

# **THE PLAYERS First-Timers Press Conference**

# Wednesday, March 13, 2024

#### First Wave: 8 - 9 a.m.

- Ludvig Åberg (2023 RSM Classic)
- Akshay Bhatia (2023 Barracuda Championship)
- Nick Dunlap (2024 The American Express)
- Austin Eckroat (2024 Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches)
- Harry Hall (No. 94 Top 125 prior year's FEC)
- Chan Kim (Below Top 10 Current FEC)
- Ben Kohles (2023 KFT leading points winner)
- Vincent Norrman (2023 Barbasol Championship)
- Jimmy Stanger (Below Top 10 Current FEC)
- Ben Silverman (Below Top 10 Current FEC)
- Carl Yuan (No. 125 Top 125 prior year's FEC)

#### Second Wave: 9 - 10 a.m.

- Ryo Hisatsune (Below Top 10 Current FEC)
- Nicolai Højgaard (Top 50 OWGR)
- Jake Knapp (2024 Mexico Open at Vidanta)
- Matthieu Pavon (2024 Farmers Insurance Open)
- Matti Schmid (No. 122 Top 125 prior year's FEC)
- David Skinns (Below Top 10 Current FEC)
- Sam Stevens (Top 70 prior year FEC)
- Ben Taylor (No. 86 Top 125 prior year's FEC)
- Sami Valimaki (Below Top 10 Current FEC)
- Carson Young (No. 102 Top 125 prior year's FEC)
- Kevin Yu (No. 112 Top 125 prior year's FEC)

#### **PLAYER BIOS**

# FIRST WAVE (8-9 a.m.)

**Ludvig Åberg** 

**Birthplace:** Eslov, Sweden **Residence:** Tallahassee, Florida **College:** Texas Tech University

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Winner – 2023 RSM Classic

**Fast Facts:** 

- Won the 2023 RSM Classic, becoming the first PGA TOUR University alum to win on TOUR
- Finished No. 1 in PGA TOUR University Class of 2023 and became the first player to join the TOUR directly out of college via PGA TOUR U; as the No. 1 player, earned TOUR membership for the remainder of 2023 and the 2024 season (now playing out of Tournament Winners category)
- In his first summer as a pro, won the DP World Tour's Omega European Masters and went on to earn a captain's pick for the European Ryder Cup Team
- As a senior at Texas Tech, became just the seventh player to win all three national player of the year awards in the same season (Haskins, Nicklaus, Hogan)
- Grew up playing soccer (central midfield), his first sports love, until shifting his focus to golf at age 13; favorite team is Liverpool, favorite athlete is Steven Gerrard
- Finished T7 at 2018 Junior PLAYERS Championship (71-69-73)

### **Akshay Bhatia**

**Birthplace:** Los Angeles, California **Residence:** Wake Forest, North Carolina **College:** n/a (turned pro in 2019)

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Winner – 2023 Barracuda Championship

**Fast Facts:** 

- Made his first PGA TOUR-sanctioned start as a 17-year-old amateur in March 2019 at the Valspar Championship (sponsor exemption, missed cut). A month later, he Monday qualified into the Korn Ferry Tour's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail Championship (finished T42).
- At the 2019 Walker Cup, Bhatia, 17 years old at the time, became the first golfer still in high school to represent the United States, as well as the youngest American player in Walker Cup history (previous: Jordan Spieth / 18 years old).
- Born in Los Angeles, California but considers Wake Forest, North Carolina (roughly 20 miles north of Raleigh) his home, as Akshay's parents, Sonny and Renu, moved the family there in 2012 and wanted to raise their children outside of chaotic Los Angeles.
- Represented the United States in its victories at the 2017 Junior Presidents Cup and 2018 Junior Ryder Cup. Also finished runner-up at the 2018 U.S. Junior Amateur, falling 1 up to Michael Thorbjornsen in the final.

