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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Vince Covello	63 (-8, TC)
	Ben Martin	63 (-8, TC)
	Matt Harmon	64 (-8, CV)
4	Chris Baker	65 (-7, CV)
	Justin Lower	65 (-7, CV)

Ben Martin, Vince Covello and Matt Harmon take first-round lead at BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by SYNEX Corporation

GREENVILLE, South Carolina – Vince Covello and Ben Martin opened in 8-under 63 at Thornblade Club, while Matt Harmon carded an 8-under 64 at The Cliffs Valley on Thursday to kick off the BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by SYNEX Corporation. The field is playing each of the two courses over the first two days before competing at Thornblade Club over the weekend.

Martin, a Greenville resident, made his first Web.com Tour start since 2013, a year when he won twice on Tour to earn his PGA TOUR card. He competed on the PGA TOUR from 2014-2018 before a back injury put him on the shelf. This is his first rehab start since January's Sony Open in Hawaii.

"I haven't played competitively in a while, but I started to feel healthy the last three or four weeks and got to play a fair amount and got to shoot some good scores at home," said Martin, who estimated he had played Thornblade Club more than 100 times. "I felt confident going in but you never know what to expect under you're put under the gun."

Martin, who carded four birdies on each nine, is being helped by a familiar face. Crawford Reeves, a former teammate of Martin's at Clemson University, is toting the bag this week for Martin. Reeves previously competed in the BMW Charity Pro-Am for three years from 2014-2016.

"My full-time caddie, because I was out so long, started working for Lexi on the LPGA Tour," said Martin. "Unfortunately, Crawford didn't qualify for the U.S. Open on Monday, so he was available to caddie for me. He grew up here at Thornblade, so I trust him with the lines and his reads."

Covello got off to a hot start, tallying four birdies in his first six holes before sinking a 75-foot birdie putt at the ninth for a front-nine 30. Birdies at Nos. 11, 13 and 15 were offset by bogeys at the 14th and 18th, and an eagle at the par-5 16th solidified his spot atop the leaderboard.

"I hit both par-5s in two on the front nine and then made a bomb on the ninth for birdie from the front of the green...That wasn't expected," said Covello. "On 16 I think I had about 212 yards to the flag. I hit it to about 10 feet or so, right behind the hole. That was the first putt I've made with any significance with the flagstick in. I'm not that guy that leaves it in, I usually take it out unless it is a really long putt but that worked out. I was thrilled."



The Philadelphia product was paired with ESPN Senior Golf Analyst Michael Collins, also originally from Philadelphia, in the unique pro-am four-ball format.

“Playing today in the pro-am format was a lot of fun,” said Covello, who played the four par-5s in 5-under. “It keeps things lighter than usual. We had two great amateur partners today. Josh Scobee was out there [with Steve Wheatcroft] and then my partner, Michael Collins, was a blast to play with.”

Over at The Cliffs Valley, Matt Harmon carded the round of the day with a bogey-free 8-under 64. The co-lead marks the first round Harmon has led/co-led a round on the Web.com Tour in his 113th start. The 34-year-old has made five of nine cuts but has finished no higher than T30 (KC Golf Classic) this year on Tour.

“I got off to a good start by hitting some wedges close,” said Harmon. “I think starting out on the back nine was a little bit of an advantage because you can start off with some easy shots and get on a roll right away. I knocked a couple of putts in early and then it was off to the races.”

Harmon reflected on his own high school basketball days while playing with his amateur partner Eddie Payne, the former basketball coach at USC-Upstate.

“I played in high school, but I wasn’t very good,” said Harmon. “I think we won maybe five or six game every year, so it wasn’t saying much. I was usually on the bench. Running around trying to get some trash buckets after some rebounds or something like that.”

Chris Baker and Justin Lower carded a pair of 7-under 65s to sit T4 after the opening 18 holes. Each player could lock up their first PGA TOUR card with a win this week.

