Hole</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Scoring Average</b>
16	1	4.340
17	7	3.174
18	2	4.313

Only 27 players managed to break par in Thursday's first round (14 morning/13 afternoon).

The par-4 16<sup>th</sup> hole was the hardest in round one with an average of 4.340. The easiest hole was the par-5 11<sup>th</sup>, which played to an average of 4.667.