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**2018 Safeway Open Pre-Tournament Notes**

**Dates:** October 1-7, 2018

**Where:** Silverado Resort & Spa (North Course), Napa, California

**Par/Yards:** 36-36--72/7,166 yards

**Field:** 144

**2017 champion:** Brendan Steele

**Purse:** \$6,400,000/\$1,152,000 (winner)

**FedExCup:** 500 points (winner)

**Format:** 72-hole stroke play

**Website:** [safewayopen.com](http://safewayopen.com)

**Facebook:** [facebook/safewayopen](https://www.facebook.com/safewayopen)

**Twitter:** [@safewayopen](https://twitter.com/safewayopen)

**Safeway Open kicks off 2018-19 PGA TOUR Season**

This week, the PGA TOUR begins kicks off its 2018-19 PGA TOUR Season at the Safeway Open, the first event in a wraparound schedule that bridges two years with 46 events -- 43 Regular Season events and three FedExCup Playoffs events. The fall includes eight FedExCup events beginning with the Safeway Open and ending with the RSM Classic in November, followed by a break before resuming in January with the Sentry Tournament of Champions in Hawaii. Every week is significant – four of the eight winners from the fall calendar of 2017 (Justin Thomas, Justin Rose, Patrick Cantlay, Patton Kizzire) qualified for the season-ending TOUR Championship. The other four winners (Brendan Steele, Pat Perez, Ryan Armour, Austin Cook) advanced through the first three Playoffs events.

**Significant changes for PGA TOUR in 2018-19**

The PGA TOUR has introduced several changes for the 2018-19 PGA TOUR Season that will allow fans to better follow and engage in the TOUR all season:

- 1) A season with a better flow from start to finish; a return of THE PLAYERS Championship to March, which kicks off a cadence of significant events over five months; and a season that concludes with the FedExCup Playoffs. The FedExCup Playoffs – which have been reduced from four to three events beginning this season and will conclude before Labor Day, allowing the TOUR to compete to own the August sports calendar – will feature fields of 125 for THE NORTHERN TRUST, 70 for the BMW Championship and 30 for the TOUR Championship, where the FedExCup Champion will be determined.
- 2) A simplified, strokes-based scoring system at the TOUR Championship that crowns a singular champion. Instead of a points reset at the TOUR Championship, the TOUR is instituting a strokes-based system related to the FedExCup standings through the BMW Championship. The scoring system virtually replicates the win probabilities of the current system but uses strokes instead of points – which is much

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easier for golf fans, and the casual sports fan, to understand. The leader through the first two FedExCup Playoffs events will begin the TOUR Championship at 10-under par. The next four players will start at -8 through -5, respectively. The next five will begin at -4, regressing by one stroke per five players until players 26-30 start at even par. With the implementation of this change, the player with the lowest total score including FedExCup Starting Strokes will be the FedExCup champion and be credited with an official victory in the TOUR Championship.

- 3) A \$10 million Wyndham Rewards-sponsored bonus – the Wyndham Rewards Top 10 -- where players will be rewarded for their outstanding play during the Regular Season, prior to the start of the FedExCup Playoffs. The top 10 Regular Season finishers in FedExCup points through the Wyndham Championship will earn \$2 million, followed by \$1.5 million for the runner-up with the 10<sup>th</sup>-place finisher earning \$500,000. Dustin Johnson led last year's FedExCup standings through the Wyndham Championship, just 83 points ahead of Justin Thomas.
- 4) Including the Wyndham Rewards top 10, there will be a doubling of FedExCup total bonus money available to players, from \$35 million to \$70 million.

### A look at the 2017 Safeway Open

At the 2015 Safeway Open, Brendan Steele took a 1-stroke lead into the final round at Silverado. Following a 4-over 76 Sunday, he finished T17. With unfinished business in 2016, Steele returned to post scores of 67-71-67-65—270 (-18) to claim his second career PGA TOUR win (2011 Valero Texas Open). After entering the final round last season at T3 and trailing 54-hole leader Tyler Duncan by two strokes, the defending champion closed with a 3-under 69 to win by two strokes over Tony Finau at 15-under 273. With last year's victory at Silverado, he became the first player to successfully defend his Safeway Open title.

### More on Brendan Steele

- Following his 2017 win in Napa, collected two additional top-10 finishes the rest of the way.
- Advanced through the first three of four FedExCup Playoffs events, before ending his season ranked 56<sup>th</sup> in the FedExCup.
- Is a combined 43-under par in his last three starts at the Safeway Open (-10/2015, -18/2016, -15/2017)
- Is the only multiple winner of the Safeway Open

### The Rookies

The Safeway Open marks the first official PGA TOUR start for the 21-member rookie class, each of whom are in this week's Safeway Open field. Among the group includes the youngest rookie Sungjae Im of Korea (20-6-5 on October 4) and the oldest rookie Chris Thompson (42-2-24 on October 4). Im led the Web.com Tour money list with \$534,326 thanks to two victories and three runner-up finishes in 25 starts. Additional notes:

- **Martin Trainer**, a Palo Alto, California native, began the 2018 Web.com Tour season with no status. In his first start, posted rounds of 67-70-68-69—274 (-14) to win the Mexico Championship by two strokes. In late July, opened with a 10-under 62 at the Price Cutter Championship before going on to claim his second victory of the season. Ended his season at No. 13 in the Web.com Tour priority ranking.
- **Cameron Champ** collected five top-10 finishes on last season's Web.com Tour, highlighted by a win at the Utah Championship. Champ, who played collegiately at Texas A&M, is the recipient of the 2018

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Calvin Peete Award, given annually to a player who displays similar spirit, humility and courage to the late Calvin Peete.

