**Three sit atop the leaderboard with 18 holes to play at the Mexican Open**

TIJUANA, Mexico—Colin Featherstone didn’t hit the ball as well during Saturday’s third round of the 59th Mexican Open. But he did roll in a left-to-right, 14-foot birdie putt on the 17th hole to get to 13-under and then got up and down for par on the 18th. Meanwhile, Austin Smotherman, also at 13-under, just missed a downhill birdie putt on No. 18 that would have given him the outright lead, while Brazil’s Alexandre Rocha made a 10-foot birdie on the closing hole 30 minutes earlier to also get to 13-under. With that turn of events, it became a three-way tie at the top of the leaderboard with 18 holes to play in Mexico’s national open. Of the three players with a share of the lead, it’s been Rocha who has been the most impressive over the last 36 holes, shooting a pair of 65s at Club Campestre de Tijuana. But Smotherman (65-66) and Featherstone (66-67) have done enough to ensure that Sunday’s final round should be a battle. American MJ Maguire is a stroke back, tied for fourth, while local favorite, Mexico City’s Juan Pablo Hernandez, fired his second consecutive 66, and he sits at 11-under and tied for fifth with American Eric Steger. They are only two strokes behind the leaders.

**Did You Know Colin Featherstone**

played Club Campestre de Tijuana one other time before this week? He was a 15-year-old, and it was a recreational round with his father.

**Did You Know Austin Smotherman**

played in his first PGA TOUR event—the 2017 A&T Byron Nelson—after receiving a sponsor’s exemption? Smotherman, who played collegiate golf at Dallas’ Southern Methodist University, opened with a 79 at the Dallas-area tournament, rebounded with a 69 in the second round only to still miss the cut.

**Did You Know Alexandre Rocha**

has one win on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica, at the 2015 Brazil Open, where he defeated Americans Kent Bulle and Keith Mitchell?

**Key Information**

* Alexandre Rocha had a relatively slow start to his third round, making bogey on No. 1 and sitting at 1-over for the day, through seven holes. Then his putts started falling. The 40-year-old Rocha made birdies on Nos. 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16 and 18—with only one more bogey, on No. 14, on his card.
* With five birdies on the front nine, Austin Smotherman made the turn at Club Campestre de Tijuana with a 5-under 30. He didn’t make a birdie the rest of the way, with eight pars and a bogey, on No. 14, for a back-nine 36.
* Of the three 54-hole leaders, only Colin Featherstone didn’t make bogey at No. 14, toughest hole on the course through three rounds. Featherstone was able to manage a par-4 there.
* For the week, Rocha is 2-over on No. 14, while Smotherman and Featherstone are even-par there. Smotherman is the only player to birdie the hole (in the second round), while Featherstone has made three consecutive pars.
* The low round of the day came courtesy of Brazil’s Rodrigo Lee, who went out early in the day and shot a bogey-free, 7-under 63—with four birdies on his front nine and three on the back. Lee’s 63 was two shots better than the next-best score Saturday (Alexandre Rocha).
* With 18 holes remaining, 24 players have shot three consecutive under-par rounds on the par-70 course.
* Besides Juan Pablo Hernandez, five other Mexicans made the cut: Santiago Gavino (3-under), Alfredo Ruiz (3-under), Adrian Rodriguez (3-under) and amateurs Raul Pereda (3-under) and Alvaro Ortiz Becerra (2-under).
* Order of Merit leader and Guatemala Stella Artois Open winner Ben Polland opened with a 2-under 68 and followed that with a 69.He goes into the weekend tied for 44th.

**Quotable**

“I battled today. I didn’t hit it as well as I did the last couple of days, so I tried to stay as patient as possible and make pars when I was out of position and take advantage of the birdie putts I had, and I did that pretty well today.” –Colin Featherstone

“My fiancée (Samantha) and my future father-in-law were with me today in the crowd. So, it was nice to have a little hometown support. The crowds out there were really fun today.” –Colin Featherstone

“It was a hot start on the front nine. I kind of jumped out. I knew I could get things going, and I kept making birdies, kept making birdies.” –Austin Smotherman

“Fourteen is the toughest hole on the course, playing straight into the wind today. You have to be on your toes, be thinking and hitting solid shots because if you don’t you’re going to be stuck short-sided in a bunker or trying to get up and down from tough spots.” –Austin Smotherman

“I knew I had the lead (on the front nine). I’m kind of bummed. I had a lot of (birdie) looks on the backside. But if they don’t go (in), I try not to get frustrated and just keep playing.” –Austin Smotherman

**Tournament Fast Fact**

With this tournament not held in 2017, Juan Pablo Hernandez has a chance to make it two consecutive victories at this tournament by Mexicans. In 2016, Sebastián Vázquez won the 58th Mexican Open. In those 58 previous playings of the Mexican Open, four players from Mexico have won the tournament five times. The first winner from Mexico was Ernesto Perez, in 1970, and he won again in 1976. Esteban Toledo took the 2000 title, and Pablo Fernández won in 2002, followed by Vázquez 14 years later.

**Third-Round Weather Report**

Partly cloudy and mild, with a high of 63. Wind variable at 9-13 mph.