



## First-Round Leaderboard

**Elk Ridge Saskatchewan Open presented by Brandt**

**Elk Ridge Resort**

**Waskesiu Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada**

**June 22, 2023**

Full [Leaderboard](#)

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Pos.	Name	Scores	Fortinet Cup Pos.
1	Gunn Yang (South Korea)	33-30—63 (7-under)	N/A
T2	Thomas Longbella (United States)	32-32—64 (6-under)	N/A
T2	Chandler Eaton (United States)	31-33—64 (6-under)	N/A
T2	Ben Carr (United States)	32-32—64 (6-under)	N/A
T5	Connor Howe (United States)	32-33—65 (5-under)	T33
T5	Nicolo Galletti (United States)	32-33—65 (5-under)	T45
T5	Cameron Sisk (United States)	34-31—65 (5-under)	T63
T5	Gavin Hall (United States)	33-32—65 (5-under)	T33
T5	Luis Gagne (Costa Rica)	33-32—65 (5-under)	T52

### Former amateur champion Yang is stellar in taking first-round lead

WASKESIU, Saskatchewan—South Korea's Gunn Yang, the last alternate to get into the 156-player field, took advantage of the opportunity and carded a 7-under 63 in his first PGA TOUR Canada start to take the first-round lead at Elk Ridge Saskatchewan Open presented by Brandt.

Yang, the 2014 U.S. Amateur champion, got hot with the putter and made eight birdies to surge in front of a tightly packed leaderboard. He holds a one-shot lead over Thomas Longbella, Chandler Eaton and Ben Carr at the Elk Ridge Resort course in the race for the Fortinet Cup.

Yang, 29, didn't learn he was in the field until Tuesday evening and had to hurry to reach the venue.

"I got the phone call after I dropped my friend off at the Saskatoon airport," Yang said. "That was around, like, 6:30, so I was just rushing up here to try to play the practice round before the pro-am on Wednesday. That was the only available time, so I'm happy to be here. I'm very fortunate and thankful for the opportunity."

Yang started on the back nine and made the turn in 33. He began the second nine with three straight birdies and ended up with a 30.

"I really got the ball rolling, especially my back nine," Yang said. "It was Nos. 1, 2 and 3—that three-birdie stretch—that I took advantage of it and then just kept it going."

Carr played in the U.S. Open last week and is making his professional debut. Longbella and Eaton, who both missed the cut last week at the Royal Beach Victoria Open, turned their fortunes around. All three shot 6-under 64 in the first round.

Tied for fifth at 5-under 65 are Connor Howe of Ogden, Utah, Nicolo Galletti of Berkeley, California, Cameron Sisk of San Diego, California, Gavin Hall of Rochester, New York, and Luis Gagne of Costa Rica.

The low Canadian is Jimmy Jones of Lake Cowichan, British Columbia. Jones, who won the final PGA TOUR Canada Qualifying Tournament in British Columbia two weeks ago, shot a 4-under 66 Thursday and is tied for 10th.

Carr, of Columbus, Georgia, was runner-up at the 2022 U.S. Amateur and played in the Masters in April and the U.S. Open last week. He showed few nerves and posted a bogey-free round that included six birdies.

“Definitely a little nervous being my first pro start,” Carr said. “Just more excitement than anything. Just sort of trying to plot my way around. I wasn’t really thinking too much about it or anything; just trying to hit the right shot every time.”

Longbella, of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, played PGA TOUR Canada a year ago and had two top-10 finishes. His opening 64 matches his lowest score first set at the 2022 Osprey Valley Open presented by Votorantim Cimentos CBM Aggregates, where he fired a pair of 64s on the weekend at TPC Osprey Valley to tie for third.

After missing the cut last week, Longbella made his first birdie at No. 5 to start a streak of six birdies over nine holes.

“I missed some putts for birdie early but the first birdie I made, I made a nice putt and that kind of got me going and gave me some confidence,” Longbella said. “I didn’t putt very well last week, so starting out like that was good to see.”

Longbella felt like he was losing some momentum after the par-5 16th hole, where he hit a poor 4-iron and managed to save par. But he followed that with a birdie on the par-4 17th, thanks to draining a 50-footer that went up and over a slope before clanking the flagstick and dropping in.

Eaton, of Atlanta, Georgia, played nine PGA TOUR Canada events in 2022 and managed only one top-25 effort.

He began on the back nine and got out of the gate fast, making three straight birdies, starting at No. 11 and turned in 5-under 31. He added a birdie on No. 7 and closed with a bogey-free round to post his lowest career score on PGA TOUR Canada.

“Golf is fun when you start making stuff,” Eaton said. “It’s so good to watch [the ball] go in the cup.”

Eaton said he never deviated from his plans to stay aggressive even though a loose shot can easily wind up in the trees that dominate the layout.

“I just tried to stay fearless because this course is kind of tight, and it’s easy to try and control it,” Eaton said. “I just tried to stay on attack, and I made some putts and drove it. I just kind of played everything well.”

Howe and Hall were among the group tied for 33rd at last week's Royal Beach Victoria Open.

Howe played a drama-free round that included five birdies and no bogeys. He credited the round to "solid approach shots" that left him within 15 feet of most hole locations.

Hall's round was accentuated by an eagle on the 538-yard par-5 16th hole, even though he hit his tee shot into the right rough.

"I had a good lie and a good angle at the pin and just a nice, little punch 5-iron up there (that) took one bounce and trickled up near the hole and made that little five-footer to make eagle," Hall said.

The veteran Galletti, who has made 44 PGA TOUR Latinamerica starts, tied for 45th last week in Victoria in his PGA TOUR Canada debut. He missed only one fairway Thursday had five birdies spread evenly throughout the round.

