FOR RELEASE: May 23, 2019

CONTACTS: Nicholas Kunz, PGA TOUR Series-China, nicholas.kunz@shankaisports.com

 Laury Livsey, PGA TOUR, laurylivsey@pgatourhq.com

**First Round**

**Nantong Championship**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pos.** | **Name** | **Scores** | **Current OOM\*\*** |
| T1 | Brad Gehl (U.S.) | 31-33—64 (-8) | 41 |
| T2 | Samuel Del Val (Spain) | 33-33—66 (-6) | 24 |
| T2 | Kevin Techakanokboon (U.S.)\* | 31-35—66 (-6) | 13 |
| T2 | Stephen Lewton (England)\* | 33-33—66 (-6) | 15 |
| T5 | Max McGreevy (U.S.)\* | 34-33—67 (-5) | 5 |
| T5 | Kenta Endo (Japan) | 32-35—67 (-5) | 31 |
| T5 | Woojin Jung (South Korea)\* | 34-33—67 (-5) | 64 |
| T5 | Henry Westmoreland IV (U.S.) | 33-34—67 (-5) | 73 |

\* Began on No. 10

\*\* As of May 19

**Quick start gives Gehl two-stroke lead in Nantong**

NANTONG, China—American Brad Gehl has come close to winning on PGA TOUR Latinoamerica, where he has played for the last four years. He has never been able to break through, though. Gehl is looking to change that trend on PGA TOUR Series-China. The Oklahoma State product, in his first season playing in China, opened the Nantong Championship with a bogey-free, 8-under 64 Thursday to take a two-shot lead over Spain’s Samuel Del Val—himself a PGA TOUR Latinoamerica alum—Kevin Techakanokboon and Stephen Lewton. A quartet of players are three shots behind Gehl.

At Nantong Yangtze River Golf Club, Gehl began his day quickly, with birdies on his first two holes. He didn’t make a bogey all day, adding three more front-nine birdies and three additional birdies on his back nine for not only the low round of his PGA TOUR Series-China career but his low round as a professional playing on PGA TOUR-affiliated Tours. Gehl’s previous-low score in China were the two 68s he had in the second and third rounds at the Beijing Championship. He has had three 65s on PGA TOUR Latinoamerica, most recently in the first round of the 2018 Costa Rica Classic (6-under). He also had a 6-under 65 at the 2017 Flor de Cana Open in Nicaragua and a 5-under 65 at the 2017 Roberto De Vicenzo Punta del Este Open in Uruguay.

Gehl was quick to note it was his ball-striking that led to his 64 and the first-round lead. “I just put [the ball] in such an easy position to go ahead and score and be aggressive with putts that it just kind of made the rest easy,” he said.

Del Val has even more PGA TOUR Latinoamerica experience than Gehl, with 64 career starts between 2013 and 2018. He, too, has a pair of runner-up finishes on that circuit plus another on the Mackenzie Tour – PGA TOUR Canada. The difference is Del Val also has a victory—at the 2016 Argentina Classic.

“I think the course is very straight forward,” Del Val assessed following his seven-birdie, one-bogey day.” Honestly, I played at 6:30 this morning, so things were fresh—at least on the front nine—and there was no wind. [The course] was playing easier.”

Three of Nantong Yangtze River’s four par-5s come in a four-hole stretch (Nos. 9, 10 and 12), and Gehl, Del Val and Techakanokboon all walked away with birdies on those three holes plus at the other par-5—Nos. 4.

**Did you know Brad Gehl** has played in 58 career PGA TOUR Latinoamerica tournaments and has posted seven top-10s and two runner-up finishes? His second-place performances took place at the 2015 Mexican Open and the 2017 Shell Championship in Miami.

