

# ILLINOIS GOLFER

## THE OPENING 9

Saturday,  
July 2, 2022

### Flavin perseveres as Poston pulls away

REPORTING FROM SILVIS, ILLINOIS

(A.K.A. BIRDIEVILLE)

**1** Patrick Flavin has said in the past that it's a great achievement to qualify on a Monday for that week's PGA Tour stop. There are usually fields of 70 or more players, and only four advance.

He knows, however, that not having to qualify is even better.

That's the case this week at the John Deere Classic. Outgoing executive director **Clair Peterson** awarded Flavin an exemption after he "wore him out with e-mails the last four years," the 26-year-old Highwood resident said Friday.

So far, so great. Flavin fired a 5-under-par 66 in the second round and stands at 6-under 136 halfway through the 51st carnival of golf in the Quad Cities. (Leader **J.T. Poston** is running away from the field through 36 holes. More on him a few words away.)

Flavin didn't have to check his phone on Friday night to see if he made the cut. That fell at 3-under-par 139, with 69 players advancing. Instead, he could turn his sights to the weekend and a high finish to garner enough points to earn a Tour card for next year.

"I'm pretty close to being there," Flavin said. "If I put myself in contention, that's the next step."

Which would mean no more Monday qualifying. Amazingly, he's made PGA Tour fields five times that way this season, and made the cut twice in those five appearances. This is the second time out of three exemptions where he's advanced to the weekend.

"An exemption is an incredible honor," Flavin said. "When you get one, you want to show you deserve it. I always believed in myself but to be actually living it is incredible. I'm so pumped for the weekend. It's so much fun to play in front of a bunch of family and friends."

Friday, Peterson, who also got Flavin into Monday's pro-am – which means



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

**EYES FORWARD** Patrick Flavin, pictured Thursday, sits xxth at the halfway point of the John Deere Classic.

he's already made some money this week – was near the ninth green when Flavin was finishing his round.

"He gave me a big high-five," Flavin said.

It was deserved. Flavin's round was bogey-free, the best of his five birdies a 19-foot, 5-inch putt on the par-3 16th, his seventh hole of the day.

"It was flawless golf," Flavin allowed of his round. "I've got to keep plugging and play hard."

In a perfect world, Flavin finishes high on Sunday and locks in at least a Korn Ferry card for 2022-23. If not, it's back to the highway.

"The plan is to play all the Monday qualifiers," Flavin said. "The biggest thing for me is improvement."

Flavin knows he's a better player now than when he graduated from Miami (Ohio). The results are beginning to show.

**2** **J.T. Poston** isn't playing a different course than TPC Deere Run, but he's certainly playing it differently. He's made but one bogey in two rounds and continues to bag birdies with monoto-

nous regularity. His 36-hole aggregate of 15-under-par 127 earned him a four-stroke lead, second-best in tournament history. **Dave Eichelberger** led by five strokes midway through the 1975 Ed McMahon-Jaycees Quad Cities Open at Oakwood Country Club.

In his last three rounds on Tour, Poston is 21-under, including the 6-under 64 he crafted Sunday at TPC River Highlands near Hartford, Conn., for the Travelers Championship, enabling him to tie for second.

"Last week, the one thing I learned after playing well Thursday was to try and keep the pedal down," Poston said after returning a 6-under 65 on the heels of his opening 9-under 62.

The pedal was glued to the floor. He birdied four of his first five holes.

"I didn't think anything," Poston said, proving **Yogi Berra's** adage about thinking too much while playing correct. "Just

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trying to stay focused on the next hole, the next shot. I wanted to try and build that lead as much as I could going into tomorrow and going into Sunday, just try and go as low as I can.”

That is the object of the exercise. Ask Eichelberger. He finished second to **Roger Maltbie** by a stroke in 1975.

**3** **Nick Hardy** had his Tour face on Friday afternoon. It was that straight-ahead blinders-on look the committed have when a goal must be reached, and was most evident on his walk from the the 18th green – his ninth of the day, where he missed a makable birdie putt – to the first tee to commence his second nine.

Hardy was 2-under at the time, having birdied the 16th and 17th, but that wasn't enough. The projected cut to the low 65 pros and ties made moved to 3-under. Hardy, who fought from 2-over to even par with birdies in the final two holes on Thursday, had to fight again.

He just made it. Birdies on the third, fourth and sixth holes built his score to 5-under, but he bogeyed the par-3 seventh by three-putting and the par-4 ninth by missing the fairway, missing the green, hitting his third to the left fringe and leaving his 13-foot, 8-inch par-saver some 10 inches short.