"I was able to play a little more offensive instead of defensive, and my putting was a little bit better today," Galletti said. "I struggled with that last week and put some good work in earlier this week and it kind of paid off today."

Sisk, a second-year PGA TOUR Canada competitor, bounced back after missing the cut last week. He closed with a 31, which included a birdie on the final hole.

"This course is about keeping it in play," Sisk said. "If you keep it in play, you're going to have some chances to get to some pins."

Tied for 10<sup>th</sup>, at 4-under 66, are Jones, Derek Hitchner of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Lee Detmer of Washington, D.C., Easton Paxton of Riverton, Wyoming, and John Pak of Scotch Plains, New Jersey.

## Key Information

### Fortinet Cup Standings

(Through Royal Beach Victoria Open)

Pos.	Player	Points	Current Tournament Pos.
1	Étienne Papineau (Canada)	500	T23
T2	George Kneiser (United States)	245	T88
T2	Chris Korte (United States)	245	T24
T4	Jared du Toit (Canada)	109	T66
T4	Chris Francoeur (United States)	109	T24
T4	Sam Choi (United States)	109	T88
T4	Jason Hong (Australia)	109	T24
T8	Hayden Shieh (United States)	80	T66
T8	Cole Bradley (United States)	80	T66
T8	Chase Sienkiewicz (United States)	80	T66

**Etienne Papineau** of Quebec, Ontario, who won last week's Royal Beach Victoria Open opened with a 2-under 68 and is tied for 23rd with countryman **Thomas Giroux** of Georgetown, Ontario.

**Thomas Longbella** missed the cut last week at the Royal Beach Victoria Open but caddied on the weekend for his buddy **George Kneiser**, who tied for second. Longbella said it helped to spend time inside the ropes with the lead group. "You see them on the top of the leaderboard, and you think they're doing something crazy but they're not. It's just simple good golf, and that's where I tried to focus today," Longbella said.

San Diego State's **Gunn Yang** was an extreme longshot when he won the 2014 U.S. Amateur at the Atlanta Country Club. He defeated Canadian **Corey Connors** in the championship match. Connors has gone on to win twice on the PGA TOUR and represented the International side at last year's Presidents Cup.

**Ben Carr** said the key part of his round was a par save at No. 13. He had to punch out of the woods and was able to save par from the rough. Carr is a member of The Country Club of Columbus (Georgia) and plays regular practice rounds with 1987 Masters champion **Larry Mize** and four-time PGA TOUR winner **Russell Henley**.

**Gavin Hall** made the cut last week at Victoria but dropped out of contention by shooting 2-over par over his final 36 holes. "I kind of got ahead of myself a little bit on the weekend. I want to just take one shot at a time. Before this TOUR started, I played pretty nicely in a couple of three-day events. This is week two of 10 events, but I'm excited and just want to get in the mix on Sunday. All anyone's trying to do is get on the back nine (on Sunday) and have a chance to win and jockey yourself in good position."

**Connor Howe** and **Derek Hitchner** both qualified for PGA TOUR Canada through PGA TOUR University. Howe, who played at Georgia Tech, was No. 13 in the standings, and Hitchner, who played at Pepperdine University, was No 14. Howe said, "College golf is super competitive. I think you've seen the guys come straight from college and compete at any level." Hedging his bets with PGA TOUR U., Howe also qualified at the Dothan, Alabama, Qualifying Tournament.

**Derek Hitchner** admitted he was nervous hitting the first shot of his professional career. He started on the back nine and went birdie-bogey-birdie-bogey. "It actually took me a little longer (to settle down) than I'd hoped. It was kind of a shaky start. I felt like I settled in a bit more on No. 15. I felt like I made a good iron swing and for some reason that seem to kind of catalyze a little more comfort. It definitely took a few holes to get my feet under myself, but thankfully it eventually happened."

**Nicolo Galletti** was paired with **Connor Howe**, and both shot 65s. Galletti said it helps when a playing competitor is having a good day. "If they're making birdies as well, then to you it looks like it's playing pretty easy, so you want to keep playing for birdies instead of playing more defensive. We never really had trouble in our minds very much out there, which was huge."

#### **Quotable**

"I just want to tell everybody, if you're an alternate, you have nothing to lose out here. You've just got to get it going, and I just did it today. I just have three more days to play like this. Just got to stay patient." – **Gunn Yang**

“I was just telling myself to be patient. I don’t need to make these putts. I just need to hit good putts and they started going in.” – **Thomas Longbella**

“I tried to attack my spots, my smart spots, instead of just attacking every pin and hitting driver everywhere. In the past I’d try to pick a smart spot and then not commit to it. So today was good. I committed to almost everything.” – **Chandler Eaton**

“I think guys are going to be able to take advantage with the soft greens, but it’s demanding off the tee, especially if the wind gusts. You’ve got to be able to control your ball.” – **Gavin Hall**

“I just played pretty solid. I didn’t make too many big mistakes, which was huge. To me it’s almost better like that, overall.” – **Nicolo Galletti**

“The putter was the best part of my game today. I hit my irons and wedges nice, even hitting from the rough a few times. I don’t hit a ton of drivers out here. I use a variety of tee shots, so that can take you out of your rhythm sometimes. I just try to make the best thing possible.” – **Cameron Sisk**

“I still feel like I’ve got a lot of work to do, and I’m sure I’ll always think that way. I can look back on a handful of shots today that I felt like I wasn’t pleased with, but at the same time it is validating to put a number down.” – **Derek Hitchner**

**First-Round Weather:** Partly cloudy and mild. High of 21. Wind S at 2-4 kph.