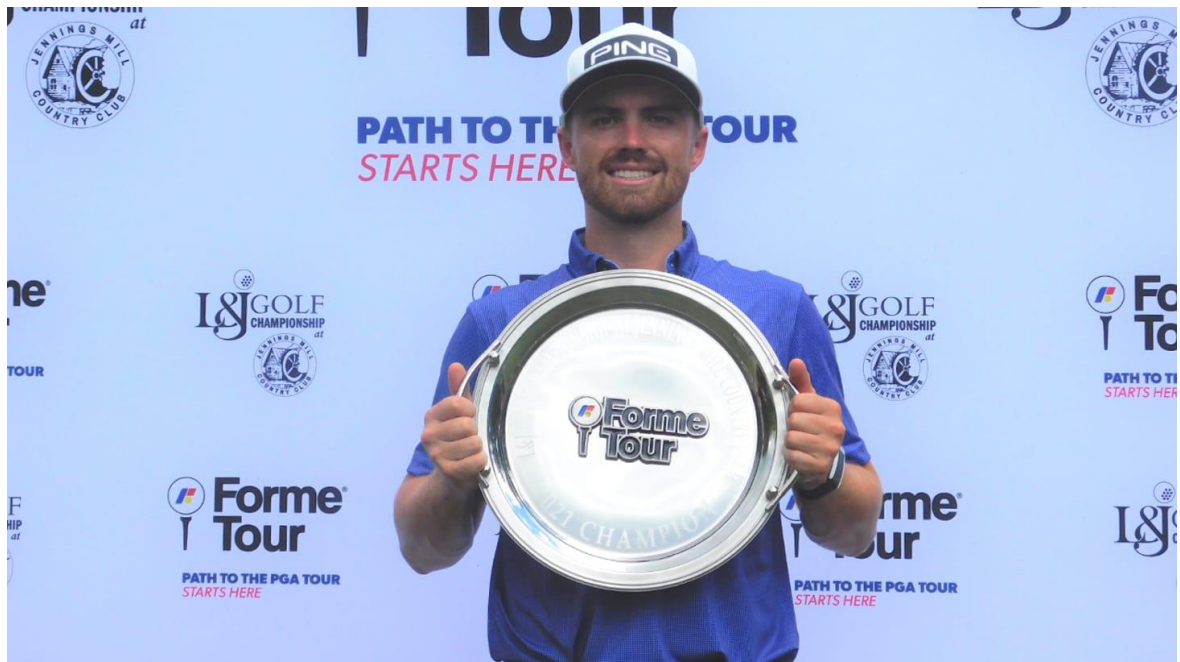


Saunders prevails in playoff to win inaugural Forme Tour event

June 26, 2021

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The victory at Jennings Mill Country Club was worth 500 points on the Points List and \$20,000 for Samuel Saunders.

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- WATKINSVILLE, Georgia—He may not be the official King of the State Opens, but Sam Saunders does have three wins in state events—in Colorado, Utah and New Mexico. Where Saunders hasn't won is on a PGA TOUR-affiliated Tour. That changed Saturday.

Saunders, an Albuquerque, New Mexico, native and proud New Mexico Lobo, poured in a six-foot par putt on the first sudden-death playoff hole to win the L&J Golf Championship at Jennings Mill Country Club, the inaugural Forme Tour tournament. He defeated Tour rookie Trevor Werbylo, who settled for second in his professional debut.

“Actually, it was pretty good. I didn’t have the best lie. It was way into the grain. It was pretty hard,” Saunders said of his final chip of the tournament that led to his par save and the title. “I honestly thought I could chunk it and hit it to two feet. I was sort of nervous, too, so I was pretty proud of the chip.

“It didn’t end up getting that close,” Saunders continued, “but I hit it really solid, and it landed right where I wanted it to. I left myself uphill and hit a great putt after that.”

