



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Sebastian Muñoz	64-66 –130 (-12)
2	Joey Garber	66-65–131 (-11)
3	Michael Johnson	67-65–132 (-10)
	Albin Choi	68-64–132 (-10)
	Kevin Dougherty	67-65–132 (-10)

Sebastian Muñoz remains atop leaderboard at Web.com Tour’s Rex Hospital Open

RALEIGH, N.C. – In life, and in golf, things don’t always go as planned. When Sebastian Muñoz earned his first Web.com Tour win at the 2016 Country Club de Bogotá Championship as a sponsor’s exemption in his hometown making just his second Tour start, it looked like things were headed upwards fast for the 25-year-old. He went on to finish No. 22 on the Regular Season money list and punch his ticket to the PGA TOUR. The following season proved to be a test for Muñoz, who made just eight cuts in 17 starts on TOUR. After taking some time to regroup and refocus, Muñoz is back with a new fire, aiming to make 2018 his year of redemption.

After picking up the 18-hole co-lead Thursday at the Rex Hospital Open, Muñoz kept fighting, posting a 5-under 66 during the second round to maintain his lead heading into the weekend. Sitting one back of Muñoz is University of Georgia alum Joey Garber, who seeks to capture the first Tour victory of his career.

“I feel like I’m driving the ball good,” Muñoz said of his strong opening play at TPC Wakefield Plantation. “I feel like I’m putting really good and the irons are starting to kick in, giving me more chances than I’m used to, so that’s good.”

That all-around game strength is the byproduct of some major game changes Muñoz made in the offseason. Changes that began with bringing in a second set of eyes.

“I never had a coach through college and stuff,” the University of North Texas alum commented, “so I never had videos and I couldn’t go back to anything, so I hired a coach... I told him I didn’t have the consistency that I wanted, that I had really good tournaments and really bad tournaments, so that’s what we worked on and that’s what made me want to change and be more consistent every day.”

To become more consistent, his coach, Troy Denton, suggested changing how Muñoz hit the ball. After growing up in Bogotá, a city at high elevation, Muñoz was used to hitting the ball with a lot of spin off the tee. That tactic didn’t exactly translate to playing in America, where most of the weeks were much closer to sea-level than he was used to.

“It was frustrating at first,” he said of the change. “I felt like huge blocks just weren’t going anywhere. I doubted myself. In The Bahamas the first week (of the season) I doubted if I wanted to do the change. I had a good friend caddying there for me and we just committed to it and it paid off in the second week.”

Since making the change, consistency has been par for the course for Muñoz. He'd made 10 of 12 cuts prior to this week, carding six top-25 finishes along the way. After picking up a T3 at the El Bosque Mexico Championship by Innova and a T2 at the North Mississippi Classic, the only thing missing from his 2018 resume is a win.

"[The results] are showing that it's paying off," he remarked. "It's showing that the hard work I put in is doing the work that I intended it to. I'm happy that the results are kicking in. I just have to keep it going. I've still got to make a few tweaks here and there, but it's building confidence that it's working."

Garber will join Muñoz in the final group on Saturday, as he enters contention for one of the first times of his Tour career. This is the 26-year-old's first full season on Tour after he successfully navigated the 2017 Web.com Tour Qualifying Tournament to earn guaranteed starts. While he hopes to pick up his first win this week in Raleigh, like Muñoz, the weekend will be a time to test his game and evaluate where he is in relation to his expectations.

"[It's going to be seeing] if I'm ready for [the pressure of being in contention]," Garber commented. "I feel like I am, so hopefully I am. If not, I'll learn from it and we'll move to the next one. I feel like I am, though, and I feel like my game is in a good spot so I'm going to just keep doing what I'm doing."

FRIDAY NOTES:

- * Friday weather: Partly cloudy, High 92, Winds W/SW 7-14 mph.
- * This week's purse is \$650,000, with \$117,000 going to the champion.
- * Four 2018 winners sit inside of the top 25 entering Saturday (Ben Taylor, Jose de Jesus Rodriguez, Scott Langley, Michael Arnaud). They each hope to become the first repeat winner of the season.
- * Tour rookie Hank Lebioda carded the round of the day Friday when he posted a career-best 9-under 62 after opening with a 3-over 74 on Thursday. Lebioda's total surpassed the tournament's prior lowest second-round score of 63 by one stroke.
- * Three 36-hole leaders/co-leaders have gone on to capture a title this season: Ben Taylor, Country Club de Bogotá Championship; Julian Etulain, Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by NACHER; and Michael Arnaud, BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by SYNEX Corporation.
- * Since the tournament's inception in 1994, the second-round leader/co-leader has only been able to convert their lead into a win six times: Michael Christie (1995), John Maginnes (2001), Kyle Thompson (2007, 2015), John Riegger (2010), and Chesson Hadley (2013).
- * Maverick McNealy moved inside the cutline with a second-round 5-under 66. He sits at 6-under 136 and will be playing the weekend in Raleigh. McNealy has yet to miss a cut in seven events on Tour.
- * Justin Lower sits at T7 headed into the weekend as he seeks the second top-10 of his career. Lower picked up a career-best T3 earlier this season at the Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by NACHER.
- * Will Claxton is continuing his comeback from being sidelined due to injury for four years. In his first start since a T8 finish at the Knoxville Open – just his fourth start since returning to competition in 2018 – Claxton has carded rounds of 67-68–135 (-7) to make the weekend once again.
- * After missing four of his last five cuts, Ben Taylor posted rounds of 67-68–135 (-7) to make the weekend in Raleigh. The Englishman sits at T12 entering the third round.
- * Friday's cut came at 3-under 139, with 82 professionals advancing to weekend play. The lowest cut of the 2018 season came at the BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by SYNEX Corporation, when it fell at 8-under 206.

* TPC Wakefield Plantation Scoring averages:

	Front (36)	Back (35)	Total (71)	Cumulative
R1	35.301	34.494	69.795	
R2	35.058	34.903	69.961	69.878

* NEXT WEEK: The Web.com Tour travels to Ivanhoe, Illinois, for the Rust-Oleum Championship before taking a week off.

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