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Three Share First-Round Lead of Q-School on the Strength of 7-under 64s

PGA TOUR Veterans Cameron Percy, Shane Bertsch Trail by a Stroke

Scottsdale, Arizona – Three weeks shy of his 50th birthday, two-time PGA TOUR winner Daniel Chopra opened with a bogey-free 7-under 64 on Tuesday at TPC Scottsdale (Champions Course) to claim a share of the opening-round lead of the PGA TOUR Champions Qualifying Tournament (Final Stage) with Micah Rudosky and the field's lone amateur, Bryan Hoops.

Australian Cameron Percy used an eagle-2 at No. 14 (his fifth hole of the day) from 114 yards to post a 6-under 65, good for a share of fourth place with Shane Bertsch.

Chopra, who claimed three victories on the Korn Ferry Tour in addition to his two TOUR titles, finished the day both elated and, admittedly, a bit surprised.

“There was a lot of anxiety starting today,” said Daniel Chopra. “I haven’t played an official tournament since July. I took six months after that and didn’t even hit a ball. I just didn’t have the motivation. There was nothing to practice or play for. I had just been waiting for this.”

Those nerves resulted in the need for two provisional balls on his first hole of the day, though the Swede managed to save par when his original ball was found on both occasions.

Bryan Hoops, the 54-year-old with the distinction of being the only amateur in the field, offset one bogey with eight birdies before joining those at 7-under 64.

“I’m just really having fun, taking in the opportunity to be out here,” said Bryan Hoops. “Playing with these guys is so enjoyable. It is also easier for me because I’m an amateur. No-one expected me to make it this far, to lead or really do much of anything else. So, I’m in the driver’s seat, as far as pressure goes. I’m battling none of it.”

Not only is that working for the decorated amateur champion, but so, too, is the fact that he’s local and sleeping in his own bed at night this week.

“I get to go home and pet my own dog, put up my own Christmas lights,” Hoops said. “It’s nice to be here. I’ve played this course hundreds of times in other amateur championships I’ve had success in, so I’m just having fun.”

Cortez, Colorado’s Micah Rudosky, 53, birdied three of his final five holes en route to a bogey-free 7-under 64, though it was his strength with the flat stick early on which provided Rudosky the zone he worked himself into.

“My putter got hot early, which helped me really settle down,” said Micah Rudosky. “But, don’t get me wrong. I’m nervous every single time I play golf. I was nervous starting this today. I was nervous last week, trying to get through to get here. But, once I hit a few good shots and realize I can play well, that confidence comes back to me. That’s what I’ve struggled with most. But, my good play of late has allowed me to ride that confidence a little bit more than usual.”

After opening the World Wide Technology Championship on the PGA TOUR last month in 10-under 62 before settling for T59, 49-year-old Australian Cameron Percy overcame a double-bogey-six at No. 5 (his 14th hole of the day) with birdies on three of his last four holes before closing with a 7-under 64 to get within one stroke of the lead, along with Shane Bertsch. Bertsch birdied three of his last four holes to reach 6-under 65.

Percy, who turns 50 on May 5, 2024, claims a P2 at the 2010 Shriners Children's Open in Last Vegas as his best finish in 220 TOUR starts.

"I played really nice at the World Wide Technology Championship in Mexico a few weeks ago, and then I followed that with some really good play in Bermuda," said Cameron Percy. "The week before first stage of Q-School was tough for me, because it rained three of the five days while at home, so I couldn't play at all. I ended up helping my wife get out all the Christmas decorations. So, I was rusty headed to that qualifier before, but managed to play well. So, I'm just elated to be here this week and give myself a chance."

Major League Baseball Hall of Famer John Smoltz struggled to a 9-over 80 in round one. Simon Griffiths was DQ'd after signing an incorrect scorecard.

At the conclusion of the four rounds, the top-5 finishers will be fully exempt into all open, full-field events for PGA TOUR Champions in the 2024 season. In addition, players finishing sixth through 30th will be eligible to apply for PGA TOUR Champions Associate Membership for the 2024 season, affording them the opportunity to enter 2024 PGA TOUR Champions weekly event qualifiers.

This year's field stands as one of the strongest in event history, as 20 players have combined for 46 combined titles between the PGA TOUR (34) and PGA TOUR Champions (12).

Tuesday's weather featured sunny skies, a high of 80 degrees and an east wind 4-8 mph.

Tee times for Wednesday's second round will run from 8:30 – 10:42 a.m. MT off Nos. 1 and 10 at TPC Scottsdale (Champions Course).

Quick Links: [Leaderboard](#) | [Second-Round Tee Times](#)

About PGA TOUR Champions

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