“Aargh,” Hardy yelled before tapping in, taking off his hat and walking to the rope line, leaning on a stake while wondering why what happened happened.

He had chanced to see the scoreboard, he would have seen the cut was 3-under and that he was in on the number at 139 on rounds of 71-68. It's likely that **Chase Seiffert**, also in his group, knew that when he lined up a 5-foot birdie putt to get to 3-under. It edged the cup on the right side and stayed out.

Golf might have been tough for Hardy down the stretch, but he plays on, starting alone at 6:50 a.m. Seiffert slams the trunk and goes home.

Also missing the cut: defending champion **Lucas Glover** and fellow U.S. Open champ **Webb Simpson**.

**4** When a field doesn't have a plethora of big names, the lesser-knowns – see Poston, J.T., above, rise to the top.

Another is **Christopher Gotterup**, who sits 10-under entering Saturday's play. The highlight of his round was a 41-foot cross-green putt for eagle on No. 14 after driving the downhill 355-yard hole.

“If you just get it up over that slope it's going to track down somewhere in that direction,” Gotterup said. “I just got a good guess on it.”

**5** It looks like **Chris Naegel** will be able to finish off his kitchen renovation sooner rather than later. He posted another 66 on Friday and is tied for third at 10-under 132 through 36 holes.

The plan now?

“Go out and play one hole at a time,” Naegel said.

“Come on,” said a reporter.

“That's what we do,” Naegel said. “I got no expectations, no goals. Just going to go out and play.”

**6** **Emiliano Grillo** was first off the tee on Thursday. Usually, those guys aren't around on Saturday, but Grillo will be after 7-under 64 on Friday. He's among those at 10-under 132.

**7** **Patrick Rodgers** aced the 131-yard third hole, using a pitching wedge. Four of the last six aces in the Deere have come on the third.

**8** **Stats Corner:** The course lost its teeth following a 76-minute lightning delay, the field averaging 69.125 strokes, the third-lowest for Round 2 in Deere history. ... The par-5 second was the easiest, but the drivable par-4 third was second-easiest, and yielded three eagles, including Gotterups. ... **Troy Mullinax** poked a 398-yard drive on the second, the longest of the day. ... Two more players withdrew on Friday: **Tyler Duncan** (back issues) after 11 holes, and **Andrew Landry** (wonky shoulder) after nine.

**9** One tradition that isn't welcome is the lightning delay. That came on Friday at 10:29 a.m., with a thunderstorm skirting to the south of Deere Run. It rained and far-off rumbles of thunder were audible, delaying the proceedings until 11:45 a.m. and shoving afternoon tee times back an hour. – **Tim Cronin**

## Leaders

Friday, July 1

J.T. Poston	62-65-127 -15
Denny McCarthy	66-65-131 -11
Matthias Schwab	67-65-132 -10
Christopher Gotterup	65-67-132 -10
Emiliano Grillo	68-64-132 -10
Chris Naegel	66-66-132 -10
C.T. Pan	69-64-133 - 9
Callum Tarren	68-65-133 - 9
Michael Gligic	64-69-133 - 9
Taylor Moore	67-66-133 - 9
Maverick McNealy	70-63-133 - 9
Scott Stallings	67-66-133 - 9
Vaughn Taylor	65-68-133 - 9
Kelly Kraft	70-63-133 - 9

## Saturday

Key Pairings

6:50 a.m.	Nick Hardy
8:50 a.m.	Seth Reeves, Zach Johnson
9 a.m.	Adam Long, Kevin Strelman
10:15 a.m.	Bo Hoag, Patrick Flavin
10:35 a.m.	Dylan Frittelli, Ryan Moore
10:55 a.m.	David Lipsky, Charles Howell III
11:05 a.m.	Adam Svensson, Curtis Thompson
11:15 a.m.	Patton Kizzire, Mark Hubbard
11:25 a.m.	Hank Lebioda, Christiaan Bezuidenhout
11:40 a.m.	Vaughn Taylor, Kelly Kraft
11:50 a.m.	Maverick McNealy, Scott Stallings
Noon	Michael Gligic, Taylor Moore
12:10 p.m.	C.T. Pan, Callum Tarren
12:20 p.m.	Emiliano Grillo, Chris Naegel
12:30 p.m.	Matthias Schwab, Christopher Gotterup
12:40 p.m.	J.T. Poston, Denny McCarthy

Television

7 a.m., ESPN+, four channels
Noon, Golf Channel
2 p.m., CBS

Radio

Noon, PGA Tour Radio (SiriusXM)
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