Production Transcript for REWIND\_VALERO\_BHATIA\_VITAC.mp3

[00:00:29] >> The PGA Tour is proud to bring you the season-long race for the FedExCup. Now, coverage of the 2024 Valero Texas Open.

[00:00:41] >> Talk about a Texas tradition. They have been playing this tournament in San Antonio for more than 100 years. In fact, it's the oldest on the PGA Tour to be held in the same city for its entire existence. And TPC San Antonio has been the site now 14 years. The Oaks Course, winding its way through the rugged hill country, put in a premium on accurate driving. And with the Texas winds out enforced today, shooting a few under par qualifies as a really good day.

[00:01:13] >> So when you go 6-under, it is a really, really good day. Justin Lower sits atop our leaderboard. There are the 68s, Homa, McCarthy Alexander. Akshay Bhatia working on a good round. Collin Morikawa making his debut here at the Valero Texas Open. So good to see the two-time major champion in the field. Max Homa, trying to put together four good rounds to give himself a taste of being deep into contention on a Sunday. Again, this was his tee shot at that par-3 7th. Again, 195 yards. And Max, with one of the most stylish swings out here in the PGA Tour handling the winds there. Beautiful. And then, at the 9th, his final hole of the day. This from almost 40 feet. This is how you end your day at the 9th. Homa rolling it in from long range for an opening round 4-under 68. Denny McCarthy taking aim at the par-3 16th. Again, there's that bunker right in the middle of the green. Sixteenth today, playing 199 yards. And McCarthy staring this one down. That's how you play it. Leave it out there to the left and roll it on down. Birdie there for him, part of his 4-under 68. Thirty-five-year-old Tyson Alexander in his second year on tour. And a long birdie there at the 18th. You saw Homa finish up his round. That is how Alexander finished up his day to post 4-under 68. And then, there's the birthday boy. Turned 35 years old today, was part of the group, first off the tee at 7:20 local time today. And then, this is how Lower finished up his round. So we showed you Homa, we showed you Alexander. And now, Lower from 28 feet to turn in an opening round of 66. And he has the lead early on here in the Lone Star State.

[00:03:10] >> We check in with Tom Kim for a birdie.

[00:03:13] >> This is just a downhill putt moving a little left to right. And let's see what type of game he's got this week. He's a player that should be able to compete on this golf course.

[00:03:26] >> Jorge Campillo is at the 12th. Got off to a birdie, birdie start.

[00:03:31] >> And putting from the first cut. Not easy to do with these putters. Jorge, there's -- it's got such a big mass. You're able to just putt right out of the rough and rolls it in. And what a start from Jorge.

[00:03:43] >> In fuego.

[00:03:46] >> Now, we go to Rory McIlroy's third shot at 8.

[00:03:50] >> Kind of a little too clean. I think he was trying to carry that much farther than he did.

[00:03:57] >> Yeah, not his best there, Woody.

[00:04:00] >> Fowler at the 8th now for birdie.

[00:04:02] >> So we got Rory ball hanging on the edge. Now, Ricky Fowler getting up and down from a divot. This 8th hole, we've seen it all.

[00:04:14] >> Rory for birdie.

[00:04:16] >> It's just whipping left to right. You can see his trousers, pants, legs moving. And I think he's just trying to gauge how much it's going to affect it right now.

[00:04:28] >> He's thinking about it. He's thinking it's got a chance if he gets a gust. Gets about 10 seconds. It's probably right around that number now.

[00:04:45] >> Oh, yeah.

[00:04:46] >> Goodness.

[00:04:46] >> Patience pays off.

[00:04:47] >> This is Spieth's third at the par-5 8th.

[00:04:55] >> Just love the way he just drives that leading edge into the ground. That wasn't in a divot. That's just the way he hits those 40-yard driving shots.

[00:05:04] >> He would make birdies.

[00:05:05] >> This was Tyler Duncan. We talked about this green being difficult to hit. Here's Duncan after missing it with his second.

[00:05:13] >> But that's how you get out of trouble.

[00:05:16] >> That's great. Yeah, this green, the players are only hitting this green 22% of the time today.

[00:05:25] >> Matsuyama for birdie.

[00:05:27][ Applause ]

[00:05:36] >> Here's Stewart Cink. Made a nice run, made some noise at the Valspar Championship a couple of weeks ago.

[00:05:42] >> Going back and forth between this tour and the Champions Tour. Kind of like Padraig Harrington, same thing.

[00:05:47] >> Yeah, yeah.

[00:05:48] >> Stewart rolling one in when they hit it.

