

ILLINOIS GOLFER

THE OPENING 9

Saturday,
July 8, 2023

Oh, to be Young

Reporting from Silvis, Illinois

On a day with six 63s, going low to keep up with the only option at TPC Deere Run. As a result, the second round of the 52nd John Deere Classic turned into a birdiefest, as is traditional in the Quad Cities in July.

1 At No. 19, **Cameron Young** is the highest player in the world golf rankings in the John Deere Classic.

Through 36 holes, he has lived up to that lofty position. Friday's 7-under 64, added to his opening 65, earns him the lead spot and a late tee time for Saturday's third round.

At 13-under 129, Young may lead, but there is company in close proximity. This is the Deere, after all, a four-day golf track meet on the fairways of greens of TPC Deere Run. **Adam Schenk**, **Garrick Higgo** and **Brendon Todd** are tied for second at 11-under 131, while **Ludvig Aberg** and **William Mouw**, who might not yet be household names beyond their own households, share fifth place at 10-under 132. **Jonas Blixt**, the overnight leader, lurks at 7-under 135.

But Young was the one on Friday.

"There's a lot of golf left," Young said. "That (lead) can go away really quick. We saw this morning. I came out and birdied the first three holes when (Blixt) wasn't on the golf course and all of a sudden I'm tied with him.

"There's just nothing I can take for granted."

Young played in the morning, when the greens were untrod upon and the wind was absent. Hitting nine fairways and 15 greens, he added five more birdies to that opening outburst, an effort offset by a single bogey. His 21-foot putt for birdie on No. 7 was the showstopper.



J.R. Howell / John Deere Classic

THE LEADER Cameron Young launches a shot off the second tee on Friday at TPC Deere Run. He birdied the hole en route to a 64 and the tournament lead.

With all that, Young's admonition that golf remains means he's not quite to the point of composing a victory speech. So far, he said, the score "just really means I'm kind of accomplishing my goals thus far this week and doing my job well. That's all I can try to keep doing."

2 The match between golf course and a particular player is all in the head of

that player. Take **D.A. Points** and Deere Run. He loves the course and yet has made the cut only once in 16 appearances. It's inexplicable that the Pekin native, a three-time winner on the PGA Tour,

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can't get over the hump at Deere Run.

Friday was the latest example. He shot 1-under 71 for a 36-hole total of 2-under 140. Not great by Deere standards, but when he finished, he was on the cut line and looking like he'd play the weekend. Then the afternoon wave took advantage of the similarly benign conditions, and the minimum score to continue advanced to 4-under 138. And once again, Points was down the highway.

Then there's **Kevin Streelman**, another Illinoian who is a PGA Tour regular. He's won twice in his 16-year career, has earned over \$25 million, and like Points, is a regular John Deere Classic visitor. His resume at TPC Deere Run is more successful than Points', but also more complicated. In 10 previous appearances, the Winfield native has tied for seventh, been solo eighth, tied for eighth, and had finished in the 40s three times, plus missed two cuts.

You never know what you'll get when he tees it up. His round of par 71 on Thursday included a pair of bogeys on par 5s, which are poison to pros, and he was stuck in 89th place. Friday, he posted a bogey-free 8-under 63, the best of his 34 rounds at Deere Run. The handsome aggregate of 8-under 134 places him tied for 10th going into the weekend.

"I putted poorly yesterday and my caddie noticed something," Streelman said. "Just kind of changed my head position a little bit. I was talking and backing out of the putts a little bit."

The adjustment centered his head, allowing for an unobstructed turn, and like that, the ball was rolling true. Aside from a three-putt on the second hole (his 11th of the day), it also found the hole. He needed only 26 putts, just 11 on his first nine holes, Deere's inward half.

"With eight birdies, it kind of gets me back in it," said Streelman before he and son Rhett went off to a baseball card store in search of bargains.

3 Jonas Blixt didn't shoot 100, as he said he could following Thursday's 62, but he did shoot 2-over 73 on Friday, and that probably felt like a million with 17 players in the field passing him.

Blixt started on No. 10, parred every hole on the back nine, then played the front in 2-over 37, with one birdie and

a trio of bogeys, including the last two holes. He missed an 11-footer for par on the par-4 ninth, knocked in the bogey putt and then faked breaking his putter over his knee.

