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**First Round**

**Sanya Championship**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pos.** | **Name** | **Scores** |
| 1 | Matt Gilchrest (U.S.) |  |
| 2 | Michael Skelton (ENG) |  |
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|  |  | 35-31—66 (-6) |
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\* Began on No. 10

**U.S.A.’s Gilchrest leads in Sanya**

SANYA, China—A year ago, Matt Gilchrest had a solid first season on PGA TOUR Latinoamerica. While he didn’t win, the Auburn University product contended numerous times and finished eighth on the Order of Merit. After one round at the Sanya Championship, the second event of the PGA TOUR Series-China season, and on the strength of an 8-under 64, Gilchrest looks ready to take home victory on PGA TOUR Series-China as he takes a a one-shot lead into the second round.

England’s Michael Skelton, shot a 65 to lie in solo second, one ahead of South Korea’s Daejin Jeong and the American duo of Sejun Yoon and Max McGreevy, the latter already off to a great run in China he finished alone in fourth at last week’s Chongqing Championship.

Coming from “China’s Mountain City” last week to “China’s Hawaii” this week has forced players to adapt quickly to the different conditions, but Gilchrest felt right at home at Yalong Bay Golf Club, which he says reminds him of his home course in Dallas, Texas.

“The greens are a lot firmer this week compared to last week. It’s a lot windier and less elevation. Last week was like walking up mountains, but it’s pretty flat this week so the courses play very different,” he explained. “My course where I practice is a lot like this. I think it was a great preparation for this week where I play at home at Trinity Forest because that course is a lot like here. So it’s a good advantage.”

Gilchrest, 24, has played on both the PGA TOUR’s other development Tours but found better results on the PGA TOUR Latinoamerica, where he recorded six top-10s and two-runner ups before his top-10 finish on the Order of Merit in 2018.

Now it appears Gilchrest has the strategy all worked out in China after a round that included seven birdies, one bogey and an eagle on the par-5 13th.

“I think you really have to be in control on this course because the wind can blow a lot. I think the greens are really firm, so you have to have the right angles off the tee to give yourself the makeable putts,” said Gilchrest, who had no trouble in the wind. “I hit all 18 greens today, so I think that was really helpful. If I can do that again I think I’ll like how that goes.”

Also in the top-10 in a tie for seventh at 5-under are nine players from varied locales as South Korea, the U.S., Japan, Italy, Spain and Australia.

**PGA TOUR Series-China 2018: First three of 14 events**

March 25-31: Chongqing Championship, Poly Golf Club, Chongqing

April 1-7: Sanya Championship, Yalong Bay Golf Club, Sanya

April 8-14: Haikou Championship, Sunac Haikou 3 KM Golf Club, Haikou

**Did you know** that the 7-under 65 Michael Skelton opened with Thursday matches his career-low round on PGA TOUR Series-China? He also opened with a 65 at the 2018 Beijing Championship on his way to a tie for third. Here is a look at Skelton’s career-low rounds on this circuit:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Tournament** | **Round** | **Result** |
| 65 | 2018 Beijing Championship | First Round | T3 |
| 65 | 2019 Sanya Championship | First Round |   |
| 66 | 2018 Qingdao Championship | Second Round | T34 |
| 66 | 2016 Yulongwan Yunnan Open | Second Round | T18 |
| 66 | 2016 Clearwater Bay Open | First Round | T23 |
| 67 | 2018 Clearwater Bay Open | Second Round | T62 |