[00:05:50] >> As long as Stewart still does, I think in his mind, he can still compete out here.

[00:05:57] >> Up at 17, Chesson Hadley giving it a go.

[00:06:00] >> This hole location over a ridge. Some of the players landing on the downslope just short of it. Right about there.

[00:06:08] >> Yeah.

[00:06:08] >> But plenty of spin with that wind in their face.

[00:06:12] >> He would make birdie.

[00:06:13] >> Now, Bhatia. You said it was that make zone here at 6.

[00:06:17] >> Yeah, there you go, Curt.

[00:06:19] >> Right in the heart. I guarantee you when he walked up there and he saw it on that back tier just off the edge, he's thinking, I can make it from there.

[00:06:27] >> Bezuidenhout for his birdie at 16.

[00:06:29] >> We saw his nice shot in here. A little left to right.

[00:06:33] >> That's a good putting stroke right there.

[00:06:38] >> Lanto Griffin with his third at this par 5 from 93 yards.

[00:06:44] >> Tricky little front right hole location. That wind is in off the right here.

[00:06:50] >> Oh, yeah, Lanto.

[00:06:51] >> OK. Oh, sure.

[00:06:53] >> The delay for a little bit more drama.

[00:06:59] >> Let's see what's going on back at 12th.

[00:07:01] >> Spieth getting to behind this birdie putt.

[00:07:04] >> I got it right edge. It would give him some pace here, Jordan.

[00:07:12] >> Kind of like that.

[00:07:13] >> Needed that one, Dan.

[00:07:14] >> Yup, he did. Remember Sam Stevens' run last year? He finished second. All kinds of trouble, though, here at this latest visit to 18.

[00:07:27] >> Oh, wow.

[00:07:27] >> But that could be taken care of just like that. He makes a turn. And Dan, that sprinkler head was in his way. He probably would have ended up putting that if he could, but chipped it over the sprinkler head, and no problem for Sam Stevens.

[00:07:38] >> One of the Coody twins. Pierceson Coody putting for birdie.

[00:07:41] >> Big right to lefter here. Coming off the backside of that ridge.

[00:07:49] >> And there you go from long distance. That is so good. In his home state, one of those 23 Texans playing in the field this week.

[00:08:01] >> Austin Eckroat and his second shot. What an impressive win that was at PGA National as Eckroat broke through.

[00:08:10] >> There was a lot of it because his iron game, his iron game was so good that week.

[00:08:14] >> A birdie from there.

[00:08:16] >> Lucas Glover, her birdied 12, 13, 14. Three straight heading to the 15th here. But he's bunkered.

[00:08:22] >> Caught the perfect lie in there.

[00:08:23] >> Oh, you say perfect? Oh, come on. Four in a row for Lucas. Yeah. Raise your hand if you're sure.

[00:08:36] >> The par 3 and Texas' own Jordan Spieth.

[00:08:41] >> That's high up in the air.

[00:08:50] >> How about in?

[00:08:52][ Cheering and Applause ]

[00:09:00] >> That's reverberating around the Lone Star State.

[00:09:08] >> Streelman's third at the 14th.

[00:09:16] >> You can't be serious.

[00:09:17] >> Get in there. Yup.

[00:09:21] >> Kevin Streelman has now gone birdie, eagle.

[00:09:24] >> Duncan with his second at this par-5 18th. Has been that wait that we talked about. Part of the reason guys waiting to go for it in two.

[00:09:37] >> And downwind makes it hard to hole this green. This looks pretty good.

[00:09:44] >> Pretty good.

[00:09:45] >> Duncan would make birdie.

[00:09:48] >> Seventeen.

[00:09:49] >> Becomes that short iron for Akshay Bhatia, Billy Ray.

[00:09:53] >> Yeah, Curt. This is going to enter. He's got a couple options here. Is he going to drive it in the slope, or is he going to try to play it through the air over that ridge? Coming in very low.

[00:10:01] >> Should have a lot of spin.

[00:10:04] >> Another great shot. Almost perfect. Boy, that he just visualized. He landed it right on top of the ridge.

[00:10:15] >> That's what I saw.

[00:10:17] >> Jordan Spieth, a one and a three if this goes down consecutively. How about that birdie from the bunker?

[00:10:24] >> A strong finish. You know, it's going to get him mentally right back into this tournament. Got that par 5 finishing hole.

[00:10:31] >> That was an outrageous birdie.

[00:10:33] >> No, that's an outrageous card.

