



## Ben Kern Takes Two-Shot Lead on Second Day of 2023 PGA Professional Championship

*First-round-leader Worthington II in second; Eight players tied for third*

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SANTA ANA PUEBLO, New Mexico (May 1, 2023) — Ben Kern called the ninth hole at Twin Warriors Golf Club on Monday a “firestarter.”

Kern began the second round of the 2023 PGA Professional Championship two strokes off the lead, in a tie for 10th place. But walking off the ninth green, the flame was lit: Kern, PGA General Manager at Hickory Hills Golf Club in Grove City, Ohio, had carded the first of four consecutive birdies, which would vault him to the top of the leaderboard.

“I hit a great shot, pulled it left of the green, had a cute little putt through the rough and made it,” said Kern of number nine. “It sparked that. I started hitting fairways and greens and rolling in 10-footers.”

Kern posted a 4-under-par 68 on Monday for a 6-under-par 138 total and a two-shot lead over first-round-leader Wyatt Worthington II (4-under-par 140) in the 2023 PGA Professional Championship at Twin Warriors and Santa Ana Golf Clubs in Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico.

Kern enters day three looking to fend off nine players within three shots of the lead.

Along with his four straight birdies on the par-3, 217-yard 9th; par-4, 477-yard 10th; par-4, 337-yard 11th; and the par-5, 550-yard 12th holes, Kern also birdied the par-4, 440-yard 6th and par-4, 390-yard 17th.

“My ball striking was really good,” said Kern. “It wasn’t too windy today, but being on the course where if you hit it outside the rough it’s gone, it puts a high demand on hitting the ball solidly. I hit a lot of solid shots today. Ball striking was there. I got the putter hot midway and it turned into a good round.”

Playing in his fifth straight PGA Professional Championship, the 38-year-old Kern is no stranger to the spotlight. He finished T-9 in his debut at the 2018 PGA Professional Championship, earning a trip to that year’s PGA Championship at Bellerive, where he made the cut and finished T-42 as the Low PGA Professional.

“I’ve had some success here in this event,” said Kern. “It’s the confidence that you can hit a good shot and do it in competition. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve had a lot more competition rounds, every shot you hit you get a little better each time. Honestly, it’s experience and I’m starting to have a little bit of that.”

Worthington II, the PGA Teaching Professional at the Golf Depot in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, carded an even-par 72 after an up-and-down second round.

“It was kind of on cruise control for the most part and then I hit the back nine,” said Worthington II. “I missed a really good opportunity on hole two for birdie. It didn’t rattle the cage, but I was sure I could’ve used that one just like anyone else. I get to the back nine and make my first bogey on the par five. I had to take an unplayable and got some bad luck. You’re going to have that. I’ve had some good luck also. No complaints on this end.”

Still, Worthington II, who has previously played in two PGA Championships, knows there is plenty of golf left as he approaches the final two rounds at Twin Warriors.

“Even though I see the leaderboard, I still can’t control what the other players are doing so what good does that do for me?” said Worthington II. “I still have to try to do my best and focus.

“Right now, I’ve got the Kobe Bryant mentality of ‘the job’s not finished.’”

Eight players are three shots back at T-3 (3-under-par 141) including Matt Cahill (Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.), Chris Sanger (Red Hook, N.Y.), Greg Koch (Orlando, Fla.), Timothy Wiseman (Corydon, Ind.), Cory Schneider (Powells Point, N.C.), John Somers (Brooksville, Fla.), Braden Shattuck (Glen Mills, Pa.) and Daniel Rodgers (Murrysville, Pa.).

Three of the seven women in the field are currently under the cut line, led by Stephanie Connelly-Eiswerth who sits T-21 after posting rounds of 73-70 for a total of 143. This is the second consecutive year the PGA Teaching Professional from San Jose Country Club in Jacksonville, Florida, is slated to make the 36-hole cut. She finished T-50 in 2022.

The other women who are currently under the cut line are Jennifer Borocz (Senior Director of Membership & Finance for the North Florida PGA Section) and Joanna Coe (PGA Director of Instruction at Merion Golf Club), who are both T-58 after each carding rounds of 72-74 for two-day totals of 146. Sherry Andonian (PGA Teaching Professional at Mountain View Country Club) is currently 4-over-par-63 with three holes left to play in the second round.

Defending Champion Jesse Mueller, PGA General Manager at Grand Canyon University Golf Course in Phoenix, posted a 1-under-par 71 at Santa Ana on Monday. He is currently T-39 after recording a two-day score of 145.

Monday's final group at Twin Warriors did not finish due to darkness and will complete the second round on Tuesday morning at 6:30 a.m. MDT.

The Championship will have a second cut after 54 holes on Tuesday to the low 70 scorers and ties. The third and final rounds will be contested at Twin Warriors.

The third round of the 2023 PGA Professional Championship will be broadcast live on Golf Channel on Tuesday, May 2 from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. EDT

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