



2018 SENIOR PGA PROFESSIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP | OCTOBER 25-28 | PGA GOLF CLUB | PORT ST. LUCIE, FLA.

Olsen, Sowards and Uresti set sizzling pace with matching 64s to open the 30th Senior PGA Professional Championship

By Bob Denney
PGA of America

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (Oct. 25, 2018) - Dan Olsen of Robinson, Illinois, Bob Sowards of Dublin, Ohio, and Omar Uresti of Austin, Texas, each took turns attacking the Ryder Course at PGA Golf Club Thursday afternoon, posting 8-under-par 64s to share the first-round lead in the 30th Senior PGA Professional Championship.

They own a three-stroke advantage over the trio at 67, which included two-time champion Mike San Filippo of Hobe Sound, Florida; Rick Morton of Jacksonville, North Carolina; and Stuart Smith of Reno, Nevada.

Was the sizzling scoring on a calm day a case of easy Ryder? Or, was something else propelling the trio atop the 264-player field?

For Sowards and Uresti - each former PGA Professional Champions - they were celebrating their debuts in the national championship for age 50-and-older. For Olsen, it was his second trip, but also an atonement for his 2017 debut when he opened with a 78.

“I’m probably one of the few guys here who actually looked forward to turning 50,” said Sowards, the 2004 PGA Professional Champion and four-time PGA Professional Player of the Year, turned 50 in June. He is a PGA Teaching Professional at Kinsale Golf & Fitness Club in Powell, Ohio.

“I was hitting it so bad on the range and go out and didn’t miss a shot,” said Sowards. “I don’t know what happened, but if it happens again, I’ll take it.” Sowards began play on No.

10 and made the turn in 30. He cruised on for an eight-birdie, bogey-free round, which was his competitive best at PGA Golf Club where he's won nine PGA Winter Championship titles and eight PGA Tournament Series events.

Uresti, winner of the 2017 PGA Professional Championship, turned 50 in August and was uncertain about his preparation before finding a spark. "Yesterday was a horrible day practicing," said Uresti. "But I spent some time in the evening hitting balls and got it close to working. Today, it worked well. I was very pleased, and the putter was on today, too.

"In this kind of event with so many good players, you almost have to attack whenever you can. Fortunately, I felt like I was able to do that today." Uresti collected nine birdies and one bogey on the par-3 seventh, where he three-putted.

Olsen, a 51-year-old PGA Assistant Professional at Quail Creek Country Club in Robinson, Illinois, also had nine birdies and a bogey - the result of a misplayed lob wedge at No. 10. He matched his best round in relation to par.

"I beat up the par-5s pretty good. I drove it well where I hit quite a few wedges into greens and made a lot of really nice plays," said Olsen. "My only hiccup was on No. 10 - I hit a lob wedge over the green and couldn't get it up-and-down. But overall, this was good golf. The golf course re-do is very good. Great grass. Greens were nice and firm.

"The senior guys are good players. A lot of guys don't play worse when they turn 50 - they play better. It's interesting. Hopefully I'm one of them."

The 30th Senior PGA Professional Championship is supported by GolfAdvisor.com and John Deere.

It is the seventh Senior PGA Professional Championship appearance for Smith. He made headlines last spring when he shared the first-round lead in the KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship at Harbor Shores in Benton Harbor, Michigan. He struggled home the second round and missed the cut.

This fall, Smith is coming to PGA Golf Club having finished runner-up in the Northern California PGA Professional and Senior PGA Professional Championships.

"I'm wearing my lucky shirt today, the same shirt I wore when I shot 66 at Harbor Shores," said Smith. "It's the pink and navy special. That Senior PGA was still a great experience, it was great learning and that's golf."

Defending champion Frank Esposito Jr. of Old Bridge, New Jersey opened with a bogey-free 69.

Sherry Andonian of Centennial, Colorado, the first woman to compete in Championship history, opened with a 72 - a round that included three birdies, three bogeys and 35 putts.

“If you would have given me that score, I would have taken it. But once I got out there, I was a little embarrassed on the greens,” said Andonian, the PGA Teaching Professional at Valley Country Club in Aurora, Colorado. “I’m trying to make Bermuda my friend.”

It’s been a breakout year for Andonian, who has been named the first Colorado PGA Women’s Player of the Year, and next April will debut in the PGA Professional Championship to set another record as the first woman to compete in both national PGA member championships.

Following Friday’s second round, the field will be trimmed to the low 90 scorers and ties. After the third round on Saturday, the low 70 scorers and ties will advance to Sunday’s final round.

The low 35 scorers earn a berth in the KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship, May 23-26, 2019, at Oak Hill Country Club in Rochester, New York.

The top eight finishers, including ties, will be exempt into the 2019 Senior PGA Professional Championship. The top five finishers earn a berth into the final stage of the 2018 PGA Tour Champions National Qualifying Tournament Final Stage, Nov. 27-30, at TPC Tampa Bay in Lutz, Florida.

Copyright © 2018 PGA of America Media

100 Avenue of the Champions, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418

If you do not wish to receive future email, [click here](#).