

## **Gunner Wiebe extends lead through 54 holes at the National Car Rental Assistant PGA Professional Championship**

By Pat Kravitz  
PGA of America

**PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla.** - Gunner Wiebe's first 18 holes at the 2019 and 2020 National Car Rental Assistant PGA Professional Championships were eerily similar: a single birdie on the front nine, along with a bogey and two birdies on the back for a 2-under 70.

The ensuing 36 holes have been strikingly different for the PGA Assistant Professional at Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles. A year ago, Wiebe fell out of contention with a 77-75 performance in the second and third rounds. This time around, he owns cards of 67 and 69 -- good enough to build a 3-stroke advantage through 54 holes at PGA Golf Club's Wanamaker Course.

"Last year, I just wasn't very good. Even the first round, I never felt particularly comfortable," admitted Wiebe, whose father, Mark, won the 2013 Senior Open in a playoff over Bernhard Langer. "This year, my preparation wasn't even that much better. More than anything, I've done a good job of not playing outside of myself. Last year, I tried to make birdies from the tee box."

After an offsetting birdie and bogey on the front, Wiebe capitalized on his opportunities on the back with birdies at 11 and 15, along with an eagle at the par-5 16th. Wiebe gave one back with a three-putt at the par-3 17th, but responded with a par to close out his third round.

"My main priority today was to extend the lead," said Wiebe, who has missed only five greens through 54 holes. "I don't pay too close of attention to what the guys are doing around me. My goal is the same every day -- give myself 18 birdie looks. Just trying to make it as easy on myself as possible."

In closest pursuit of Wiebe are Aaron Purviance of Park City, Utah, and Jin Chung of Lawrenceville, Ga., both of whom jointly held the first-round lead. The two have matched each other the entire way, posting 67-72-70-209. Purviance came within one of Wiebe after he eagled No. 16, but a dropped shot at 17 provided Wiebe with some breathing room.

Chung's day started with a lost tee shot, which resulted in a double-bogey. It was his only blemish of the round, as he added birdies at 8, 10, 13 and 16.

"I hit a driver just left of the edge of the fairway. We got up there and couldn't find my ball. Maybe it was plugged somewhere," recalled Chung. "I was hoping for a better start, but that helped me really focus on getting back to where I was. I didn't make any huge mistakes and had some good breaks the rest of the day.

"I joined the PGA program this summer, so this is my first national championship. Of course, I wanted to play good, be in contention and have a chance to win. It's exciting. Being a PGA Professional and getting these opportunities is amazing."

Justin Bardgett of Champaign, Ill., and Greg Koch of Orlando, Fla., share a tie for fourth at 6-under 210. In a tie for sixth at 5-under 211 are Jake Scott (Strongsville, Ohio), Timothy Wiseman (Corydon, Ind.) and Danny Lewis (Deal, N.J.).

Brittany Kelly, one of three women competing in the 132-player field, is in a tie for 11th at 2-under 214. The Fishers, Ind., resident posted an even-par 72 on Saturday.

Defending champion Alex Beach of Stamford, Conn., began the day in a tie for second, but faltered with a 5-over 77 to fall back to 1-under 215 for the Championship.

Sunday's winner will earn \$12,000 and a spot into the 2021 PGA Professional Championship field, to be held April 25-28 at PGA Golf Club.

The 44th National Car Rental Assistant PGA Professional Championship is supported by Srixon | Cleveland Golf | XXIO | Asics and John Deere.

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