

# ILLINOIS GOLFER THE OPENING 9

Friday,  
August 19, 2022

## Welcome to BirdieFest 2022

REPORTING FROM WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

**1** The members of Wilmington Country Club are undoubtedly proud of their South Course, where the BMW Championship is underway through Sunday. It's a long layout – 7,471 yards on Thursday – that undoubtedly gives the members fits on a daily basis.

However, like Caves Valley last year, and Medinah No. 3 in 2019, and Aronimink the year before that, and Conway Farms and Crooked Stick and so yawn, it isn't nearly difficult enough for the elite of the PGA Tour.

A tornado here a couple of years ago took down 300 trees. Thursday, tornadic scores blew through the field, led by **Keegan Bradley**, who scored 7-under-par 64 in a round reminiscent of how he played in annexing this championship at Aronimink, just up I-95 from here, in 2018. Fully 41 of the 68 players in the field scored under par in the first round. There were 11 rounds under 68. The high men, **Si Woo Kim** and **Luke List**, scored 78, which any Wilmington member would have taken on a layout with thick rough of four inches and more, plus greens slick as a hardwood floor.

Any smart Wilmington member who follows the Tour should not be surprised by this. Ideally, nobody will overreact and decide to tear up the layout in favor of something tougher, as is being done to the tune of \$23.5 million at Medinah. Blood-red scoreboards are the price of doing business when you invite the best of the PGA Tour to have lunch.

What Thursday's first thrust means is by Sunday, the leaders should be duking it out at around 22-under, maybe lower. That invites the crowd to roar and the TV viewers to stay with the show – and professional golf, if it hasn't become evident in this summer of dueling pro circuits, is first and foremost a show.

The showmen following Bradley

POSITION	START	TOTAL	PLAYER	HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN	R1	R2	R3	R4	TOTAL	
1	-	3	BRADLEY, K.	PAR	3	3	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	35	4	4	5	3	5	3	4	4	4	35	71	71	71	64		
2	-6	12	SCOTT, A.	PAR	3	4	4	4	3	2	4	3	2	29	4	5	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	35	65	65	65	65		
T3	-5	29	WARNER III, H.	PAR	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	32	4	4	5	3	4	3	3	4	4	33	65	65	65	65		
T3	-5	22	LOWRY, S.	PAR	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	34	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	5	32	66	66	66	66	
T6	-4	41	THOMAS, J.	PAR	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	32	4	3	5	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	33	66	66	66	66	
T6	-4	19	REAVIE, C.	PAR	4	4	5	3	4	3	2	5	4	34	4	3	5	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	33	67	67	67	67	
T6	-4	7	MORIKAWA, C.	PAR	4	3	5	4	3	4	3	4	4	32	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	35	67	67	67	67	
T6	-4	43	SCHAUFFELE, X.	PAR	5	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	33	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	35	67	67	67	67
T6	-4	35	BEZUIDENHOUT, C.	PAR	4	3	5	3	3	4	3	3	4	32	4	4	6	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	35	67	67	67	67
T6	-4	28	HATTON, T.	PAR	4	2	5	4	4	4	2	4	4	33	4	3	5	2	5	2	4	4	4	4	4	35	67	67	67	67
T12	-3	32	HENLEY, R.	PAR	3	3	5	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	32	4	4	5	3	5	4	3	4	4	4	35	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	30	LEE, K.	PAR	4	4	5	4	4	3	2	4	4	34	4	4	5	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	34	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	30	CONNERS, C.	PAR	4	4	5	4	4	3	2	4	4	34	4	4	5	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	34	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	17	CONNERS, C.	PAR	4	3	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	34	4	3	5	3	4	3	3	5	4	3	4	34	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	8	SPIETH, J.	PAR	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	35	4	4	6	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	33	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	8	CANTLAY, P.	PAR	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	4	32	5	4	5	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	35	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	56	LEISHMAN, M.	PAR	4	3	5	3	5	4	2	5	3	33	3	4	5	3	5	3	5	2	5	3	4	34	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	49	GRILLO, E.	PAR	4	3	5	3	5	4	2	5	3	33	3	4	5	3	5	3	5	3	3	4	4	34	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	42	STALLINGS, S.	PAR	4	3	5	4	5	4	2	3	3	33	4	4	4	4	3	5	3	3	4	4	4	34	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	33	MCCARTHY, D.	PAR	3	3	5	3	5	3	3	4	5	34	4	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	4	4	4	34	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	31	MCCARTHY, D.	PAR	4	3	5	4	4	4	3	4	5	36	4	3	5	3	5	3	2	3	4	4	4	32	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	9	SPAIN, J.	PAR	3	3	4	4	3	4	2	4	4	31	4	4	5	2	4	6	4	4	4	4	4	37	68	68	68	68
T12	-3	9	MCILROY, R.	PAR	3	3	4	4	3	4	2	4	4	31	4	4	5	2	4	6	4	4	4	4	4	37	68	68	68	68

Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

**CIRCLE HEAVEN** The circles speckled about the scorecard tell the first day story. around include **Adam Scott**, who scored 65 and was paired with Bradley. They should draw a throng for today's second round, teeing off at 1:05 p.m. Eastern. Whether they can team for a 10-under best-ball score again will be an attraction.

Joint third at 5-under 66 are **Harold Varner III**, who was in the first pairing, **Steve Lowry** and **Justin Thomas**. Like Bradley, Thomas seeks to lift the **J.K. Wadley** Trophy a second time.

The sextet tied for sixth at 4-under 67 includes **Collin Morikawa** and **Xander Schauffele**.

**2** Bradley birdied five of the first seven holes and saw his scorecard sullied by only one bogey. The wide-open feeling he got on the tee – the tornado had something to do with that – brought him confidence.

"Well, I think any time you play a course where you're hitting a lot of drivers is going to be good for me," Bradley said. "I think on this course in particular if you hit the ball in the fairway, there's a lot of opportunities. I did that today, hit a lot of fairways, and the ones that I missed I was able to manage."

He hit 10 of 14 fairways and 15 greens, and made a pair of putts outside 30 feet, including a 38-footer for birdie on the par-4 ninth. Then he cooled off. Add up the nine putts that dropped on the inward half and the total is 37 feet, 1 inch.

Bradley's been largely absent from the conversation lately, with only three top-10s in 2022. One was a tie for seventh in the U.S. Open, so he still has game. It's just a question of when it shows up. He rolled into Wilmington missing the cut in three of his last four starts.

**3** Scott, with five top-9s in the BMW going back to a solo fourth in 2007, surfed the wake Bradley created.

"I think I was drafting off him," Scott said. "He shot 6-under the front and was running. Sometimes it's good to see that and you can draft off each other, but also just to know that it's really out there. When you get off to a slower start sometimes, you can make the course harder than it really is, and Keegan made it look

easy today, so I tried to take advantage of that, as well.”

**4** Thomas started much like Bradley, with birdies on three of the first four holes, then cooled down. His eagle on the par-5 14th was partly offset by a bogey on the next hole, but 66 was more than acceptable, all things considered.

“I didn’t have total control of my ball,” Thomas explained “I didn’t drive it as well as I would have liked or wedged it as well as I would have liked, but I putt-ed the ball the best I have in a very, very, very long time. I mean, even every putt I missed, I hit it exactly where I wanted to and it looked like it had a chance to go in.”

It’s not supposed to rain in Wilmington until Monday, so there’s a good chance Thomas’ prediction of a fast-and-form course comes to pass by the weekend. And that means more low scores. Maybe.

“I think it has the chance to be difficult,” Thomas said. “If it gets firm and fast this weekend, it could play a very championship-like golf course. If the fairways continue to get firm and you drive the ball well, you can have some short clubs and make some birdies. I think you’re going to see a lot of volatility in the scores every day.”

**5** Early pacesetter Varner actually opened par-bogey, but then went on a tear with three straight birdies, five overall, and an eagle on the par-5 14th, when he holed out from a green side bunker from close to 50 feet. That brought the crowd to its feet, but for him, the round was more relief than joy.

