**Álvarez and Maguire open two-shot lead after 18 holes at Puerto Plata DR Open**

PUERTO PLATA, Dominican Republic—Uruguay’s Juan Álvarez tied for fourth at the 2017 Lexus Peru Open. That finish still represents his best PGA TOUR Latinoamérica performance for the soon-to-be 25-year-old from Montevideo. Álvarez, who will celebrate a birthday Sunday, did plenty Thursday during the opening round of the Puerto Plata DR Open to indicate he’ll improve on that top-five finish from a year ago. Álvarez shot a 7-under 64 Thursday—matching what American MJ Maguire turned in—and the duo takes a two-shot, 18-hole lead on the Playa Dorada Golf Course. Six players from five countries are tied for second, at 5-under. They are Americans Jordan Rodgers and Mark Silvers, Colombia’s Ricardo Celia, the Dominican Republic’s Willy Pumarol, Argentina’s Andres Gallegos and Mexico’s Santiago Gavino.

It was Álvarez and Maguire who had their way with the Robert Trent Jones, Sr.-designed course. Álvarez overcame bogeys on Nos. 4 and 8, with four front-nine birdies and then turned in a flawless back nine, with an additional five birdies. They played most of their round in strong, gusting wind, reaching as much as 18 mph.

Maguire, winner of the U.S. Qualifying Tournament in Florida in mid-January, already has a runner-up finish this season, tying for second at the 87 Abierto OSDE del Centro in Cordoba, Argentina, in April. He is 12th on the Order of Merit. Maguire did the bulk of his damage on his first five holes of his round, as he made eagles at Nos. 1 and 5 and added birdies at the third and fourth.

**Did you know**

Juan Álvarez had 10 3s on his scorecard Thursday? Of those 3s, four were pars and six were birdies. He made birdie-3s on Nos. 3, 9, 11, 14, 15 and 16.

**Key Information**

Despite a disappointing drive on the short, par-5 18th, Willy Pumarol was still able to make an easy birdie there. After laying up with his second shot, he faced an 84-yard approach, which he hit to one foot for the tap-in birdie that took him to 3-under at the time. Pumarol played the back nine first.

Willy Pumarol’s father, Willy, is serving as his caddie this week.

MJ Maguire began his day by hitting a 7-iron on the first hole to three feet, and he calmly made the eagle. He the reached the fringe of the green at the par-5 fifth hole and chipped in for another eagle there. Prior to Thursday, Maguire had made three eagles all season in 20 rounds.

Despite his Order of Merit position and his victory at the U.S. Qualifying Tournament, which makes him exempt into tournaments, MJ Maguire had to Monday qualify to play this week. He thought he would play in the Web.com Tour’s BMW Charity Pro-Am in South Carolina. The sponsor’s exemption he thought he would receive into that tournament was a restricted-spot invitation, for Web.com Tour members only. Since Maguire had not signed up to play in the Dominican Republic, he had to Monday-qualify.

Mark Silvers was bogey-free in the opening round, with five birdies on his scorecard to go with 13 pars. Other bogey-free rounds came from Andres Gallegos (66), Chris Killmer (67), Eric Steger (68) and Juan Pablo Luna (68).

Matthew Schall had an adventuresome back nine to open his first round. He double-bogeyed his first hole and then bogeyed the 13th to sit at 3-over through four holes. Schall then birdied the 15th and 18th holes and eagled No. 16. He made the turn and promptly birdie No. 10. He then made eight consecutive pars to finish his round. He fired a 69 and is tied for 24th.

**Quotable**

“It felt comfortable all day. On the second nine, I started making some putts.” –**Juan Álvarez**

“The greens are a little slow for my taste, but this is for everyone in the tournament.” –**Juan Álvarez**

“I have the same confidence as last year, and although I have not had the start to the season that I expected, anything can happen. There is still a lot of golf, and I hope to continue with this good play.” – **Juan Álvarez**

“It feels great to be back in the DR playing in this tournament. I’m always thankful for the opportunity to play in front of my people. It’s a special week each time we play here in the country.” –**Willy Pumarol**

“It’s more special since I have my dad caddying for me this week. This is the first time he’s taken care of the big bag.” –**Willy Pumarol**

“It was nice to get a low one in today, and I hope to keep it going for the rest of the week.” –**MJ Maguire**

“That was a really nice start” –**MJ Maguire,** on his 5-under start through five holes that included two eagles

“The wind was blowing all day, which was tough. I just had to pick and choose when I could be aggressive. When I hit a good drive and had a wedge in my hand, I could then maybe attack the pin a little bit more.” –**MJ Maguire**

**Tournament Fast Fact**

Past PGA TOUR Latinoamerica champions in the Dominican Republic are Oscar Fraustro (2012), Ryan Blaum (2013), Michael Buttacavoli (2014), Rodolfo Cazaubon (2015), Timothy O’ Neal (2016) and Tee-K Kelly (2017).

**First-Round Weather Report**

Mostly cloudy, humid and warm, with a high of 85. Wind E at 13-17 mph.