## **Nick Dunlap**

**Birthplace:** Huntsville, Alabama **Residence:** Tuscaloosa, Alabama **College:** University of Alabama

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Winner – The American Express 2024

#### **Fast Facts:**

- Won the 2024 American Express, becoming the first amateur to win a PGA TOUR event since Phil Mickelson at the 1991 Northern Telecom Open.
- He's the second-youngest winner on TOUR in the last 90 years and the only player to win the U.S. Junior Amateur, the U.S. Amateur and a PGA TOUR event as an amateur.
- A week after earning his first PGA TOUR win at the 2024 American Express, declared he was turning pro and accepted PGA TOUR membership at a press conference at the University of Alabama surrounded by his family and UA coaches/teammates.
- Was a high-level baseball and football player. As a third grader in the 8-to-9-year-old age group, was a finalist for the NFL Punt, Pass & Kick competition and went to the NFC Championship game in 2012.

### **Austin Eckroat**

**Birthplace:** Edmond, Oklahoma **Residence:** Edmond, Oklahoma **College:** Oklahoma State University

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Winner – 2024 Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches

#### **Fast Facts:**

- Earned his first PGA TOUR card via the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Finals a year after joining the Korn Ferry Tour via a No. 3 finish in the inaugural PGA TOUR University Class of 2021.
- Claimed his first PGA TOUR victory in his 50th start at the 2024 Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches, becoming the second PGA TOUR University alum to win on TOUR (Ludvig Aberg, 2023 RSM Classic).
- Played on the victorious United States team at the 2021 Walker Cup; his teammates included fellow Class of 2022 Korn Ferry Tour graduate Davis Thompson and Korn Ferry Tour winner Pierceson Coody.
- Helped Oklahoma State win the 2018 NCAA Championships as a true freshman alongside Viktor Hovland. Fellow Class of 2022 Korn Ferry Tour graduate Sam Stevens was a senior on the 2018 national title team, but Eckroat replaced him in the starting lineup for the NCAA Regional and NCAA Championships.
- Favorite professional sports teams are the Kansas City Chiefs (NFL football) and Oklahoma City Thunder (NBA basketball). In addition to the NFL and NBA, he also enjoys watching Formula 1 racing and college basketball and football.
- Hunting is among his hobbies and off-course interests.

### **Harry Hall**

Birthplace: Camborne, Cornwall, England

Residence: Las Vegas, Nevada

College: University of Nevada - Las Vegas

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Top 125 in 2022-23 FedExCup Playoffs & Eligibility Points List

#### **Fast Facts:**

- As a rookie for the 2022-23 season, finished fourth on TOUR in Strokes Gained: Putting. Harry chooses to feel the slope with his feet rather than using traditional green reading methods, saying, "If you can really hone in your feet, it's a lot more reliable when you go from different course to course, different sceneries. Your eyes, they don't lie to you, but I trust my feet a lot more now. It's a lot more repeatable week in and week out."
- Represents Cornwall, a county in the far southwest of England along the Celtic Sea and English
  Channel, both of which flow into the North Atlantic Ocean. Harry traditionally wears black and
  something with a tint of gold on Sundays in honor of Cornwall's colors and flag.
- Played in the 2019 Walker Cup at Royal Liverpool Golf Club in Hoylake with fellow Englishman Alex Fitzpatrick (younger brother of 2022 U.S. Open champion Matt Fitzpatrick) among his teammates.
- Played the 2017 and 2018 Arnold Palmer Cups alongside PGA TOUR winner Viktor Hovland.

### **Chan Kim**

**Birthplace:** Suwon, South Korea **Residence:** Gilbert, Arizona **College:** Arizona State University

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Below Top 10 in Current FedExCup Points

#### **Fast Facts:**

- Globetrotter with 10 worldwide wins (eight on Japan Golf Tour between 2017 and the end of 2022, two on Korn Ferry Tour in 2023) in his first season as a PGA TOUR member. Kim earned TOUR membership for the first time via the 2023 Korn Ferry Tour season, which saw him finish No. 2 on the Points List.
- Secured PGA TOUR membership for the first time with back-to-back Korn Ferry Tour wins in August 2023. Kim earned his first win at the inaugural Magnit Championship at Metedeconk followed by a win at the Albertsons Boise Open a week later.
- Played with his childhood idol, Tiger Woods, in the third round of the 2020 ZOZO Championship at Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks, California. Kim called the round one of the best moments of his life

