

FOR RELEASE: March 15, 2018

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**Hong Kong’s Jason Hak snares two eagles to lead Chengdu Championship with 64**

CHENGDU, SICHUAN, CHINA—Hong Kong’s Jason Hak bagged two eagles in an 8-under 64 Thursday to hold a two-stroke lead after the first round of the Chengdu Championship, the opening event on this season’s PGA TOUR Series-China.

Hak, 24, also made six birdies at Luxehills International Country Club and was at 10-under before a double bogey on the par-3 17th slowed his run. American Ryann Ree and England’s James Maw, who secured his place in the field through the Monday qualifier, both shot 66.

Englishmen Callum Tarren and William Harrold carded 67s to share fourth with China’s Bowen Xiao, Chinese Taipei’s Chiehpo Lee, Australian DJ Loypur and American Paul Imondi.

Hak, who finished 17th on the Order of Merit in 2016, is searching for his first victory on PGA TOUR Series-China, which has resumed after a year’s hiatus.

“I’m feeling great. I was hitting it really good today. Everything was going my way,” said Hak, who’s based in Beijing. “I hit some good iron shots, made some putts, and turned in a 64.”

Hak eagled the 525-yard, par-5 seventh after “two great shots,” sticking his approach to six feet and making the putt. He also eagled the 14th after holing out with his 9-iron second shot on the 438-yard par-4.

“I was really on fire. We just wanted to shoot as low as we could. I was playing really well and was at 10-under but had a little bump coming in on 17,” said Hak, whose caddie is Qiliang Pang, who worked for Zecheng Dou when the current PGA TOUR player won four times on the 2016 PGA TOUR Series-China.

“Today’s already history, so now I’m focused on getting a good rest so I can come out tomorrow and keep the momentum going,” Hak added.

Ree, 24, shot nine birdies in Wednesday’s pro-am and added another six Thursday, when he birdied his opening hole on 10, bogeyed Nos. 14 and 15 and then eagled the par-5 16th.

“I’m feeling pretty good. I struggled a little bit on my first nine, but on my second nine I started making putts and everything started going my way,” said the Californian, who is of Korean descent.

“I think my strong point is my driver, and I was able to drive it pretty well today and had a lot of looks at birdies today. I’d say the course suits me, so I’m just hoping that I can keep plugging away and keep my momentum going.”

Maw, 28, was the best of several Englishmen on the leaderboard, followed up strongly on the 69 he shot to finish second in the Monday qualifier. Maw holed out from a bunker to eagle the par-5 seventh, also carding five birdies to go with a bogey on No. 4.

“I got off to a good start and was 2-under after three and dropped a silly one on the fourth,” said Maw, who played three European Challenge Tour events last year, sharing fourth at the Bridgestone Challenge in England as his best finish.

“I then holed a shot from out of nowhere on the seventh. I actually didn’t hit a very good second shot and hit a 3-wood into the bunker. I prayed it wasn’t plugged and then got there and it was nice. I just splashed it out and ran up the hill and it dropped in.”

A “rusty” Tarren, who plays out of the same club as Maw, is playing only his second tournament since December, but his game plan of plotting his way around the course worked well.

Eighth on the Series’ 2016 Order of Merit, the big-hitting 28-year-old from Darlington had four birdies on the front nine, dropped his only shot of the day on the par-3 12th and responded with two more birdies over his final three holes.

“I’m pretty happy. I had the ball under control all day. On the front nine I didn’t really put a foot wrong. I feel I’ve got a good game plan for this course, and I’ve just got to stick to that and keep hitting good shots,” said Tarren, looking for his first victory on the Tour after three runner-up finishes.

“The course sets up decent because you’ve got to hit it to spots on a lot of holes where everyone’s going to be hitting to. I haven’t really hit many drivers, just 5-woods into spots where I know I can hit the green and get it close to the flag.”

The first eight of the year’s 14 events were announced on Wednesday. The Chongqing Championship will be held at Poly Golf Club next week and will be followed by two events in May, two in June and at least two in July.

Every tournament on this year’s PGA TOUR Series-China offers RMB 1.5 million, a 25-percent increase over purse levels from 2016.

The PGA TOUR established PGA TOUR Series-China in 2014 as its third international developmental tour, following in the footsteps of PGA TOUR Latinoamerica and the Mackenzie Tour – PGA TOUR Canada. Since its inception, PGA TOUR Series-China players have received Official World Golf Ranking points for top finishes at official tournaments.

**PGA TOUR Series-China 2018: First eight of 14 events**

March 15-18: Chengdu Championship, Luxehills International Country Club, Chengdu, Sichuan

March 22-25: Chongqing Championship, Poly Golf Club, Chongqing

May 3-6: Changsha Championship, Hunan Dragon Lake International Golf Club, Changsha, Hunan

May 10-13: Haikou Championship, 3 Miles Golf Club, Haikou, Hainan

June 7-10: Guilin Championship, Guilin Landscape Golf Club, Guilin, Guangxi

June 14-17: Kunming Championship, Yulongwan Golf Club, Kunming, Yunnan

July 12-15: Yantai Championship, Nanshan International Golf Club, Yantai, Shandong

July 19-22: Qingdao Championship, Tiger Beach Golf Club, Qingdao, Shandong

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**About PGA TOUR-China**

PGA TOUR Series-China is a professional golf tour featuring open-competition to all nationalities. PGA TOUR Series-China attracts players, mainly from Asia and other Pacific Rim countries, although members have come from five continents. PGA TOUR Series-China is owned and operated by the PGA TOUR and sanctioned by the General Administration of Sport of China. It operates in partnership with the China Golf Association and Shankai Sports. The top-five money-winners from PGA TOUR Series-China earn Web.com Tour membership for the following season. PGA TOUR Series-China’s website is PGATOURCHINASERIES.COM. Information on the Tour can also be found at PGATOUR.COM, the No. 1 site in golf.

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