[00:10:40] >> What a shot. What a three for Bhatia. And he is now at 8-under par.

[00:10:45] >> What a round he is putting together.

[00:10:51] >> Akshay Bhatia carded a bogey free 9-under at the top, while Justin Lower and Brendon Todd tied for second at 6-under. Round 2 is next.

[00:11:06] >> Springtime in the Lone Star State. And that usually means plenty of wind. That's the case again today on the Oaks Course, in perfect condition with that always intriguing par-5 18th through the penalty area, which winds its way up to the right of the green. And then, the par-3 16th. We mentioned that Jordan Spieth lit it up with his fourth career ace on the PGA Tour yesterday, that bunker right in the middle. It's also the site of Smylie Kaufman's latest Friday happy hour. He's got a couple of great guests on the way. So another beautiful Friday here in the 93rd edition of this great Texas tradition, the Valero Texas Open. Look at the leaderboard. Can anybody catch Akshay? Five clear of Justin Lower. He shot 66 yesterday. So he's even through his first nine. Brendon Todd, even par round of 72. He was a part of that tie for second with Lower. And Russell Henley with a 3-under 69 also at 6-under. So there's Rory sitting six shots back as heads to the weekend.

[00:12:10] >> As we check out some of the highlights, it was Jordan Spieth who got to that 16th hole yesterday. He aced it. He was plus-4 at that time, and he finished up strong. He started at the 10th today. Birdied that hole. Birdied 11. And then, struck this shot at the par-4 12th. Three in a row. He birdied four of his first five holes, ended up with a 4-under 68. So, Spieth back on a good track. Rory McIlroy and his birdie as he made the turn of the par-5 18th, just the third time that Rory has been here to this tournament, gearing up for another run for that elusive green jacket. McIlroy sitting at 5- under for the tournament. But everybody chasing Akshay Bhatia after the 63 yesterday. This was how he started his day today at the 10th. And then, he picked up some bogeys in his opening nine, but then got things straightened around. And the second nine, this was his second to last hole. A birdie there. Three birdies coming home for Akshay Bhatia. Round of 2-under 70 and 11-under, five clear of the next best three that are at 6-under at the Valero Texas Oak.

[00:13:20] >> Let's go to the short par-4 17th.

[00:13:23] >> Here's Matt Kuchar, the Wiley veteran. And he curls that one in. He's been coming here forever. This is his 19th start. And they love the Kuch. He travels to Texas, travels everywhere.

[00:13:39] >> At the 9th, Hoffman, Mr. 500, throwing all of his fans. He said he had earmarked this event. He wanted to make this event his 500th PGA Tour start.

[00:13:57] >> Adam Scott for eagle. And that is going to lift the lid for eagles at the 8th. Adam Scott moving it to 1-under with the very first eagle at the par-5 8th.

[00:14:21] >> Carl Yuan for birdie at 18th. He makes it back to 2-over.

[00:14:40] >> We go to 17.

[00:14:42] >> J.B. Holmes was barely breathing on that one. And he gets it to go. Nicely done.

[00:14:52] >> It's Aaron Rai going through his routine for birdie to get to red figures.

[00:14:57] >> Downhill, but back into the wind.

[00:15:01] >> Oh, yeah. And great read. So the 1-under he goes with his third birdie through the first 12 holes.

[00:15:11] >> Beau Hossler here. Hit it over the green, chipped up to this point. Putting today -- I mean, were you playing wind on these putts from 7 feet?

[00:15:19] >> You have to. I mean, a chalk line on a straight putt, if the wind's off the left or right, it's going right. You know, it's crazy. So, you have to definitely factor it in, especially when it's gusting like this.

[00:15:31] >> Over at the 3rd again, 167 yards. Sam Ryder.

[00:15:39] >> Kind of low flatted in there. And --

[00:15:42] >> Oh, bangs it off the stick.

[00:15:45] >> He would make birdie.

[00:15:49] >> Out to the 7th. And Joe Highsmith, who was our walk and talk interview last week in Houston.

[00:15:58] >> Unmistakable.

[00:15:59] >> Beautiful hat that he wears.

[00:16:03] >> Doug Ghim to save Par. Nice chip from the rough at 9.

[00:16:13] >> You know, this guy Max Homa over here at 13 for birdie, what's he looking at here, Rors?

[00:16:19] >> Yeah, that's -- he said a good shot into 13. Pretty tough par 3 down the hill there. Yeah, he -- Yeah, great too.

[00:16:27] >> That's a skin today.

[00:16:30] >> Yeah, that is a skin today.