### **Ben Kohles**

Birthplace: Dallas, Texas

Residence: Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

College: University of Virginia

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: 2023 Korn Ferry Tour Points Leader

- Four-time Korn Ferry Tour winner (two wins in both 2012 -- his first year as a professional -- and 2023) who regained PGA TOUR membership as a 2023 Korn Ferry Tour graduate. Finished No. 1 on the 2023 Korn Ferry Tour Points List, earning exemptions for the 2024 PLAYERS Championship and U.S. Open by virtue of finishing atop the Points List.
- Turned professional out of University of Virginia in July 2012 and won his first two professional starts in back-to-back weeks on the Korn Ferry Tour, becoming the first (and still the only) player in history to win their first two starts on the Korn Ferry Tour.

- Played four seasons at University of Virginia (2008-12), where he set a school record for career wins (seven) and was twice named Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year (2010 and 2011); he shared the 2010 ACC Player of the Year honor with Florida State's Brooks Koepka.
- Likes to watch Formula 1 and enjoys race cars. Owns a race car simulator which he purchased following the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour season and set up in his garage at home. The simulator is fully equipped with a race car seat, gear stick, pedals, vibrations, etc.
- He and his wife, Lindsey, welcomed their first child in May 2022 (daughter, Charlotte).

### **Vincent Norrman**

**Birthplace:** Stockholm, Sweden **Residence:** Tallahassee, Florida **College:** Florida State University

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Winner, 2023 Barbasol Championship

### **Fast Facts:**

- Played his way through First, Second, and Final Stages of the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying
  Tournament to earn membership for 2022, then earned his first PGA TOUR card via the Korn
  Ferry Tour Regular Season with a strong rookie season. Spent the final 10 weeks of the regular
  season on the bubble and held on to the No. 23 position on the points list with a top-40 in the
  regular season finale.
- Secured his first PGA TOUR victory in only his 23rd career start, as the 25-year-old rookie won the 2023 Barbasol Championship in a playoff over Nathan Kimsey.
- Lives in Tallahassee, Florida and at the end of 2023 friend and fellow Swede/PGA TOUR member Ludvig Aberg moved in.
- Grew up in Stockholm, Sweden, playing mostly at Haninge Golf Club, where a young Alex Noren previously honed his golf game. Vincent also played a lot of hockey before he gave it up and pursued golf at 15 years old.
- Girlfriend, Frida Kinhult, played collegiately for Florida State and gained her LPGA Tour card via the Symetra Tour following the 2020 season. She earned LPGA Tour membership for 2022 via the LPGA Q-Series.
- Fan of Kygo, a Norwegian DJ, and Swedish House Maffia, a Swedish house music supergroup.
- Passionate about coffee.

### **Jimmy Stanger**

**Birthplace:** Tampa, Florida **Residence:** Jacksonville, Florida **College:** University of Virginia

**How he qualified for THE PLAYERS:** Below Top 10 on Current FedExCup Points

- PGA TOUR rookie who earned membership for the first time via the 2023 Korn Ferry Tour season, which awarded TOUR cards to the top 30 players on its points list. Stanger finished in the top 30 largely off the strength of his first career win at the Compliance Solutions Championship in Norman, Oklahoma in June 2023.
- Turned professional out of University of Virginia in 2017 and earned Korn Ferry Tour membership for the 2018 season via Q-School. Stanger played five consecutive seasons (and six

consecutive years) on the Korn Ferry Tour until earning his first PGA TOUR card at the end of the 2023 season.