On a day with a lot of leaderboard movement, Saunders moved to the lead when he birdied the par-4 13th hole, with playing partner Luke Schniederjans chasing him. Playing two holes ahead, Werbylo looked like he had shot himself out of the tournament when he made a double bogey-6 at the seventh hole. From there, the former Arizona Wildcat made birdies at Nos. 8, 10, 11, 13 and 16. Looking to post a 17-under score, he missed the green with his approach shot on his 72nd hole but got up and down for par.

Saunders had a chance to win in regulation, but his 55-foot birdie effort—not exactly one you would think about making—just about went in.

“It looked really good for a long time. But I was pretty far,” Saunders said. “To be honest, I was just trying to have a good pace. But eight feet out, I thought, Wait a minute, this has a chance. It ended up as a tap-in, and that’s all I wanted, really.

“I don’t like to look at leaderboards. I had no idea,” he continued, talking about what he knew about the scoreboard. “But you always sort of know. I thought if I got to 17(-under), I would probably win. I thought 16 was pretty strong, too.”

Sixteen ended up being the number, and on to the playoff they went, with Saunders winning the overtime session and taking the early Points List lead. The victory was worth 500 points and \$20,000. Saunders also won despite making three double bogeys over the course of his 73 holes, probably speaking more to the difficulty of Jennings Mill Country Club than his play.

“Usually, you don’t have a chance to win when you make doubles like that,” he added.

“There is a lot of out of bounds. Today, I was really doing my best on every hole to put it in the fairway. Then, if I didn’t have a good (yardage) number for my approach, I was trying to put it in the middle of the green. It worked out well.”

In defeat, Werbylo was philosophical. “Today was really good. I made a double (bogey) on seven. Other than that, it was really solid all around,” he said. “I’m very happy with the way I played this week. I gave myself a chance.”

Following his win, Saunders was already thinking about the next tournament and what this week's performance portends.

"I'm super excited. I'm so glad to have this Tour in the states this year," he continued. "I can't be more thankful to the TOUR for giving us somewhere to play given how difficult things have been. It's been my dream to get to the PGA TOUR for a long time, and I think this is definitely the path for that."

Luke Schniederjans, a Georgia Tech alum who still lives in metro Atlanta, finished alone in third. He had a chance to join the playoff but needed a birdie on the 18th hole. He made a par. Former Auburn University star Michael Johnson was in good form this week, finishing alone in fourth as he prepares for next week's Auburn University Club Invitational that begins Wednesday.

Did you know Samuel Saunders has a choice to make about his playing schedule? As a winner and runner-up of the Colorado Open, the 2021 edition of that tournament conflicts with the Forme Tour's fourth event of the season, the Birck Boilermaker Classic on July 29-August 1. "I'm debating. I would like to play in Colorado because they have been so good to me, and I love that golf course (Green Valley Ranch). I was planning on playing all eight on the Forme Tour, and this is my goal. I wanted to be in the top 10 on the Points List. That was my thought at the start of the year, and I'm obviously No. 1 right now, so I'm in a good spot going forward."

Key Information

Points List Standings

Through L&J Golf Championship at Jennings Mill Country Club

Pos.	Player (Country)	Points
1	Samuel Saunders (U.S.)	500.00
2	Trevor Werbylo (U.S.)	300.00
3	Luke Schniederjans (U.S.)	190.00

4	Michael Johnson (U.S.)	135.00
T5	Carter Jenkins (U.S.)	96.25
T5	Clay Feagler (U.S.)	96.25
T5	Alex Smalley (U.S.)	96.25
T5	Peyton White (U.S.)	96.25
9	Alexandre Fuchs (France)	80.00
T10	Andrew Dorn (U.S.)	65.40
T10	Quade Cummins (U.S.)	65.40
T10	Charles Huntzinger (U.S.)	65.40
T10	Kyle Westmoreland (U.S.)	65.40
T10	Austin Morrison (U.S.)	65.40

- A day after turning in a wild scorecard that included two double bogeys, two bogeys, four birdies and a double eagle, Samuel Saunders was beyond pleased with how consistent his play was over his final 18 holes of regulation and the one playoff hole. Saunders only made one bogey to go with his six birdies for his final-round 67 that led to his triumph.

