

ILLINOIS GOLFER

THE OPENING 9

Sunday,
July 3, 2022



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

LOOK OUT, GENESED! The big driver and ball adjacent to the ninth fairway is a big photo attraction at the John Deere Classic.

REPORTING FROM SILVIS, ILLINOIS

1 The hardest thing to do in golf isn't merely winning.

It's winning wire-to-wire, taking the lead in the first round and holding it outright after each round is completed.

It hasn't happened at the John Deere Classic since before Deere & Company put its name on the tournament. **David Frost** – undoubtedly with **Arthur Treacher** as his caddie – managed the feat in 1992 at Oakwood Country Club in the Hardee's Golf Classic. Twelve years before that, **Scott Hoch** went wire-to-wire at Oakwood in the 10th Quad Cities Open.

And that's it. Going wire-to-wire is golf's version of a no-hitter. They went 60 years between wire-to-wire finishes in the Western Open, and when **Nick Price** pulled it off in 1993, nobody remembered that it hadn't been accomplished since **MacDonald Smith** managed it in 1933.

J.T. Poston can run the Deere table on Sunday. He's led since mid-morning Thursday, when he opened with a 9-under 62. Adding a 70 on Friday and a 67 on Saturday adds up to a 54-hole aggregate of 19-under-par 194, a three-stroke lead over **Scott Stallings**,

Emiliano Grillo and **Denny McCarthy** entering the final round.

Poston accomplished this despite a pair of bogeys – that makes three for the week – along the way. Key to the final score was a 13-foot, 8-inch eagle putt on the 537-yard 17th, allowing for the second and third shots of what is now a comfortable cushion.

Poston had led by as many as five strokes mid-round, but the first of Saturday's bogeys and Stallings stitching together a 7-under 64 helped close the gap and made the gallery of perhaps 12,000 realize this was actually a competition, not an early Independence Day parade. Then Poston answered with his fireworks on the penultimate green, and the table was set for Sunday.

Poston hopes for it to be a feast.

"I can't go out there and play defensive and try to par it to death," Poston said. "I need to go out there and be aggressive and play to the last hole, the last putt."

2 McCarthy, whose 9-foot putt at the last tumbled in for a birdie-birdie finish and 5-under 66, advancing him to 16-under 197, is hanging with Poston

this week in a house they and several other pros, including **Patton Kizzire** and **Brendon Todd**, rented. They're spending their free time chowing down and playing gin, among other pursuits.

"We've been having fun at night, going to some dinners together," McCarthy said. "Playing a lot of cards, some dice games. ... Gin, it's a good fun card game. Gets the brain activated in the morning and at night before we go to bed."

"We've just been relaxing and having fun, so probably won't talk too much about golf. I took him in the card game this morning, so at least I got something out of today."

So he's got that going for him, which is nice.

The three-time Tour winner (most recently San Diego in 2014) also has solid golf going for him, hitting every green in regulation and 12 of 14 fairways. Only five birdies and taking 31 putts was therefore something of a disappointment.

"I had some good looks in the

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middle of the round I didn't capitalize on," McCarthy said. "I know the way he's hitting it and the way he putts as well. I'm going to have to go out and be aggressive and make some birdies early to put pressure on him."

3 Grillo, whose 6-under 65 included four birdies in his last five holes, hasn't won in seven years, but made an excellent point about being ready to win.

"I've been there a few times; obviously there's an advantage there," Grillo said. "But if you're there (in contention) after three rounds, you have enough experience. You have enough game. Everybody is in the same situation. Everybody wants to win. It's definitely going to be a tough battle tomorrow."

4 Northbrook's **Nick Hardy** gutted his way to an even-par 71 on Saturday morning, starting at 6:50 a.m. and ending at 9:53, going around Deere Run on his own. That earned him a 7:30 a.m. tee time for Sunday.

Hardy, chasing a Tour card, knows he has to play often but also knows he has to rest eventually. Maybe this coming week.

"I'm definitely feeling the heat of a month on the road," Hardy said. "It's just the mental energy. It's nothing physical. You don't realize the minor things you start doing – getting annoyed out there and showing your emotions.