- Played four seasons at University of Virginia (2013-17), winning three individual titles, with the crown jewel being a playoff victory for medalist honors at the 2017 Atlantic Coast Conference Championship.
- Started Birdies for Hope in 2020 in an effort to build churches and hope centers in third-world countries around the world.
- Younger sister, Theresa Maylei Stanger, was adopted from China by the Stanger family when she
  was 11 months old; she played golf at Wheaton College, a NCAA Division III program roughly 30
  miles west of Chicago

### **Ben Silverman**

Birthplace: Thornhill, Ontario, Canada

**Residence:** Juno Beach, Florida **College:** Florida Atlantic University

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Below Top 10 on Current FedExCup Points

#### **Fast Facts:**

- Returning to the PGA TOUR for the first time since consecutive seasons on TOUR in 2017-18 (finished No. 136 in FedExCup standings) and 2018-19 (finished No. 181 in FedExCup standings).
- Turned professional in 2010 and toiled on mini-tours until he earned PGA TOUR Canada membership in 2014; he also played the 2015 season on PGA TOUR Canada.
- Walked on to the golf team and played two seasons at two different programs -- Johnson and Wales University (2006-08), which had a satellite campus in Miami and offered a handful of academic tracks but was known for its culinary program, and Florida Atlantic University (2008-10).
- Has an intense dedication to maintaining elite fitness and mental performance, as he believes
  those are two areas which will allow him to accomplish his ultimate goal of winning on the PGA
  TOUR. Also pays close attention to nutrition and carefully curates his meals both at home and
  on the road; he does not eat fast food or drink soda.

### **Carl Yuan**

Birthplace: Dalian, China

**Residence:** Jacksonville, Florida **College:** University of Washington

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Top 125 in 2022-23 FedExCup Points & Eligibility List

- Second-year PGA TOUR member whose best ever TOUR result was a solo-fourth finish at the 2023 Butterfield Bermuda Championship. Originally earned PGA TOUR membership after finishing No. 2 on the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Points List despite holding the top ranking for the five months leading up to the Korn Ferry Tour Finals, which saw Justin Suh overtake him for the top spot.
- After finishing his rookie season No. 126 in the standings through the FedExCup Fall, moved to No. 125 after updates to the priority ranking following Jon Rahm's suspension to earn full-

- exempt status for 2024. In his first start of the 2024 season, Yuan finished T4 at the Sony Open in Hawaii, his best result of the season to-date.
- Represented China in the 2020 Olympic Men's Golf Competition (finished T38), but sacrificed
  the remainder of the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour season in order to fulfill obligations related to
  China's Olympic team, including competing in the National Games of China
- Close friends with fellow countryman and PGA TOUR member Zecheng "Marty" Dou. They grew
  up playing against each other, representing national teams together, and they played four years
  together on the Korn Ferry Tour from 2019 through 2022, a season which ended with both
  earning PGA TOUR cards.

# SECOND WAVE (9-10 a.m.)

### **Ryo Hisatsune**

**Birthplace:** Okayama, Japan **Residence:** Okayama, Japan

College: n/a (turned professional 2020)

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Below Top 10 on Current FedExCup Points

#### **Fast Facts:**

- Turned professional in 2020 and finished atop the Japan Challenge Tour's money list in 2020-21 with three victories in the span of three months from June September 2021. Competed on the Japan Golf Tour in 2022 and earned T2 finish for his best result.
- Third player from Japan to win on the DP World Tour, joining Isao Aoki (1983 Panasonic European Open) and Hideki Matsuyama (2016 WGC-HSBC Champions). Rikuya Hoshina became the fourth with a win at the 2024 Commercial Bank Qatar Masters.
- After earning dual membership on the PGA TOUR via the DP World Top 10, plans to take up residence in Orlando, near where fellow Japanese players Hideki Matsuyama and Satoshi Kodaira reside.
- Awarded the Sir Henry Cotton Award as 2023 DP World Tour Rookie of the Year, the first player from Japan to earn the recognition.