- In the playoff, Samuel Saunders was disappointed with his second-shot approach that forced him to get up and down for par in what turned out to be enough to secure the win. "It's

a pretty hard hole. I just tried to hit a good drive, and from there the hole is a lot easier. Then I hit a terrible second shot, and got away with it, I guess. I made a good par," he said.

- Eight players shot four under-par scores this week: Samuel Saunders (won), Luke Schniederjans (third), Carter Jenkins (tied for fifth), Clay Feagler (tied for fifth), Alex Smalley (tied for fifth), Peyton White (tied for fifth), Quade Cummins (tied for 10th) and J.J. Grey (tied for 29th).

- The low score the final round was 6-under 66, from four different players: Trevor Werbylo, Michael Johnson, Andrew Dorn and Chris Petefish.

- Besides former Arizona golfer Trevor Werbylo finishing second, two other players from the inaugural PGA TOUR University class finished in the top-10. Clay Feagler (Pepperdine) fired a final-round 67 to tie for fifth, while Quade Cummins (Oklahoma) moved up 15 leaderboard positions with his 4-under 68 to tie for 10th.

- Third-round co-leaders Alexandre Fuchs and Peyton White never got any momentum going Saturday. White shot a 1-under 71 and tied for fifth. Fuchs had an even-par 72 and finished alone in ninth. Fuchs, a native of France, turned in the best showing by an international player.

- Chris Petefish had a strong final round, following his 71-70-72 start with a 6-under 66 to moved from a tie for 49th when the day began into a tie for 15th.

- Carter Jenkins made it to 15-under and was in a share of the lead when he made a birdie at the par-4 10th hole. Despite making a disappointing double bogey at the par-5 11th, the North Carolina Tar Heel bounced back with birdies at Nos. 13, 14 and 16 to move to 16-under and again a share of the lead. He fell into a tie for fifth after a bogey at No. 17 and a double bogey-6 at the last.

- In the final round, the par-4 13th played as the most-difficult hole, with a stroke average of 4.527. The easiest hole was No. 5, with four of the six Saturday eagles occurring there. The par-5's stroke average was 4.378.

- For the week, No. 13 was the most difficult (4.420), while No. 11 was the easiest, giving up a double eagle, 34 eagles and 252 birdies. Only No. 5 yielded more birdies (258). The four-round stroke average at No. 11 was 4.374.

Quotable

"I played it inside right. I thought it was going to turn a touch left, and that's what it did." – Samuel Saunders on his winning par putt in the playoff

"It's sort of weird. The wind should be downwind on that hole, but for some reason it isn't, and it keeps hurting all the balls." –Samuel Saunders on the difficulty of the 18th hole

"I think it's just a little indecision on the wind because the whole rest of the round it's blowing out of the east, but it seems to play into the wind." –Samuel Saunders on the 18th hole's tricky wind direction

"These greens were so fast and so nice with a lot of slope around them. It was hard to make putts." –Samuel Saunders

"You're just so defensive because they're so fast, and if you're not careful you can leave yourself seven, eight feet." –Samuel Saunders

"It was a great golf course today. It was tough. You had to hit some great golf shots to get it around." –Samuel Saunders

"I was right between clubs. I wasn't sure what the wind was doing, and I wasn't 100 percent committed about the wind—if it was hurting or helping. I gave it an uncommitted swing and came out of it. I didn't leave myself with the easiest up and down but made a nice chip." – Trevor Werbylo on his approach on his 72nd hole that resulted in a par and got him into the playoff

"I didn't look at my phone at all until I came off 18. I figured if I shot 5-, 6-under, that would definitely give me a chance, and obviously anything better than that would give me a really good chance." –Trevor Werbylo

Final-Round Weather: Partly cloudy and warm. High of 84. Wind E at 3-5 mph.