“I’ve played so bad lately. I just was super determined to just get something going. I put good work in last week with **Butch (Harmon)**, and yeah, it’s been good,” Varner said. “I know where the golf ball is going right now, have a pretty good idea, and I’m pretty determined to make it to East Lake, and there’s only one way to get there, and that’s to play well.”

The bunker eagle at 14 almost came at a cost. He nearly fell back into the bunker while waving to fans.

“Yeah, that was awesome,” Varner laughed.

## Friday Pairings

### No. 1 Tee (Central Time)

8:10	Matt Kuchar	69	Brendan Steele	76
8:20	Adam Hadwin	69	Christiaan Bezuidenhout	67
8:30	Lucas Herbert	70	Emiliano Grillo	68
8:40	Tyrrell Hatton	67	Cam Davis	69
8:50	Scott Stallings	68	Andrew Putnam	73
9:00	Luke List	78	Russell Henley	67
9:10	Keith Mitchell	74	Cameron Tringale	72
9:25	Lucas Glover	75	Denny McCarthy	68
9:35	J.J. Spaun	68	Aaron Wise	69
9:45	David Riley	77	Sahith Theegala	72
9:55	Billy Horschel	69	Brian Harman	72
10:05	Viktor Hovland	73	Joaquin Niemann	69
10:15	Jon Rahm	73	Hideki Matsuyama	70
10:25	Sepp Straka	72	Rory McIlroy	68
10:40	Will Zalatoris	69	Scottie Scheffler	68
10:50	Matt Fitzpatrick	69	Cameron Young	67
11:00	Alex Smalley	69	Wyndham Clark	77
11:10	Harold Varner III	66	Alex Noren	72
11:20	Chris Kirk	70	Taylor Moore	73
11:30	Troy Merritt	69	Chez Reavie	67
11:40	Mackenzie Hughes	75	Si Woo Kim	78
11:50	Kurt Kitayama	71	Sebastian Munoz	70
12:05	Keegan Bradley	64	Adam Scott	65
12:15	Trey Mullinax	71	Mito Pereira	74
12:25	Seamus Power	71	Shane Lowry	66
12:35	Maverick McNealy	70	K.H. Lee	68
12:45	Kevin Kisner	71	Corey Connors	68
12:55	J.T. Poston	72	Joohyung Kim	71
1:10	Collin Morikawa	67	Tom Hoge	70
1:20	Max Homa	72	Jordan Spieth	68
1:30	Xander Schauffele	67	Patrick Cantlay	68
1:40	Sam Burns	69	Tony Finau	77
1:50	Justin Thomas	66	Sungjae Im	70
2:00	Taylor Pendrith	71	Marc Leishman	68

**6** Lowry was 6-under until a bogey at the last.

“Obviously a smelly finish, and lunch is not going to taste as nice after that,” Lowry said.

**7** **Rory McIlroy**, who was chasing Bradley at 6-under through 14, triple-bogeyed the par-3 15th. A tee shot in the water and three-putt will do that. He was between a 5-iron and 6-iron on the tee of the 216-yard hole.

“I tried to hit like a high, soft, cutty 5 and just double-crossed it,” McIlroy said. “I still played a decent round of golf. Three-under out there this afternoon was pretty good. I’ve just got to reset tonight and forget about that swing on 15 and go again tomorrow.”

**8** The shot of the day belonged to **Kurt Kitayama**, whose wedge from 102 yards on the first hole found the cup for an eagle 2. The rest of the day was a wash for him, and he finished at even par 71.

**9** **Course stats:** For all the low scores in the better third of the field, the course played only three-quarters of a stroke under par, at 70.250. ... Aside from Kitayama’s deuce, there were only three eagles, by Varner, Lowry and Thomas, all on the 622-yard 14th hole, the easiest of the day at more than a half-stroke under par (4.485). ... The eighth and ninth holes tied for toughest, each at 4.221 strokes.

– Tim Cronin