### Nicolai Hojgaard

**Birthplace:** Billund, Denmark **Residence:** Aarhus, Denmark

College: n/a (turned professional 2019)

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: World No. 33 (Official World Golf Ranking)

- Joined the PGA TOUR as a Special Temporary Member at the 2023 Valero Texas Open and earned his PGA TOUR card for the 2024 season by finishing inside the top 125 on non-member FedExCup points following The RSM Classic.
- Nicolai and his twin brother, Rasmus, became the first brothers to win back-to-back on the DP World Tour in 2021. Rasmus won the 2021 Omega European Masters in Switzerland, and a week later, Nicolai won his first DP World Tour title at the 2021 DS Automobiles Italian Open.

- Won the 2018 Eisenhower Trophy for Denmark as an amateur alongside twin brother Rasmus and John Axelsen. They edged the United States Team of Cole Hammer, Collin Morikawa and Justin Suh by one stroke. Nicolai finished T6 in the individual competition. Reached as high as No. 5 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking.
- Selected by Captain Luke Donald to compete in the 2023 Ryder Cup in Rome, where he finished with a 0-2-1 record for the victorious European Team. Played in the 2018 Junior Ryder Cup in Paris (alongside twin brother Rasmus). Put himself into contention for a pick following his play in the 2023 Hero Cup, where he replaced his injured brother, Rasmus, and ended up finishing tied with the most points with 3.5. Won 2.5 points paired with 2022 Ryder Cup Vice Captain Francesco Molinari.

### Jake Knapp

**Birthplace:** Costa Mesa, California **Residence:** Scottsdale, Arizona

College: UCLA

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Winner – 2024 Mexico Open at Vidanta

### **Fast Facts:**

- PGA TOUR rookie finished No. 13 on the 2023 Korn Ferry Tour Points List, earning his first PGA TOUR card (top 30 from Points List) in what was his second season on the Korn Ferry Tour.
- Logged 10 top-10s -- tied for the most on Tour in 2023 -- and logged 20 made cuts in 22 starts. Solidified his place in the top 15 of the Points List with three top-10s in his final five starts, including a solo-fifth at the Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship and T10 at the season-ending Korn Ferry Tour Championship presented by United Leasing & Finance. Prior to the 2023 season, had one top-10 and 16 made cuts in 36 career starts on the Korn Ferry Tour.
- Earliest golf memory is watching Tiger Woods defeat Stephen Ames 9&8 at the 2006 WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship (played at La Costa Resort & Spa in Carlsbad, California) and having Woods' caddie, Steve Williams, toss him one of the balls from the match.
- Played three and a half seasons at UCLA (2012-15), winning twice individually; he turned professional in January 2016, forgoing the spring of his senior season.

### **Matthieu Pavon**

**Birthplace:** Toulouse, France **Residence:** Encamp, Andorra

**College:** n/a (turned professional 2013)

**How he qualified for THE PLAYERS:** Winner – 2024 Farmers Insurance Open

- PGA TOUR rookie in 2024 after earning dual membership via the inaugural DP World Tour Top 10. Moved inside the top 10 - eventually finishing eighth on the Race to Dubai Point List - at the final event of the 2023 DP World Tour season to earn his TOUR card
- Won the 2024 Farmers Insurance Open after posting a birdie on the 72nd hole to defeat fellow DP World Tour graduate Nicolai Hojgaard by one stroke. Earned his first PGA TOUR victory in his 11th career PGA TOUR start (and third as a TOUR member) at 31 years, 2 months and 25 days old.

- First player representing France to win on the PGA TOUR since World War II. Is currently the
  highest-ranked French golfer in the Official World Golf Ranking. When the field is finalized for
  the Olympic Golf Men's Competition following the U.S. Open, the highest-ranked French player
  in the OWGR will earn a spot in the Paris 2024 field (to be contested at Le Golf National), per the
  Olympic Golf Ranking.
- Member at Dye Preserve in Jupiter that will serve as his home base in the U.S. in 2024. Will
  spend time staying with fellow French professional Thomas Levet, who was a mentor to Matt
  early in his career.