"When you're really high-focused and in the groove, like I was for a few weeks, you have the energy to control all that. Now it's hard.

"(Today), I just didn't play my best."

5 Highwood's **Patrick Flavin**, who scored 3-under 68 on Saturday, gets the full John Deere Classic experience Sunday. He plays with **Zach Johnson**, pride of Cedar Rapids, two-time major winner, one-time Deere winner, member of the tourney board, and fan favorite.

6 Golf Makes No Sense Dept.: **Bo Hoag** has missed eight straight cuts, yet is tied for sixth and is five strokes off the lead.

7 On offer today: The John Deere Classic trophy, a first prize of \$1,278,000,

Grace wins LIV Golf Portland; Meronk leads Irish Open

Branden Grace of South Africa scored 7-under 65 at Pumpkin Ridge to score 13-under 203 to win the LIV Golf Portland tournament by two strokes over Carlos Ortiz of Mexico. Grace earned \$4.375 million for the individual win and second-place team placing, running his two-tournament LIV haul to \$6.4 million.

At the Irish Open, Adrian Meronk of Poland's 4-under 68 earned him a one-stroke lead on Jorge Campillo, Fabrizio Zanotti and Jack Senior at 14-under 202 at the Mount Juliet Estate.

a total purse of \$7.1 million, and three spots in the British Open for those who finish in the top 10 and not yet in that field.

8 Omar Uresti was 26 when he first played in what is now the John Deere Classic. That was 1995, when it was titled the Quad City Classic and played at Oakwood Country Club, on the other side of the Rock River.

He was back again this year, his 10th start, and made the cut at age 53. Saturday, he added a 2-over 73 to rounds of 72 and 67 and stands 68th, next to last, entering the final round.

Uresti isn't the oldest in Deere history to make the cut. **Sam Snead** was 67 when he made the cut and tied for 36th in 1979, a week highlighted by his 66 – breaking his age by a stroke.

9 **Stats Corner:** The course average of 68.609 was 2.391 strokes under par, the sixth-best burrow under par for a round in Deere history. Fifty-three of 69 players were under par. ... The toughest hole was the par-3 seventh, a 233-yard examination that yielded only three birdies. **C.T. Pan, Justin Lower** and the aforementioned Omar Uresti managed the feat. As usual, the par-5 second was the easiest. ... Saturday's 300 birdies runs the week's total to 1,750, compared to 1,637 birds at this juncture last year.

– **Tim Cronin**

Leaders

Saturday, July 2

J.T. Poston	62-65-67-194 -19
Denny McCarthy	66-65-64-197 -16
Scott Stallings	67-66-64-197 -16
Emiliano Grillo	68-64-65-197 -16
Callum Tarren	68-65-65-198 -15
Bo Hoag	67-69-63-199 -14
Chris Naegel	66-66-67-199 -14
Christian Bezuidenhout	69-65-66-200 -13
Matthias Schwab	67-65-68-200 -13
	6 tied at 201 -12

Sunday

Key Pairings

7:30 a.m.

Nick Hardy	210 - 3
Fabian Gomez	210 - 3

7:40 a.m.

Kevin Streelman	209 - 4
Morgan Hoffman	209 - 4

9:45 a.m.

Patrick Flavin	204 - 4
Zach Johnson	205 - 5

11:45 a.m.

Maverick McNealy	201 -12
Michael Gligic	201 -12

11:55 a.m.

Hank Lebioda	201 -12
Kelly Kraft	201 -12

12:05 p.m.

Matthias Schwab	200 -13
Cam Davis	201 -12

12:15 p.m.

Chris Naegel	199 -14
Christiaan Bezuidenhout	200 -13

12:25 p.m.

Callum Tarren	198 -15
Bo Hoag	199 -14

12:35 p.m.

Emiliano Grillo	197 -16
Denny McCarthy	197 -16

12:45 p.m.

J.T. Poston	194 -19
Scott Stallings	197 -16

Television

7 a.m., ESPN+, four channels
Noon, Golf Channel
2 p.m., CBS

Radio

Noon, PGA Tour Radio (SiriusXM)