- **Jose de Jesus Rodriguez** made his way to the Web.com Tour last season via PGA TOUR Latinoamerica. A four-time winner on PGA TOUR Latinoamerica, Rodriguez is ranked fourth in all-time earnings on that Tour (\$194,433), just \$6,200 shy of No. 1. On the Web.com Tour this past season, he won the United Leasing & Finance Championship.

## Notables in the Field

### Phil Mickelson

- Making fourth start at the Safeway Open (2007/MC, 2016/T7, T3/2017).
- As a Captain's Selection, competed last week in 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive Ryder Cup.
- Of 43 career PGA TOUR wins, California native has won 11 times in his home state.
- Ended a four-season winless drought with his victory at the 2018 World Golf Championships-Mexico Championship.
- Claimed a first (WGC-Mexico Championship), T2 (AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am) and T3 (Safeway Open) as part of six top-10 finishes in the 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season.
- 2012 World Golf Hall of Fame inductee.

### Brandt Snedeker

- 2012 FedExCup champion and nine-time PGA TOUR winner claimed his most recent win at the 2018 Wyndham Championship after opening with an 11-under 59. As such, became the ninth different player to post a score below 60.
- In addition to his victory at the Wyndham Championship, claimed three top-10 finishes to help him advance to the BMW Championship, the third of four FedExCup Playoffs events. Ended his season ranked 40<sup>th</sup> in the FedExCup.
- Will be making his third start in the Safeway Open and first since 2015 (T17).

### Joaquin Niemann

- Former World No. 1 amateur will be competing in his first full season on the PGA TOUR, having earned membership through the top 125 non-member category.
- 19-year old native of Chile collected four top-10 finishes in 13 starts in the 2017-18 season (made nine cuts); A Military Tribute at The Greenbrier/T5, Valero Texas Open/6<sup>th</sup>, the Memorial Tournament/T6 and AT&T Byron Nelson/T8.
- Nominated for 2018 PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year.

### Emiliano Grillo

- 2015 Safeway Open champion and 2015-16 PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year
- Advanced to the 2018 BMW Championship (T61) in the FedExCup Playoffs events, before finishing his season at No. 32 in the FedExCup standings.

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- Career-best six top-10 finishes in 2017-18 including T3 at the Houston Open and third at the Fort Worth Invitational.
- Captain's Selection by Nick Price for the International Team at the 2017 Presidents Cup.
- Native of Argentina.

#### **Fred Couples**

- World Golf Hall of Fame member making first TOUR start since the 2018 Masters Tournament; also competed in six PGA TOUR Champions events with a best finish of T3 at the American Family Insurance Championship.

#### **Maverick McNealy**

- Former World No. 1 amateur made his first start as a professional at the 2017 Safeway Open (T52) and will play as a Sponsor Exemption in 2018.
- Of seven starts in the 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season, best finish was T29 at the Farmers Insurance Open
- 23-year-old Stanford University grad claimed 11 school victories, tying the record for most with Tiger Woods and Patrick Rodgers.
- Full-time status on Web.com Tour in 2019, having finished 65<sup>th</sup> on the Web.com Tour money list last year with two top-10 finishes.

#### **Sangmoon Bae**

- 2014 Safeway Open champion regained his PGA TOUR card with a victory in the 2018 Web.com Tour Finals in September, winning the Albertson's Boise Open to finish among The 25.
- Bae returned from his two-year mandatory military service in South Korea last year and made just five cuts in 17 starts, with one top-25 finish at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am (T15).

#### **A broader look at the field**

- Two players that qualified for the 2018 TOUR Championship (FedExCup rank): Patrick Cantlay (20) and Phil Mickelson (21).
- FedExCup champions: Bill Haas (2011), Brandt Snedeker (2012).
- Four of the last five Safeway Open champions; Sangmoon Bae (2014), Emiliano Grillo (2015), Brendan Steele (2016, 2017).
- Sponsor exemption Tyler McCumber, son of former PLAYERS Championship winner Mark McCumber, won three times on the Mackenzie Tour-PGA TOUR Canada in 2018. McCumber is a former University of Florida All-American.
- Nine 2017-18 PGA TOUR Season winners: Brendan Steele/Safeway Open, Patrick Cantlay/Shriners Hospitals for Children Open, Ted Potter, Jr./AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, Phil Mickelson/WGC-Mexico Championship, Andrew Landry/Valero Texas Open, Scott Piercy (with Billy Horschel)/Zurich Classic of New Orleans, Michael Kim/John Deere Classic, Troy Merritt/Barbasol Championship, Brandt Snedeker/Wyndham Championship.

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