### **Matti Schmid**

Birthplace: Regensburg, Germany

**Residence:** Maxhütte-Haidhof, Germany

**College:** University of Louisville

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Top 125 in 2022-23 FedExCup Points & Eligibility List

### **Fast Facts:**

- Turned professional immediately following The Open Championship in 2021 and secured his DP World Tour status in just seven starts, eventually being named the 2021 Sir Henry Cotton Rookie of the Year.
- Gained entry to the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Finals via the non-member FedExCup Nos. 126-200 category, largely off the strength of his top-10 (T8) at the Barbasol Championship, which he gained entry to via his DP World Tour standing.
- Credits the coaching staff at University of Louisville, and former PGA TOUR professional Ted Schulz in particular, for developing his game. Says, "[college] helped my golf game tremendously. I wasn't that good before. I would say I don't think I would have made it straightaway on TOUR, a high level on any Tour, but college really has prepared me and has given me the opportunity to improve."

# **David Skinns**

**Birthplace:** Lincoln, England **Residence:** Suwanee, Georgia **College:** University of Tennessee

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Below Top 10 on Current FedExCup Points

- Three-time Korn Ferry Tour winner who earned PGA TOUR membership for the second time in the last three seasons; he previously graduated from the Korn Ferry Tour following the 2020-21 season, played the 2021-22 season on TOUR as a rookie and finished 198th in the FedExCup standings, relegating him to the Korn Ferry Tour, where he played the 2023 season and regained TOUR membership via a top 30 finish on the Korn Ferry Tour Points List.
- Finished fifth in the 2001 European Amateur prior to his arrival at University of Tennessee; he
  played one season as an amateur after high school before electing to go to college, and cited
  Luke Donald and Paul Casey as examples for why he saw college in the United States as a
  pathway to professional golf.

- Turned professional in 2005 but did not play consistently on PGA TOUR-sanctioned circuits until 2012; he played eight Korn Ferry Tour events in 2012, played PGA TOUR Canada seasons in 2013, 2015, and 2016, and played full Korn Ferry Tour seasons from 2017-2021.
- Follows the Tennessee Volunteers, Pittsburgh Steelers (NFL football), and the Atlanta Braves.

### Sam Stevens

**Birthplace:** Fort Worth, Texas **Residence:** Wichita, Kansas

College: Oklahoma State University

**How he qualified for THE PLAYERS:** Top 70 in the 2022-23 FedExCup Points List thru the Playoffs

# Fast Facts:

- Earned his first PGA TOUR card via the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Finals. Secured his TOUR card at the season-ending Korn Ferry Tour Championship at Victoria National Golf Club with a course-record 10-under 62 in the third round, which led to a T12 finish. Stevens finished No. 43 on the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Eligibility Points List to gain entry to Finals.
- Turned professional out of Oklahoma State University in 2018 and earned his way onto PGA
  TOUR Latinoamerica for the 2019 and 2020-21 seasons. Sam finished No. 3 on the 2020-21
  Order of Merit for Korn Ferry Tour membership in 2022. Sam also made 26 starts from 2019
  through late 2021 on a mini-tour circuit (All Pro Tour) and amassed over \$200,000 in official
  earnings.
- Sam is a third-generation professional golfer. His grandfather, Johnny, made 30 PGA TOUR starts, mostly across the 1968 and 1969 seasons. His father, Charlie, played collegiately at University of Oklahoma and Texas Christian University before he made two Korn Ferry Tour starts in 1992.

# **Ben Taylor**

Birthplace: Epsom, London

**Residence:** Champions Gate, Florida **College:** Louisiana State University

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Top 125 in 2022-23 FedExCup Points & Eligibility List