**Key Information**

* The course this week is a par-72 course totaling 7,200 yards.
* Matt Gilchrest had a pair of runner-up finishes to go with a third-place showing on PGA TOUR Latinoamerica in 2018. Of his 52 official rounds from a year ago, Gilchrest’s lowest score was a 9-under 63 at La Reunion Resort, site of the Guatemala Stella Artois Open. He also had a 7-under 65 in his last round of the season—at the Latinoamerica Tour Championship in Miami.
* Matt Gilchrest came close to victory several times in 2018. He tied for second behind winner Ben Polland at the Guatemala Stella Artois Open, lost in a playoff to Thomas Baik at the weather-shortened Molino Canuelas Championship and finished two shots behind winner Horacio Leon at the Quito Open in Ecuador.
* After missing the cut last week at the Chongqing Championship (74-73), Japan’s Narutoshi Yamaoka had a solid start to the Sanya Championship. Yamaoka shot a 5-under 67 and is tied for **xxxxx** after 18 holes.
* Stephen Lewton had two bad holes on what was otherwise a solid first round. He made five birdies, but back-to-back double bogeys on Nos. 7 and 8 left him at 1-under after 18 holes.
* Austrian Berni Reiter had his first PGA TOUR Series-China hole-in-one and the second of the season. He aced the par-3 11th hole—his second hole of the day. Unfortunately, he triple-bogeyed his next hole and then made bogey on No. 13. He **finished at xx and is tied for xx.**
* Max McGreevy continued his strong play in his second PGA TOUR Series-China tournament. Following a fourth-place finish at the Chongqing Championship, McGreevy opened quickly in Sanya, shooting a 6-under 66 after turning in four under-par rounds last week in his debut. Through 18 holes, he is 7-under.
* Bogey-free rounds Thursday came from Cyril Bouniol, Daejin Jeong,Trevor Sluman, Eric Steger, Henry Westmoreland IV, Sejun Yoon and AronZemmer**Xinyang Li.**

**Quotable**

“The course is great, and what a beautiful place here right on the beach. It’s a really beautiful part of the country here in Sanya.” **– Matt Gilchrest**

“Today was great. Eight-under is a great day. In golf you always try to have a few less, so I’ll go work on a few putts and then we’ll be in good shape for tomorrow.” **– Matt Gilchrest**

“Now I’m going to have some lunch, practice a bit and maybe (watch) a few movies in the hotel room. This is such a beautiful place, and we want to practice and keep our skills sharp but not enough to where we’re tired when it’s time to play.” **– Matt Gilchrest**

“I’m a conditional Web.com Tour player but unfortunately my status won’t get me into any events so I’m going to play all the events in China except for one and maybe play some Web[.com Tour] Monday qualifiers when I’m back at home. But it’s a lot of travel to get over here from the U.S.” **– Matt Gilchrest**

“Any time you shoot 65 and birdie the last three holes, you’ve got to be pretty happy I think.” **– Michael Skelton**

“To birdie the last hole was nice, and I felt like things were going my way a little bit today. I started out hitting some really good shots and managed to keep it going.” **– Michael Skelton**

“The course is great, and it’s nice to be in Sanya. It actually reminds me of this place in Portugal where they just have a stream of hotels down one lane and then a couple nice golf courses around. It’s good.” **– Michael Skelton**

“I’m not sure what to expect for the rest of the week. I’m not sure yet. I’ll have to tell you after round two.” **– Michael Skelton**

“I had a great start. I had five birdies on my first six holes, but it started to get really windy after that. There was so much wind for me after hole 7, and it was tough to focus on my game. I lost my ball on hole 1, the par-5. I had a not great bogey, but I managed to keep my mind straight and finish well.” **– Woojin Jung, who started on hole 10.**

“I wasn’t expecting a birdie on the first hole. I hit an 8-iron on my second shot into the wind, and it was really windy. But I made a close birdie putt. Then on hole 3, it was just an easy par-5 and I had a tap-in birdie for that so it was good to find my rhythm today.” **– Woojin Jung**

“I’m going to take an easy practice, find my game and do the same tomorrow.” **– Woojin Jung**

“I just love the views here. The weather is really hot, but the wind cools me down sometimes.” **– Woojin Jung**

**Tournament Fast Fact**

This is the first PGA TOUR Series-China event to take place at Yalong Bay Golf Club but the third tournament overall in Sanya.

**Thursday Weather Report**

Sunny. High of 86. Wind SSE at 10 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**

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**About PGA TOUR-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.

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