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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
T1	Viktor Hovland	64 (-7)
T1	Cameron Percy	64 (-7)
3	Doug Ghim	65 (-6)
4	Matthew NeSmith	66 (-5)
T5	Three players tied	67 (-4)

Hovland and Percy share first-round lead at Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Viktor Hovland and Cameron Percy fired matching 7-under 64s to claim the first-round lead at the Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship. Doug Ghim sits one stroke behind after posting a 6-under 65, while Matthew NeSmith trails by two after an opening-round 66.

Hovland did not show any nerves in his Korn Ferry Tour debut. The 21-year-old recorded birdies on three of his first seven holes and made the turn at 3-under for the round.

Hovland caught fire with an eagle at the par-5 12th, moving him to 5-under. He carded his only bogey of the day at the par-4 14th but rebounded with birdies on his final three holes to post an opening-round 7-under 64.

"This course could be pretty hard, and a lot of the pins were kind of tucked in," Hovland said. "I finally got some good looks and finally made a birdie on No. 4 and a nice putt on No. 5 to kind of get kick-started. I made three really nice putts to finish and hopefully that will keep me going for the rest of the week."

Hovland enters the Korn Ferry Tour Finals after a summer to remember. The highly touted Oklahoma State University alum recorded five top-16 finishes in six PGA TOUR starts between June and early August including a T12 at the U.S. Open as an amateur. He earned his best result as a professional with a solo-fourth at the Wyndham Championship two weeks ago.

Despite his impressive stretch, Hovland fell 67 FedExCup points short of earning his PGA TOUR card. He now looks to capture a spot in The Finals 25 and secure his place on TOUR for the 2019-20 season.

"I've played well," Hovland said of his summer. "I think most of all the fact that I've been so consistent every week. I haven't had one fourth and then two missed cuts and then one 25th or 18th. The fact that I've made all the cuts that I've been playing in, that gives me even more

confidence. I feel like in the [Korn Ferry Tour] Finals, if you just play consistently good golf, that should get the job done.”

Tied with Hovland atop the leaderboard is Cameron Percy. The veteran began his round with three consecutive pars but tallied birdies on four of his next six holes. Percy vaulted up the leaderboard after holing his approach shot from 183 yards for eagle at the par-4 11th. He closed his round with two birdies and a bogey over his final seven holes, earning him a share of the lead.

“I just hauled off a 6-iron and it looked like it went really close,” Percy said of his approach on No. 11. “The cameraman sort of made a, ‘Whoa!’ I thought, oh, it must be pretty close. We got up there and we were looking, and the cameraman goes, ‘No, it went in.’ We had no idea.”

Percy, who is making only his 11th Korn Ferry Tour start this season, has recorded two top-10s and five top-25s in 2019. The 45-year-old suffered a wrist injury earlier this year while on vacation with his family.

“I’ve played three events in four months, I think,” Percy recalled. “I just haven’t played any golf. I fractured my wrist earlier in the year, I was really struggling to start off just getting in the rhythm of playing golf again.”

The injury left Percy sidelined for all of April and May, but he still managed to finish the Regular Season ranked 58th in The 25. Despite the setback, the Australian still has his sights set on a return to the PGA TOUR.

Sitting alone in third place is Doug Ghim who opened with a 6-under 65 on Thursday. Ghim won the 2018 Ben Hogan Award as the top male college golfer while at the University of Texas. The 23-year-old has made six PGA TOUR starts this season and is in search of his first PGA TOUR card.

THURSDAY NOTES:

* Thursday’s weather: Partly cloudy, with a high of 85. Wind W/NW at 7-14 mph, gusting to 18 mph.

* Low round of the day: 7-under 64, shared by Norway’s 21-year-old Viktor Hovland and Australia’s 45-year-old Cameron Percy.

* No player in his 40s has won on the Korn Ferry Tour this season, however 13 players in their 20s have won.

* Of the players who earned PGA TOUR cards by finishing in The 25, none are within three strokes of the lead. Xinjun Zhang, the No. 1 player in The 25, sits T19 at 2-under. Bo Hoag, a standout for the Ohio State Buckeyes before turning professional who won his first Korn Ferry Tour title and PGA TOUR card at last week’s event in Portland, sits T19 at 2-under as well.

- * Six of 24 first-round leaders/co-leaders have gone on to win this season, most recently Nelson Ledesma at the TPC Colorado Championship at Heron Lakes.
- * Viktor Hovland's 64 came in the opening round of his first Korn Ferry Tour appearance. In 10 PGA TOUR starts this season, Hovland posted 64 three times – R4/Rocket Mortgage Classic, R4/John Deere Classic, R3/Wyndham Championship.
- * Cameron Percy's 64 marked his 10th under-par opening round in 11 Korn Ferry Tour starts this season (73/+2/The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club).
- * Doug Ghim (3rd/65) came into the week off three consecutive missed cuts, using three different caddies in his last five events. His caddie this week, Micah Fugitt, also caddied for him when he sat fourth through 54 holes at the PGA TOUR's Farmers Insurance Open earlier this year, eventually finishing T20.
- * Matthew NeSmith (4th/66) finished T2 at the NCAA Columbus Regional as a University of South Carolina freshman when the Ohio State University Club – Scarlet Course hosted the event in 2013. NeSmith shot a career-low 63 two weeks ago in the opening round of the Ellie Mae Classic at TPC Stonebrae and tied that score in the second round to hold a two-stroke lead through 36 holes, eventually finishing T8 for his third top-10 on the season.
- * India's Anirban Lahiri (T5/67) was 2-over after five holes, but rallied with six birdies, including his final two holes, to be one of three international players at 4-under or better (Hovland/Norway, Percy/Australia).
- * Julian Etulain (T19/69) aced the 205-yard 17th hole with a 5-iron, the first on No. 17 in tournament history. It marks the seventh hole-in-one at the Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship (most recent, J.J. Spaun/R3/2016) and the 18th on the Korn Ferry Tour this season.
- * Kevin Chappell (T84/73) returned to the tournament where he made his professional debut in 2008, finishing T40 that week. Chappell, who has been recovering from microdiscectomy surgery, last competed at the PGA TOUR's 2018 Mayakoba Golf Classic.
- * This week's purse is \$1,000,000, with \$180,000 going to the champion. The winner will also receive 1,000 Korn Ferry Tour Points.
- * The par-4 11th hole (473 yards) & par-3 13th hole (221 yards) ranked as the toughest holes on the course Thursday with a scoring average of 4.348 and 3.348, respectively.
- * The par-5 12th hole (562 yards) ranked as the easiest hole on Thursday. The hole played to an average of 4.428 and yielded 10 eagles and 65 birdies.

***Ohio State University Golf Club – Scarlet Course Scoring Average:**

	Front	Back	Total	Cumulative
R1	36.232	35.580	71.812	

For highlights from today's round, or any 2019 event visit <http://bit.ly/kornferry2019video>



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