- Recorded two runner-up finishes, including one in the regular season finale, on the Korn Ferry
  Tour last season to secure a return to the PGA TOUR. Ben previously graduated via the 2019
  Korn Ferry Tour Finals and played the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons on TOUR.
- Turned professional in summer 2015 and spent the 2016 season on PGA TOUR Canada as he
  worked his way to the Korn Ferry Tour, where he played from 2017 through 2019, when he
  earned his first PGA TOUR card via the 2019 Korn Ferry Tour Finals.
- In two seasons at LSU (2013-15), helped the Tigers win the 2015 national title, finishing with a 3-0 record in match play at The Concession Golf Club in Bradenton, Florida.
- Was the only player among the top 50 in the FedExCup standings eligible for the 2023 PLAYERS
   Championship who did not compete. After proposing during the 2022 Masters week (he did not
   play) to now-wife Taryn, the couple found their dream wedding venue in West Palm Beach,
   Florida, and agreed they wanted a spring date. The only two weekends available? The Saturday
   of the 2023 PLAYERS or Saturday of the 2023 Masters. The couple selected March 11 never

thinking they would be eligible for either. After three top-five finishes through March, Taylor did end up qualifying for THE PLAYERS.

### Sami Valimaki

**Birthplace:** Nokia, Finland **Residence:** Pirkkala, Finland

College: n/a (turned professional 2019)

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Below Top 10 on Current FedExCup Points

### **Fast Facts:**

- Captured his second career DP World Tour victory at the 2023 Commercial Bank Qatar Masters to move him into position to capture dual membership on the PGA TOUR in 2024.
- Won the 2020 Oman Open in his sixth career start on the DP World Tour, 18 months after completing his military service in Finland. Added five other top-10 finishes to earn the Sir Henry Cotton Award as the DP World Tour Rookie of the Year.
- With his maiden DP World Tour victory, became the fourth player from Finland to win on the Tour, joining Mikko Ilonen, Roope Kakko and Mikko Korhonen.
- Cousin Juuso Valimaki was selected by the Calgary Flames in the first round, 16th overall, in the 2017 NHL Entry Draft. The defenseman joined the Arizona Coyotes franchise in 2022.

# **Carson Young**

**Birthplace:** Anderson, South Carolina **Residence:** Anderson, South Carolina

**College:** Clemson University

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Top 125 in 2022-23 FedExCup Points & Eligibility List

# **Fast Facts:**

- Earned his first PGA TOUR card via the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Finals, which he gained entry to via a win at The Panama Championship (third event of the season) earlier in the year. Posted top-25s in two of the three Finals events, including a T12 at the season-ending Korn Ferry Tour Championship to earn TOUR membership for the 2022-23 season.
- Played four seasons at Clemson University (2013-17) and turned professional following his senior season. Won the 2017 Furman Invitational for his lone collegiate victory, earned a 2017 All-America Honorable Mention laurel, and was a two-time All-Atlantic Coast Conference selection (2016 and 2017).
- Was ready to quit golf before giving it one more shot at 2021 Korn Ferry Q-School. He finished
  T29 at Final Stage to earn eight guaranteed starts and won in Panama, which helped him earn
  his PGA TOUR card for 2022-23.

### **Kevin Yu**

**Birthplace:** Taoyuan, Chinese Taipei **Residence:** Scottsdale, Arizona **College:** Arizona State University

How he qualified for THE PLAYERS: Top 125 in 2022-23 FedExCup Points & Eligibility List

**Fast Facts:** 

• 2015 Junior PLAYERS Champion! Birdied the 18<sup>th</sup> hole to win by a stroke.

- Earned his PGA TOUR card in his first full season on the Korn Ferry Tour, finishing No. 20 on the Regular Season Points List off the strength of two runner-up finishes and a solo-third. Joined C.T. Pan as the only other Chinese Taipei player to earn a PGA TOUR card via the Korn Ferry Tour.
- Starred at Arizona State University for five seasons (2016-21), winning three individual titles and earning 2019 All-America First Team honors, as well as a 2021 All-America Third Team selection.
- Underwent surgery to repair torn meniscus in the left knee in February 2023 after injuring himself while doing gym work. Returned to action at the Travelers Championship.
- Moved to the United States in January 2015, roughly four months after he won an individual bronze medal and helped Chinese Taipei win a gold medal at the 2014 Asian Games. Yu trained at the Gary Gilchrist Golf Academy as he played the junior circuit in the U.S.