First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Vince Covello	63 (-8)
2	Rafael Campos	64 (-7)
	Trevor Cone	64 (-7)
	Paul Haley II	64 (-7)
	Greg Yates	64 (-7)

Vince Covello opens with 63 to lead
Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by MISTRAS

BROUSSARD, Louisiana – After beginning the day with a bogey at the first, Vince Covello went on a birdie binge to card an 8-under 63 and claim the first-round lead at the Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by MISTRAS. The 36-year-old rattled off eight birdies over his final 13 holes at Le Triomphe Golf & Country Club.

"Some of the best rounds start with a bogey," said Covello. "It kind of gets you fired up early. It was a three-putt bogey so I didn't do anything really too bad. I left myself in a bad place after the second shot and managed to get it on the green and missed a three-footer for par."

On a course that traditionally plays tougher on the back nine, Covello tallied five birdies over that stretch to close with a bogey-free 30. One of his birdies came at the par-4 13th, nicknamed "Gator's Jaw," which ranked as the fourth-toughest hole on the Web.com Tour in 2018.

"Obviously to get through 12 and 13, if you play them well you can get rewarded and if not then they can snap up and bite you," said Covello. "To play those two in 2-under is not something you expect every day. That kept the momentum going and obviously getting a couple more through that stretch was great."

Covello, a University of North Florida alum, hit 17/18 greens in regulation and got up-and-down on the lone exception. The 63 was his lowest round on Tour since the 2018 KC Golf Classic where he finished T11. In 79 career events, Covello has two top-10 finishes including a T3 at the 2017 Ellie Mae Classic at TPC Stonebrae. This year, he earned a T11 finish in his only made cut of the season at The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club.

"I was glad to get a good start in the Bahamas with a T11 in Abaco," said Covello. "I got some money in the bank and it got me rolling a little bit to know that I can play and compete, top-25 and almost top-10."

Rafael Campos, who earned his first Web.com Tour win in Abaco in January, joined Trevor Cone, Paul Haley II and Greg Yates at T2 (7-under 64) after 18 holes. The Virginia Commonwealth University alum may have had the shot of the day with a 3-wood from 265 yards to three feet for a stress-free eagle at the par-5 seventh hole.

"I had 247 to the front into the wind and 265 to the pin, which was a tough pin," said Campos. "I knew if I laid up it was going to be a tough wedge shot because you have to be really precise, most likely you're

going to have a 20-footer short of the hole. I told my caddie I wanted to put it as close as possible to the green even though he thought we should lay up…I landed short of the green and it trickled all the way down there."

Haley II is seeking his first top-10 finish since 2012 when he earned four top-10s (including a win) to finish 12th on the money list and earn his PGA TOUR card. Cone, who burst onto the scene as a rookie last year with a win at the Ellie Mae Classic at TPC Stonebrae, is seeking his second made cut and first top-25 of the year. Yates is looking for his first top-10 finish since a runner-up at the Greater Dallas Open in his Web.com Tour debut.

Three players sit tied for sixth at 6-under (65). Second-round tee times will run from 7:20 a.m. to 2:10 p.m. on Friday.

THURSDAY NOTES:

* Thursday's weather: Sunny, high of 71, winds N/NW at 4-14 miles per hour.

* This week's purse is $550,000, with $99,000 going to the champion. The champion will also earn 500 points in the Web.com Tour points system.

* Forty-two former Web.com Tour champions are competing in the field, amounting to 56 victories, as well as 12 PGA TOUR champions (equaling 30 victories).

* Casey Wittenberg, one of three former champions in the field, opened with a 5-under 66 to sit T9. Wittenberg is one of two players to win the event twice (2012, 2017). His 24-under 260 in 2012 stands as a tournament record (tied with two others).

* Ben Taylor, a local favorite after winning a national championship at LSU in 2015, opened with a 6-under 65 to sit T6. Taylor earned a perfect 3-0 record in match play at the 2015 NCAA Championships to lead the Tigers to their first national title in 60 years.

* Jacob Bergeron, another former LSU golfer, Monday qualified to earn entry and make his Web.com Tour debut. The 20-year-old carded a 1-under 70 in his first round on Tour. Bergeron turns 21 on Monday, March 25.

* Zach Edmondson is also making his Web.com Tour debut this week after Monday qualifying in. Edmondson sprinted out of the gate, reaching 6-under through seven holes before settling for a 6-under 65.

* Entering the day as the first alternate, Lee Hodges earned entry after a late withdrawal by Wes Roach. Hodges took advantage with a 3-under 68 to sit T24.

* Brian Rowell, who lives behind the eighth tee, is 1-under after the first round.

* The par-4 14th hole (513 yards) ranked as the toughest hole on the course on Thursday with a scoring average of 4.340.

* The par-5 fifth hole (560 yards) ranked as the easiest hole on Thursday. The hole played to an average of 4.493 and yielded four eagles and 72 birdies to the 144-player field.

* The Le Triomphe Golf & Country Club Scoring Averages:

	Front (36)	Back (35)	Total (71)	Cumulative
R1	34.826	35.528	70.354	

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