



50TH PGA PROFESSIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Crosswater and Meadows Golf Courses

Sunriver Resort | Sunriver, Oregon

June 18 - 21, 2017



EAGLE PROPELS TENNESSEE'S LOREN PERSONETT TO FIRST-ROUND LEAD IN THE 50TH PGA PROFESSIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

By Bob Denney
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SUNRIVER, ORE. (June 18, 2017) - Loren Personett of Mount Juliet, Tennessee, unveiled his best performance on a national stage Sunday morning, posting a 5-under-par 66 on the Meadows Course to grab the lead in the opening round of the 50th PGA Professional Championship presented by Club Car, Mercedes-Benz and OMEGA.

Personett, the PGA Head Professional at McCabe Golf Course in Nashville, Tennessee, owns a one-stroke margin over defending Champion Rich Berberian Jr. of Hooksett, New Hampshire, who had a 67 in the largest all-professional national championship.

Rod Perry, who won the 2013 Championship at Sunriver, headed a foursome at 3-under-par that included Craig Bowden of Bloomington, Indiana; Jim Billiter of Gurnee, Illinois; and Andrew Larkin of Los Angeles. The field of 312 competed on Sunriver Resort's par-71 Meadows Course and the nearby par-72, Crosswater Club, a four-time host to the \$600,000 Championship.

Making his eighth appearance, Personett's 66 was his best effort in 17 career championship rounds. Before today, he'd landed in the 60s just once: an opening-round 69 last year.

A nine-time Tennessee PGA Section Player of the Year, Personett's talent and skill had never synched up with the timing of this Championship. He missed the cut six times in seven previous entries.

Playing in the first group of the morning, Personett recorded three birdies among his first five holes: Nos. 2, 4 and 5. Four straight pars took Personett to the turn. From there, he birdied the par-5 10th before holing out a 161-yard approach for an eagle on the 423-yard 12th hole.

"The pin was over a ridge and I hit an 8-iron," said Personett. "We did not see it go in."

His momentum flickered, if only briefly, thanks to a bogey-bogey sequence on 13 and 14, but a two-putt birdie on the 17th, "gathered it back in."

"I feel good, but there is a long way to go" said Personett.

Berberian's title defense began in the company of two other PGA Professional Champions, Perry of Port Orange, Florida, and Matt Dobyns (2012, '15) of Glen Head, New York. It was essentially the Championship's feature group.

"It's cool because I've been watching these guys for a long time and it's nice to be included with them," said Berberian, the PGA Director of Instruction at Vesper Country Club in Tyngsborough, Massachusetts. "It's fun to see them. They don't miss many shots. They don't miss many putts. We drew off each other and we all played pretty well today, everyone in the 60s."

Berberian's solid 67 included seven birdies and a trio of bogeys.

“I hit it really well off the tee today,” said Berberian, who is attempting to become the Championship’s first repeat winner since Mike Small in 2008 and ‘09. “(The driver) did not leave me much on the back nine (his front nine, as he teed off on No. 10), lots of short irons and short irons into par-5s. At the turn, I started to lose the putter a little bit. . .but after a while, I settled myself.”

For Bowden, whose 69 was the low round of the day at Crosswater, his solid round couldn’t have been timed any better. He was celebrating his 49th birthday.

“I feel good about my game now. I’m driving it pretty straight, which you have to do out here” said Bowden, who spends his time off the course as a tour representative for KBS Company of Boulder, Colorado. “My goal this week is to stay patient. I did make the cut in a Web.com Tour event in Evansville. It allowed me to play another event. I’m not quitting my KBS job. I wear a lot of hats.”

The field will be trimmed to the low 90 scorers and ties after Monday’s round, with Crosswater hosting the final two rounds. The low 70 scorers and ties after Tuesday’s third round advance to the final round.

The low 20 scorers earn a berth in the 99th PGA Championship, Aug. 10-13, at Quail Hollow Club in Charlotte, North Carolina.

NOTES: Karen Paolozzi of Atlanta, Georgia, making her third appearance and first-time competitor Michelle Murphy of Sherrill, New York, the two women PGA Members of the field, recorded rounds of 72 and 80, respectively. . . Roy Vucinich of Moon Township, Pennsylvania, the oldest starter in the field at age 70, posted a 76 at Crosswater.