4 **Michael Thorbjornsen** broke the single-round amateur scoring record on Friday morning, firing a 8-under 63. Splashing eight birdies on his card and with nary a single bogey, Thorbjornsen jumped to 6-under overall and 29th place, up from the tie for 133rd he was mired in Thursday. So much for Saturday being moving day.

Thorbjornsen, winner of the 2021 Western Amateur at the Glen View Club, is in on a sponsor's exemption. The old amateur mark for the Deere was a 64 by **Philip Francis** in 2008's third round. The previous second-round amateur record was the 66 posted by **Jamie Lovemark**, also in 2008.

5 Next week's Scottish Open will give an exemption to the Deere winner if he isn't otherwise except, it was announced Friday. That replaced the exemption to the British Open, which vanished this year.

6 PGA Tour commissioner **Jay Monahan** reported improvement in his health on Friday, saying he'd return to work from an unspecified health scare on July 17.

"With the support of my family and thanks to world class medical care, my health has improved dramatically," Monahan said in a statement released by the organization. He took a medical leave on June 13, a week after announcing a peace deal had been cut between the PGA Tour and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, the operation behind the rival LIV Tour.

7 A score of 4-under 138 or better, a stroke more precise than last year, was needed to make the cut, and 69 players accomplished the feat. Aside from Points, among those who did not: Northwestern alum **Dylan Wu** (139), 2022 co-runner-up **Christian Bezuidenhout** (140), **Tommy Kuhl** and **Brandt Snedeker** (141), and 2019 winner **Dylan Frittelli** (142).

The course averaged 69.335 strokes, about 1.66 strokes under the par of 71, with the par-4 ninth hole the most difficult (4.187) and the par-5 sec-

Round 2 Leaders

with Round 3 Tee Time (*-10th Tee)

T1	Cam Young	65	64-129	-13	11:55
T2	Adam Schenk	65	66-131	-11	11:55
	Garrick Higgo	65	66-131	-11	11:55
	Brendon Todd	66	65-131	-11	11:44
T5	Ludvig Aberg	68	64-132	-10	11:44
	William Moww	66	66-132	-10	11:44
	Denny McCarthy	68	64-132	-10	11:33
	Kevin Roy	69	63-132	-10	11:33
9	Mark Hubbard	67	66-133	-9	11:33
T10	Grayson Murray	64	70-134	-8	11:22
	Lucas Glover	69	65-134	-8	11:22
	Kevin Streelman	71	63-134	-8	11:22
	Peter Kuest	67	67-134	-8	11:11
	Cody Gribble	68	66-134	-8	11:11
	Jim Herman	71	63-134	-8	11:11
	Chris Kirk	68	66-134	-8	11:00
	Nate Lashley	65	69-134	-8	11:00

Notables

T18	J.T. Poston	68	67-135	-7	11:00
	Doug Ghim	70	65-135	-7	10:27
T29	Nick Hardy	67	69-136	-6	10:05
T61	Zach Johnson	72	66-138	-4	11:44*
	Missing The Cut				
T70	Dylan Wu	70	69-139	-3	
T87	D.A. Points	70	70-140	-2	
T100	Tommy Kuhl	70	71-141	-1	

Round 3

TV: Golf Channel, noon;

CBS, 2 p.m.

Online: ESPN+, 6:45 a.m.

Radio: SiriusXM, noon

and the easiest (4.426).

Birdies for Charity watch: There were 671 recorded on Friday, bringing the three-day total to 1,355.

8 Saturday's television coverage is split between Golf Channel (noon-2 p.m.) and CBS (2-5 p.m.), with the PGA Tour Live coverage on ESPN Plus beginning at the first tee time (9:55). SiriusXM radio coverage on the PGA Tour channel runs from noon-5 p.m.

9 Saturday is the first of the two concert days. Only high-end tickets remain, general admission for the weekend having sold out on Thursday afternoon. Gates close at 4 p.m., with the Darius Rucker concert expected to begin at about 5:45 p.m., some 45 minutes after play is expected to conclude.

— **Tim Cronin**