

A new season is here

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina—When Rodolfo Cazaubón won 2015 PGA TOUR Latinoamérica Player of the Year honors, he was a three-time tournament winner that season. The following year, Nate Lashley also won three times on his way to a Player of the Year title of his own.

In 2022, Mitchell Meissner won exactly *zero* tournaments but, like Cazaubón and Lashley before him, added Player of the Year to his resume, proving there is more than one way to go about your business in reaching your ultimate season goal.

Harry Higgs knows that all too well. Four years earlier, Higgs, now on the PGA TOUR, had missed two consecutive cuts in Brazil and was 19th on the Order of Merit as the season moved into its stretch run. Higgs merely shook off those disappointing performances with six consecutive made cuts, finishing the season with this record in his final four starts: win, third place, tie for second and tie for fourth.

Higgs ultimately won Player of the Year honors by \$64 (still using the money list then) over Nico Echavarria.

So, yeah, many different ways to get to the same place.

While Meissner spoke openly about the frustration he felt in not winning—he finished second three times and third twice—his season-long consistency left him alone atop the Totalplay Cup standings. Early next year, Meissner will begin his Korn Ferry Tour career, eligible to play in every open event.

In May, following another close call in Ecuador, Meissner shrugged about what turned out to be his bridesmaid-but-never-a-bride season.

“It wasn’t meant to be this week. It’s comical that I’ve played well how many weeks in a row, and someone has been better than me in each of those weeks. But someday it’s going to be my time, whether it’s this year or next year on the Korn Ferry Tour, whenever it is. I’m looking forward to the future.”

Meanwhile, every current PGA TOUR Latinoamérica player would likely take Meissner’s 2022 record, given the chance. Instead, they will go out and try to earn their Korn Ferry Tour cards as PGA TOUR Latinoamérica begins its 11th Tour season and second in the Totalplay Cup era.

The highest-ranked Totalplay Cup returning player without any Korn Ferry Tour status is France’s Jeremy Gandon, with a mix of newcomers and veterans making up the membership. Four from that group are the players who were medalists at the Qualifying Tournaments held in the U.S. (two, in Florida), Mexico and Argentina. They are Austin Squires, David Laskin, Ollie Osborne from the U.S. and Argentina’s Puma Dominguez.

Squires’ is an interesting story. The PGA TOUR Canada member playing his first season on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica is delaying his debut by a couple of weeks as he’s getting married this Saturday and honeymooning in Mexico next week. Those two to-do items will cause the former University of Cincinnati standout to miss the season-opening Visa Argentine Open presented by Macro and next week’s Neuquen Argentina Classic.

“In the back of my mind I was thinking I needed to win [the Qualifying Tournament] so I can have the rest of the season secured,” Squires said after his Q-School victory assured him entrance into every

tournament. “It’s unfortunate that I won’t be [in Argentina], but at the same time I’m so blessed and so happy to be getting married. Missing tournaments is such a small thing. It’s nice to have that comfort of being exempt through the whole season.”

Squires first tournament will be the Scotia Wealth Management Chile Open presented by Volvo, the final tournament of the 2022 calendar portion of the schedule (December 15-18). By then, Squires will be looking up at plenty of players who will have already amassed Totalplay Cup points. He’ll have 10 tournaments to play catch-up.

If it’s any solace to Squires, of the top five in the 2021-22 Totalplay Cup standings through the first two tournaments, only Argentina’s Jorge Fernández Valdés remained there at season’s end (finishing No. 3). The top-five from this season earn 2024 Korn Ferry Tour membership.

Once the Tour finishes in Chile, it will observe a scheduled break and resume action in mid-March, returning to Argentina for a pair of tournaments—the Termas de Rio Hondo Invitational and a special event commemorating what would have been the 100th birthday of Argentina legend Roberto De Vincenzo. The Roberto De Vincenzo Memorial 100 Years is scheduled for De Vincenzo’s home club, Ranelagh Golf Club, 40 miles from Nordelta Golf Club where players are gathering this week.

Stops in Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and two tournaments each in Colombia and Mexico round out the 12-event season.

“We typically wouldn’t hold four tournaments in Argentina, but the opportunity to honor the memory of Roberto and what he meant to our sport in this part of the world was too important to pass up,” said Todd Rhinehart, PGA TOUR Latinoamérica Executive Director. It was Rhinehart and his team who served as the architects of the schedule that takes players to seven countries.

Added Rhinehart, “It’s an important part of what we do. First and foremost, we want to present well-run tournaments on world-class golf courses, which we are able to do. It’s also significant, however, for us to give players the chance to experience different cultures and see places they may not otherwise ever visit.”

With Korn Ferry Tour membership every players’ goal, there is the \$100,000 bonus pool associated with the Totalplay Cup, spread out among the top-10 performers, while the winner of the Visa Argentine Open presented by Macro receives an invitation to the 2023 Open Championship at Royal Liverpool Golf Club in England and the top-Latin player in the Totalplay Cup standings after the JHSF Brazil Open earns the right to play in the PGA TOUR’s Mexico Open at Vidanta.

Twelve tournaments, seven countries, an event remembering a Latin American legend and two PGA TOUR playing spots up for grabs.

No wonder the players are excited to get going.