**Key Information**

* Brad Gehl played college golf at one of the sport’s powerhouse programs, Oklahoma State. During his time in Stillwater, Gehl counted future PGA TOUR players Peter Uihlein, Kevin Tway, Morgan Hoffmann, Talor Gooch and Wyndham Clark as teammates.
* Samuel Del Val was in the first group of the day, teeing off at 6:30 a.m. His lone bogey of the round came at the par-4 third hole.
* Samuel Del Val skipped the last two PGA TOUR Series-China tournaments in order to play in the European Challenge Tour’s Challenge de Espana in his home country and the Prague Golf Challenge in the Czech Republic. Del Val’s second-round scores hurt him in both tournaments, shooting 79s after opening with 69s in both first rounds. He missed the cut in the two events.
* After shooting four consecutive under-par rounds last week at the Qinhuangdao Championship, on his way to a tie-for-sixth finish, Kevin Techakanokboon kept his good play going Thursday, opening with a 6-under 66. Techakanokboon has been par or better in 11 of his last 12 rounds. His scoring average during that span is 69.16.
* Max McGreevy shot opening and closing 74s at the Haikou Championship in mid-April. They are the only two over-par rounds he’s had this season. His other 18 rounds have all been under-par—including Thursday’s 67. He birdied the first three holes of his day, starting his round at No. 10. He had one additional three-birdies-in-a-row streak later in his round, on Nos. 3-5.
* There are 10 amateurs in the field this week. The top performer through 18 holes is China’s Enqi Liang. Liang opened with a 1-under 71.
* Two first-round leaders have turned their first-day advantages into victories. Taihei Sato was the solo 18-hole leader at the Chongqing Championship, a tournament he won in a playoff. Richard Jung was one of three players holding the first-round lead at the Beijing Championship, with Jung eventually winning the tournament by two strokes.
* It was a slow start for players from China, with no players from the host country inside the top 10. Nannan Shen shot a 3-under 69, and he’s tied for 16th. Yunliang Chen and Yanzhang Wang are both at even-par and tied for 60th.
* China’s Cheng Jin got off to a strong start, birdieing his opening two holes. He was 2-under through three when he hit a rough patch. Jin played the final six holes of his opening nine in 5-over (three bogeys and a double bogey-6 at No. 5). Jin rebounded with a 2-under 34 on his back nine to finish the opening round at 1-over and a tie for 80th.
* Order of Merit leader David Kocher shot an opening, 3-under 69, and he’s tied for 16th through one round. Kocher won the Haikou Championship earlier this season. Other 2019 tournament winners in the field this week include Trevor Sluman (first-round 70, tied for 29th) and Luke Kwon (71, tied for 43rd). Taihei Sato, winner of the season-opening Chongqing Championship, is in his home country of Japan this week playing in the Kansai Open Golf Championship. Sato opened with a 71 and is tied for 37th.

**Quotable**

“I made it really easy on myself. I hit a lot of fairways and every green out there.” **– Brad Gehl**

“It was just a nice, easy day where I was in control of the golf ball.” **– Brad Gehl**

“There are a lot of slopes where they can put the pins. As long as you’re aiming away from those and giving yourself uphill putts, that’s kind of the key.” **– Brad Gehl**

“I felt like I haven’t capitalized on some of my better days, so it was nice to do that today and take advantage of hitting the ball well.” **– Brad Gehl**

“The goals at the beginning of the year are very similar to a lot of guys out here—to get to the Web.com Tour. Whatever I have to do to do that, that’s my whole goal.” **– Brad Gehl**

“It’s honestly been an awesome experience so far. I really enjoy it.” **– Brad Gehl on playing in China**

“Definitely the putter made a difference today.” **– Samuel Del Val**

“I managed to the par-5s, birdieing all four. That was really the key.” **– Samuel Del Val**

“I woke up at 3:45 this morning. So maybe I’ll take a nap and relax.” **– Samuel Del Val on his post-round plans**

**Tournament Fast Fact**

This is the sixth tournament of the season. Following the completion of the Nantong Championship, PGA TOUR Series-China will observe a two-week break before playing back-to-back tournaments—the Suzhou Open (June 10-16) and the Huangshan Championship (June 17-23).

**First-Round Weather Report**

Mostly sunny and warm. High of 84. Wind S at 8 mph.

*If you don't wish to receive any further news from PGA TOUR Series-China, please reply to or email**PTSC**and write UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject header*

**Photographs**

Please credit: PGA TOUR Series-China / Zhuang Liu

For high-res versions of attached photos or more selection, email PTSC.media@shankaisports.com

**About PGA TOUR Series-China**

PGA TOUR Series-China is a professional golf tour featuring open-competition to all nationalities. PGA TOUR Series-China attracts players, mainly from Asia and other Pacific Rim countries, although members have come from five continents. PGA TOUR Series-China is owned and operated by the PGA TOUR and sanctioned by the General Administration of Sport of China. It operates in partnership with the China Golf Association and Shankai Sports. The top-five money-winners from PGA TOUR Series-China earn Web.com Tour membership for the following season. PGA TOUR Series-China’s website is PGATOURSERIESCHINA.COM. Information on the Tour can also be found at PGATOUR.COM, the No. 1 site in golf.

Website: [www.pgatourserieschina.com](http://www.pgatourserieschina.com)

Facebook: PGATourChina

Twitter: PGATourChina

Instagram: PGATourChinaOfficial