



Latin America
Amateur Championship
PRINCE OF WALES COUNTRY CLUB - CHILE - 2018

For Immediate Release
20 January 2018

DEFENDING CHAMPION TOTO GANA TIED FOR LEAD AFTER DAY ONE OF LATIN AMERICA AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

Eight Countries Represented on Tightly Packed Leaderboard

When: 20 January 2018

What: 2018 Latin America Amateur Championship

Where: Prince of Wales Country Club, Santiago, Chile

Course Architect: Alex MacDonald

Par and Yardage: Par 71 – 6,864 yards

Rapid Recap:

SANTIAGO, Chile – Defending Latin America Amateur champion Toto Gana is tied for the lead after a three-under-par 68 during the first round of the 2018 championship at Prince of Wales Country Club.

Clearly relishing playing in his home country, the 20-year-old freshman at Lynn University traded six birdies and three bogeys on his way to a share of the lead.

Argentina's Mark Montenegro led the way in the early stages. The 20-year-old, who won the South Argentine Open last year, raced into the lead with four consecutive birdies beginning at the 8th, and moved to six under par with a birdie at the par 5 14th. An untidy finish saw him drop three shots in his final four holes to slip back to three under for the day.

Colombian Pablo Torres, who attended Jacksonville State in Alabama, enjoyed a steadier round with four birdies and a solitary dropped shot on the par-four 17th to join the leaders at three under.

Five players finished a stroke back from the lead after the first round: Mexicans Mario Carmona and Alvaro Ortiz, who lost out in the playoff in last year's event to Gana, Jaime Lopez Rivarola and Horacio Carbonetti, both of Argentina, and Rhadames Peña from the Dominican Republic.

The world No. 1-ranked amateur Joaquin Niemann finished at three-over-par 74, the same mark as the 2015 and 2016 LAAC champions Matias Dominguez and Paul Chaplet.

Quotable:

Toto Gana, 20, Chile: “Tomorrow is going to be a different day, but I think I'm going to keep on doing the same things I've been doing up to now. The greens are going to be faster. I think it's going to be hotter tomorrow, but I just have to keep on doing what I've been doing. I think I have my game under control. I hit the ball very well, and I also putted very well. So, I am confident about tomorrow.”

Mark Montenegro, 20, Argentina: “I played really well from the fairway. I made very good putts the first 14 holes and I saved most of the greens that I missed. I think I was playing really solid, and the end wasn't what I wanted, but I'm happy with the round....I worked hard for this round with my coach, and we made a pretty good strategy. So, we are going to keep doing what we did today.”

Pablo Torres, 22, Colombia: “It's a very tight golf course, and in many holes we have to hit a short club so that we can have a shot to the green and have a chance for birdie. We had two practice rounds. We designed a strategy for the golf course, and today I stuck to my game plan and it turned out to be just fine.”

Justin Hastings, 14, Cayman Islands (Youngest Player in Field): “Once I step off that first tee, I have adapted to playing tournaments where I feel less pressure. It just ends up feeling like a normal round of golf once you're midway through the round. I think that's why I succeed in tournaments. Even when I was at that 1-under number, I wasn't thinking about it too much. I was just trying to play good golf, and I was playing good golf, just a little hiccup down the stretch.”

Joaquin Niemann, 19, Chile (No. 1 in World Amateur Golf Ranking): “It was not easy out there. The course was very different (compared) to the one we practiced the last two days. The wind blew harder. On the first holes I was fighting, but a couple of odd mistakes at the end cost me. You can go low on this course, especially in the morning, and I'll be playing early tomorrow. The course will be softer and no wind, so I'm going to be more aggressive to try to get in contention. There's still a lot of golf to be played.”

Notable:

- The 497-yard, par-4 18th hole was converted from the club's normal par-5 for the championship to take advantage of its challenge as a finishing hole. Because of the prevailing wind, the yardage for Round 1 was set at 460 yards.
- 2017 champion Toto Gana of Chile started his title defense with a 3-under-par 68, which is the best round by a defending champion in the ensuing competition in the LAAC. Matias Dominguez of Chile, who won in 2015, opened with a 71 in 2016 and Paul Chaplet from Costa Rica, who won in 2016, began with a 71 in 2017. Gana also shot 68 in the first round in 2017.
- Mexico's Alvaro Ortiz, who finished T3 in 2015 and T2 in 2017, shot a first-round 69. His previous first-round scores are: 68 in 2015, 68 in 2016, 71 in 2017
- Gana (T1) and Ortiz (T4) are the only players from the top 10 in 2017 to begin the 2018 championship in the top 10.

- Eight countries are represented in the top nine (15 players). Argentina and Mexico led the group with three, followed by Chile, Colombia and Dominican Republic with two and Guatemala, Puerto Rico and Peru with one.
- The best scores among the 11 players representing the host nation of Chile were Gana's co-leading 68 and a 70 from Augustin Errazuriz.
- Fifteen players broke par (3 with 68, 5 with 69, 7 with 70).
- First-round co-leader Mark Montenegro of Argentina made six birdies in the first 14 holes and then bogeyed three of the last four holes for his 3-under 68.
- At 6,864 yards, Prince of Wales Country Club is the shortest venue in the brief history of the LAAC.
- Past champions Matias Dominguez of Chile, Paul Chaplet of Costa Rica and World Amateur Golf Ranking No. 1 Joaquin Niemann of Chile all opened with scores of 74.
- Fourteen-year-old Justin Hastings of the Cayman Islands, the youngest player in the field, was 1 under through 15 holes but played the last three in 3 over to finish at 73.
- Camilo Aguado of Colombia had the best nine-hole score of the day – a 4-under 32 – on the front nine.

Leaderboard:

Pos.	Country	Player	To Par	R1	Total
T1	ARG	Mark Montenegro	-3	68	68
T1	CHI	Toto Gana	-3	68	68
T1	COL	Pablo Torres	-3	68	68
T4	MEX	Mario Carmona	-2	69	69
T4	ARG	Jaime Lopez Rivarola	-2	69	69
T4	DOM	Rhadames Peña	-2	69	69
T4	MEX	Alvaro Ortiz	-2	69	69
T4	ARG	Horacio Carbonetti	-2	69	69
T9	CHI	Agustin Errazuriz	-1	70	70
T9	MEX	Aaron Terrazas	-1	70	70
T9	PER	Felipe Strobach	-1	70	70
T9	COL	Camilo Aguado	-1	70	70
T9	GUA	Daniel Gurtner	-1	70	70
T9	DOM	Juan Jose Guerra	-1	70	70
T9	PUR	Jeronimo Esteve	-1	70	70

[Click here for the full leaderboard](#)

Next: Round two begins Sunday at 07:45 off the Nos. 1 and 10 tees, with the second wave beginning at 12:15.

More: Spectators are encouraged to attend, and entry into Prince of Wales Country Club for the 2018 Latin America Amateur Championship will be free. For more information, please visit LAACgolf.com.



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Based in St Andrews, The R&A runs The Open, elite amateur events, international matches and rankings. Together The R&A and the USGA govern the sport of golf worldwide, operating in separate jurisdictions but sharing a commitment to a single code for the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status and Equipment Standards. The R&A, through R&A Rules Ltd, governs worldwide, outside of the United States and Mexico, with the consent of 153 organisations from amateur and professional golf and on behalf of over 30 million golfers in 140 countries.

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