Second-round tee times will run at both Thornblade Club and The Cliffs Valley in two waves from 7:00 a.m. to 1:49 p.m. on Friday.

THURSDAY NOTES:

* Thursday’s weather: Isolated showers. High of 84. Winds W/SW at 5-10 mile per hour.

* The BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by SYNEX Corporation is one of the more unique events on the Web.com Tour’s schedule. It is hosted on two courses, Thornblade Club and The Cliffs Valley, and pairs a pro with an amateur for the first 36 holes. After 36 holes, a cut is made to the top-65 professionals (and ties), the top-10 amateurs and the top-six celebrities.

* Notable celebrities in the field include 11-time Pro Bowler Brett Favre, Larry the Cable Guy, Ivan Rodriguez, Ozzie Smith, Willie Robertson, Lucas Black, Patrick Peterson and Brian Baumgartner.

* The 18-hole co-lead is the first round Matt Harmon has ever led/co-led on the Web.com Tour. His highest rank after a round in 2019 coming in was solo-fourth after the first round of the KC Golf Classic. Vince Covello led after the first round (and co-led after the second round) before going on to earn his first Web.com Tour victory earlier this year at the Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by MISTRAS.

* Currently sitting at 717 points on the season, Covello would mathematically earn his PGA TOUR card (based on TOUR projections) with a three-way tie for fourth or better this week. The projection to finish in The 25 is at 830 points.

* Despite missing his last three cuts, Justin Lower (T4) opened with a 7-under 65. The Malone University alum hit 12 of 14 fairways (T13) and 16 of 18 greens (T8).



- * Chris Baker, who led after the second and third round last week before falling to T4, carded an opening-round 65. The round was his fifth round in the 60s in his last six rounds.
- * Michael Miller (T6) carded his best round of the season – and tied for the best round of his career – with a 6-under 65. He had previously only carded two rounds in the 60s this year, both 68s. The only other 65 of his Web.com Tour career came at the 2014 BMW Charity Pro-Am.
- * Greenville resident Kyle Thompson (T124, +1) is playing in his last event as a professional. He will retire after the BMW Charity Pro-Am, 22 years after beginning his professional career at the 1997 BMW Charity Pro-Am.
- * Andrew Novak, a Wofford College alum in nearby Spartanburg, opened with a 5-under 67 on The Cliffs Valley to sit T11.
- * Davis Riley (-2, T69) played with friend and fellow Hattiesburg, Mississippi, native Brett Favre. Riley is looking to earn special temporary membership through a 19th-place finish or better, passing the threshold of the No. 100 player on the money list from 2018. Despite having no status this year, Riley has Monday qualified into four events (earning medalist honors in three). He bogeyed his first three holes before rebounding to reach 2-under.
- * This week’s purse is \$700,000, with \$126,000 going to the winner. The champion will also earn 500 points in the Web.com Tour points system.
- * Forty-nine former Web.com Tour champions are competing in the field, amounting to 75 victories, as well as seven PGA TOUR champions (equaling 10 victories).
- * The par-3 11th hole (207 yards) ranked as the toughest hole on Thursday at Thornblade Club with an average of 3.250. The par-3 second hole (178 yards) ranked as the toughest hole at The Cliffs Valley with an average of 3.125.
- * The par-5 second hole (575 yards) ranked as the easiest hole on Thursday at Thornblade Club with an average of 4.475. The par-5 ninth hole (578 yards) ranked as the easiest hole at The Cliffs Valley with an average of 4.423.

* Thornblade Club Scoring Averages:

	Front (35)	Back (36)	Total (71)	Cumulative
R1	33.863	35.968	69.830	

* The Cliffs Valley Scoring Averages:

	Front (36)	Back (36)	Total (72)	Cumulative
R1	34.798	34.948	69.746	

*For highlights from today’s round, or any 2019 event visit <http://bit.ly/webcom2019video>
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