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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Matt Atkins	62 (-8)
2	Matthew NeSmith	63 (-7)
3	Mark Hubbard	64 (-6)
	Edward Loar	64 (-6)
	Michael Hebert	64 (-6)
	Todd Baek	64 (-6)

Matt Atkins takes lead in fog-shortened first round at Ellie Mae Classic at TPC Stonebrae

Hayward, Calif. — Matt Atkins carded an 8-under 62 on Thursday to take the first-round lead at the Ellie Mae Classic at TPC Stonebrae. After a one-hour fog delay pushed back morning tee times, a second fog delay at 6:50 p.m. forced play to be called for the day.

“Just talking golf, it was a solid round,” said Atkins. “When I mishit a shot, I was still in a good spot today. I had a couple of holes where I really needed to scramble at the end, but I saved par. I took care of the par-5s and I drove it on the green on the one drivable hole on the back nine. Overall it was a good round.”

Atkins is coming off a more eventful couple of weeks than most; 13 days ago he and his wife Jill welcomed their first child, Audrey Claire Atkins. He withdrew after the first round two weeks ago in Omaha when he learned Jill was in labor back home in North Augusta, South Carolina.

“Some people have brought up to me people sometimes playing better in their first event back after having a baby,” said Atkins. “With your perspective changing, I could see that having an effect. But I’m definitely out here playing hard. It’s a win-win. If I don’t play well then I won’t get into the Finals and will go home to spend time with my family which is important to me anyways. If I do play well, then I’ll still go see them for a couple of days before getting to play in the Finals and have a chance at a TOUR card. So I’m just free-wheeling it right now.”

Starting on the 10th hole, Atkins birdied four out of his first six holes and turned at 4-under 31. On his second nine, Atkins continued his bogey-free ways and added birdies at Nos. 3, 4, 6 and 9 to reach 8-under 62. The 62 was his lowest round since the 2017 Korn Ferry Tour Championship.

While he didn’t make any long putts, Atkins credited improved putting to his low round. The round was his first in the 60s since late June.

“My putter is usually the strongest club in my bag, but the last two years it has been pretty disappointing,” said Atkins. “I was home last week and found a little something. I was on my way to feeling better and it really came together last week. Now I have two weeks left to see what happens.”

Currently at No. 137 in the season-long Korn Ferry Tour points standings, Atkins needs a strong finish over the final two tournaments of the Regular Season to reach the top 75. Finishing in the top 75 earns a spot in the Korn Ferry Tour Finals as well as retention of full Korn Ferry Tour status for the 2020 season.

Matthew NeSmith, another player from North Augusta, South Carolina, sits one shot back at 7-under 63. NeSmith went 5-under on the front nine and reached 8-under through 16 holes before a late bogey saw him settle for a career-low round of 63.

“I finally got off to a good start and was able to carry that momentum through the front nine and into the back nine,” said NeSmith. “I’m just happy it’s not 95 degrees and humid. We’ve been in some warmer places over the last few weeks so it’s nice to have some chilly weather.”

The first round will resume beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Friday morning.

THURSDAY NOTES:

* Thursday’s weather: Partly cloudy with a high of 74. Wind W at 6-15 mph. There was a fog delay prior to the morning wave pushing back tee times by one hour. Play was suspended due to a second fog delay at 6:50 p.m. The first round will continue beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Friday.

* The top-two players on the leaderboard – Matt Atkins and Matthew NeSmith – are both from the Augusta, Georgia, region. The last player with Augusta roots to win was Henrik Norlander six weeks ago at the Wichita Open. Norlander, originally from Sweden, lives in Augusta and attended Augusta State University.

* Through 22 events thus far this season, only six first-round leaders/co-leaders have gone on to win the tournament. The most recent was Nelson Ledesma, who held a two-stroke lead after 18 holes before going on to win the TPC Colorado Championship at Heron Lakes.

* Matthew NeSmith (-7, 2nd) carded four consecutive birdies from Nos. 2-5 and later chipped in for his final birdie at the par-3 16th. The 63 sets a new career low on the Korn Ferry Tour, two strokes lower than his previous low of 65 (achieved four times in 2019).

* Several players currently outside the top-75 enjoyed good starts to the tournament. Edward Loar (No. 98), Michael Hebert (No. 126) and Todd Baek (No. 154) each carded opening-round 6-under 64s and are T3 entering Friday’s second round.

* Loar carded two eagles during the first round, the only player with two eagles in the first round. Fourteen eagles were made overall by players in the field when play was suspended.

* Stanford alumni Maverick McNealy (-5, T7) and Joseph Bramlett (-4, T9) both sit in the top 10 after the suspended first round. Each are sitting just outside The 25 at 28th (McNealy) and 29th (Bramlett). Stanford University is approximately 35 miles away from TPC Stonebrae across the bay.

* Steven Ihm (-2, T19) carded the only eagle on Thursday at the drivable par-4 14th hole (326 yards).

* This week’s purse is \$600,000, with \$108,000 going to the champion. The winner will also receive 500 Korn Ferry Tour points.

* Thirty-nine Korn Ferry Tour winners are in the field this week, with a combined 57 victories between them. Ten past PGA TOUR champions are in the field as well combining for 19 victories.

* The par-4 eighth hole (465 yards) ranked as the toughest hole on the course on Thursday with a scoring average of 4.311.

* The par-5 third hole (625 yards) ranked as the easiest hole on Thursday. The hole played to an average of 4.480.

*** TPC Stonebrae Scoring Average:**

Front (35)	Back (35)	Total (70)	Cumulative
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R1 35.270 35.308 70.578

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