**First-Round Leaderboard**

**Neuquen Argentina Classic**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pos.** | **Name** | **Scores** | **OOM** |
| 1 | Tano Goya (Argentina) | 32-34—66 (-6) | 37 |
| 2 | Clodomiro Carranza (Argentina) | 35-32—67 (-5) | 36 |
| 3 | Harry Higgs (U.S.) | 33-35—68 (-4) | 5 |
| T4 | Matthew Pinizzotto (U.S.) | 35-34—69 (-3) | 98 |
| T4 | Matias Simaski (Argentina) | 34-35—69 (-3) | 70 |
| T4 | Victor Lange (South Africa) | 33-36—69 (-3) | 118 |

**Goya stays hot, takes lead in Argentina**

NEUQUEN, Argentina—Tano Goya has made the most of his limited PGA TOUR Latinoamerica opportunities already this season, and nothing much changed Thursday during the first round of the Neuquen Argentina Classic. Goya came in hot and stayed that way, shooting a 6-under 66 at Chapelco Golf and Resort to take a one-shot lead over fellow Argentine and playing partner Clodomiro Carranza. Harry Higgs, the Tour’s most recent winner—at the Diners Club Peru Open—is alone in third two shots behind Goya.

After splitting his time this season in Europe, on both the European Tour and the European Challenge Tour, Goya returned to Latin America figuring he might give his game a bit of a rest. Then a couple of invitations to play materialized, and it’s been a whole lot of under-par scores since. Goya tied for 19th at the San Luis Championship in Mexico, was a runner-up finisher at the Volvo Chile Open before tying for sixth at the Diners Club Peru Open. In that three-tournament, 12-round stretch, 11 of his 12 rounds have been under-par, with eight of them in the 60s. It was another sub-70 round here in the first of consecutive events in Argentina.

Goya opened his round with a birdie at the par-5 10th and made three more birdies on his remaining par-5s. He made the turn to his second nine at 2-under and reeled off three consecutive birdies on his 10th, 11th and 12th holes (Nos. 1, 2 and 3). Goya’s lone bogey of the day came at No. 16.

At 37th on the Order of Merit with three tournaments to play, Goya’s current goal is to finish inside the top 10 so he can qualify for Web.com Tour Qualifying Tournament next month. Beyond that, finishing as one of the the top-five money-winners would give him immediate Web.com Tour membership. And a win would suddenly put him in the mix as a player who could win the money title. The 30-year-old from Alta Gracia did nothing in the opening round to diminish those goals.

**Did you know Tano Goya** had his two best performances in Europe in back-to-back starts in May and June? He tied for 15th at the Challenge de Espana on the European Tour then turned around and tied for 19th at the Challenge Tour’s Scottish Hydro Challenge.

**Key Information**

Harry Higgs turned in his fifth consecutive under-par round with his opening 68. In his last 11 rounds, dating to the third round of the San Luis Championship, only a 2-over 73 in the final round of the Volvo Chile Open stopped the streak.

Order of Merit leader Nicolas Echavarria had a solid start to his tournament, shooting an even-par 72, leaving him tied for 15th after the first round. Marcelo Rozo, No. 2 on the Order of Merit, struggled to an opening 75 and is tied for 47th.

There are eight Argentine players in the top 10 after 18 holes. Besides leader Tano Goya and Clodomiro Carranza, alone in second, the others are Matias Simaski (tied for fourth), Andre Gallegos and Cesar Agustin Costilla (tied for seventh) and Tomas Beitia, Ignacio Marino and Jorge Monroy (tied for ninth).

Clodomiro Carranza will enter the second round alone in second place. The six-year professional won in his rookie season, at the 2012 Brazil Open. He is winless since then, although he won two 2012 tournaments in his native Argentina to go with his 2008 Tour de las Americas win at the Carlos Franco Invitational.

Matthew Pinizzoto had a solid start to his Neuquen Argentina Classic, shooting a 3-under 69. He’s tied with Matias Simaski and Victor Lange in fourth place. Pinizzoto has never won a PGA TOUR Latinoamerica tournament, his best finish a tie for 10th at this year’s 59th Abierto Mexicano de Golf. This is Pinizzoto’s 15th career PGA TOUR Latinoamerica start. There were an additional eight even-par scores.

With difficult scoring conditions because of the wind, there were only 14 under-par rounds Thursday.

**Quotable**

 “It was good. It was tough out there and got windy at the end.” –**Tano Goya**

“The key was from the tee I hit it pretty solid. I took advantage of the par-5s. I was 4-under on those.”– **Tano Goya**

“I think it’s tough because normally it’s very windy, but the direction changes a lot. And you have the mountains and the trees. Sometimes, the wind doesn’t affect a shot as much as you think it will. That makes it tough to control the distance.” – **Tano Goya**

“It was very difficult today. I hit a lot of fairways, and that really helped. Playing out of the rough with this wind, you never know.” **–Harry Higgs**

 “I think we’re going to have more difficult conditions the next couple of days. Hopefully I can keep it going.” **–Harry Higgs**

“I think I was fortunate to get an afternoon tee time today after a long day of travel.” **–Harry Higgs**

“We played pretty well and solid. I think it gets contagious. Both of us got off to a good start and then we kept going and didn’t make many bogeys.” – **Tano Goya on playing with Clodomiro Carranza**

“Some of these holes [the wind] feels one way then it blows a completely different way. I’m very, very satisfied with the start.” **–Harry Higgs**

**Tournament Fast Fact**

A year ago, the tournament preceding the Argentine Open was the NEC Argentina Classic. Julian Etulain won that tournament at the Las Praderas de Lujan Country Club by a stroke over Colin Featherstone and Jared Wolfe.

**First-Round Weather Report**

Mostly sunny and warm, with a high of 90. Wind SW at 12-17 mph, with gusts to 20 mph.