



Worthington II Leads By One Following First Round of 2023 PGA Professional Championship

Eight players tied for second; 19 within two shots of the lead

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SANTA ANA PUEBLO, New Mexico (April 30, 2023) — Wyatt Worthington II is keenly aware that the PGA Professional Championship is a highly-competitive, four-day marathon.

But like in any race, a good start is crucial.

Worthington II —a PGA Teaching Professional at the Golf Depot in Reynoldsburg, Ohio—came out of the blocks quickly, carding a 4-under-par 68 on Sunday to take a one-shot lead in the 2023 PGA Professional Championship and top a packed leaderboard following the opening round at Twin Warriors and Santa Ana Golf Clubs in Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico.

Eight players are one shot back at T-2 (3-under-par 69) including Garret Howell (Santa Fe, N.M.), Daniel Rodgers (Murrysville, Pa.), Tommy Sharp (Salt Lake City, Utah), Brad Marek (Berkeley, Calif.), Vinnie Poncino (San Clemente, Calif.), Casey Pyne (Greenwich, Conn.), Chris Sanger (Red Hook, N.Y.) and Greg Koch (Orlando, Fla.). Eleven more players are two shots back at 2-under-par 70.

“I’m very, very fortunate and blessed to get off to a decent start,” said Worthington II. “I just put my head down and tried to keep it on the grass. That’s the goal in my mind. Just keep it on the grass, let me find it.”

Worthington II began his round on the back nine at Santa Ana by birdieing the par-4, 435-yard 10th hole. He added birdies at the par-4, 454-yard 16th; par-5, 510-yard 18th; par-5, 567-yard 3rd; and par-5, 601-yard 5th holes.

His birdie at the 5th hole followed a wayward tee shot that required quite the recovery.

“I’m not happy to admit this, but I pretty much shot it into the other par five on number three,” said Worthington II. “We thought that ball was gone. That was a lot of work and I ended up converting to make a birdie there. I also made a couple really good par saves. It’s a long, long battle.”

The 36-year-old Worthington II is playing in his seventh PGA Professional Championship. He finished T-4 at the 2022 PGA Professional Championship to earn his second career appearance in the PGA Championship (Southern Hills). With three more rounds to play, he is focused on improved accuracy off the tee.

“If I can just keep my tee ball in play and set the driver back to factory settings, if you will, and hopefully it can get calibrated in those regards. Twin Warriors is a great golf course. If I can just keep on the grass to get myself as many opportunities as possible.”

Howell, a PGA Assistant Golf Professional at The Club at Las Campanas, is one of several local players in the field. His 3-under-par 69 included six birdies at Twin Warriors.

“I hit one in the desert on 16, but other than that, I kept it in play and hit a lot of greens,” said Howell, who will play Santa Ana on Monday. “It’s process, process, process. It’s trying to hit shots to good spots. That’s about it.”

The 27-year-old credited his caddie, Ben Tolsma, for his strong start in his first PGA Professional Championship. Tolsma, a PGA Associate at the Club at Las Campanas, played golf at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

“Ben was talking me through a lot of the shots,” said Howell. “We were able to pick good targets and keep it on the green. He knows all these courses very well, knows the wind directions really well. We have a pretty tight relationship. We’ve had a lot of golf battles back and forth so he knows my game very well.”

Defending Champion Jesse Mueller, PGA General Manager at Grand Canyon University Golf Course in Phoenix, opened with a 2-over-par 74 at Twin Warriors. Mueller is one of 13 PGA Professional Champions in the field.

Sunday afternoon’s final group on the Twin Warriors course did not finish due to darkness and will complete their first round on Monday morning at 7:45 a.m. MDT before beginning their second round at Santa Ana.

The Championship, which offers a \$715,000 purse, will have a 36-hole cut after Monday’s round to the low 90 scorers and ties, and a 54-hole cut Tuesday to the low 70 scorers and ties. The third and final rounds will be contested exclusively at Twin Warriors.

The second round of the 2023 PGA Professional Championship will be broadcast live on Golf Channel on Monday, May 1 from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. EDT

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Media Contacts

Greg Dillard, PGA of America, 561-308-8013, gdillard@pgahq.com

Alan Cox, PGA of America, 972-214-8274, acox@pgahq.com