[00:16:31][ Applause ]

[00:16:35] >> Bunker short side here. Wilson Furr. This looks difficult.

[00:16:38] >> Yeah, this is. But he's back into the wind a little bit, so it might actually be OK.

[00:16:43] >> It's floating as it looks like.

[00:16:45] >> Yeah. OK. Yeah, easy.

[00:16:48] >> I was thinking, man, he didn't have a chance. But sometimes in TV, when it comes up and pops up, I think, you know what, he might make this. And Wilson Furr having a nice day. Two birdies on his day.

[00:17:00] >> The defending champion, Corey Conners, at this par 5. Needs to get it going.

[00:17:07] >> Over par. Cut line and -- yeah, come on now. Where's the wind from Rory yesterday?

[00:17:14] >> That could go. Look at --

[00:17:16] >> That's got to go.

[00:17:17] >> Look at how much ball is hanging over the edge.

[00:17:19] >> Where's Rory to kick it in with that breeze? Come on, now. There we go.

[00:17:22] >> There we go.

[00:17:23] >> And it was less than 10 seconds. Look at Corey. Second shot coming for Ryan Moore.

[00:17:34] >> Yeah, love it when they move it up as a drivable par 4. Ryan Moore is an excellent wedge player.

[00:17:41] >> There's some evidence of it.

[00:17:45] >> He would make birdie from there. Another long putt for Yuan at 6. And Yuan sinks that one for birdie.

[00:18:06] >> The 6th.

[00:18:07] >> Mark Hubbard has been absolutely fantastic today. Best round going so far in Round 2. And look at that, from off the green.

[00:18:14] >> Whoa.

[00:18:15] >> Just scorching out there in very difficult conditions. Look at that card. The 16th.

[00:18:21] >> Sloan from behind at the par 3.

[00:18:27] >> Close enough to the edge, going with that putter. This got a good line.

[00:18:30] >> Oh, there you go. Sloan filling it up. Might be a little too late to make the cut. Corey Conners at the 15th.

[00:18:42] >> Straight downhill. Oh, yeah. How about some of the shots he's pulled off today? The chip in over at 14, now from off the green at 15.

[00:18:53] >> Back at 7. Erik van Rooyen.

[00:18:58] >> Plus-5 on his round. So having a tough day trying to ride that right to left breeze in there. And the slope. How about this one?

[00:19:09] >> Oh, wow. That's how you do it, right? Oh, man.

[00:19:18] >> McCarthy at 13 for another one. That's --

[00:19:21] >> And he's -- Yup.

[00:19:23] >> Such a good birdie on a tough hole. We're seeing some quality golf out here in really tough conditions.

[00:19:31] >> Joe Highsmith for birdie at the 12th. Hovering on the cut line.

[00:19:37] >> He was playing well last week. He didn't have a great Sunday, but I think he gained some confidence, you know, that he's playing some good golf.

[00:19:47] >> To 15. And Aberg for birdie.

[00:19:51] >> Has worked his way back to even. Now, 1-under with a little cushion.

[00:19:59] >> Three holes left for Ludvig.

[00:20:02] >> Scott Gutschewski is playing in this group as well.

[00:20:09] >> Nice of Peter Malnati to lend him his golf ball for the week. Oh, that one goes in. How about that? What a shot from Gutschewski.

[00:20:19] >> I know he's over par. He's 7-over. Now he's 5-over par. But if you're going to end the day, Dan on a shot, that's the one to do it on.

[00:20:29] >> Akshay Bhatia builds his lead to five shots going into the weekend, and a three-way tie at second with Todd, Henley, and McCarthy. Round 3 is next.

[00:20:46] >> The longest run of any PGA Tour event in any one city. San Antonio has been the only home of this tournament, which dates back to 1922, being played for the 93rd time. It's the sixth oldest on the PGA Tour. Seven courses in the Hill Country have hosted since 2010. However, it's been played right here at TPC San Antonio. Akshay Bhatia, a five shot lead overnight. Dave Moore back in 1958 at a six shot lead. That's the last time we've had a lead this large at the halfway point.

[00:21:20] >> Second par 5 on this front side, a hole that they expect to make birdie on. It's playing with some help on the wind side of things.

[00:21:33] >> OK.

[00:21:33] >> There you go.

[00:21:35] >> Hideki with a couple of birdies on this front side. As we go back to the 8th, and the birdie effort for Andrew Putnam.

[00:21:43] >> Guy can really roll it. An excellent putter. And a good read there coming out of that fringe.

[00:21:52] >> Back to 2.

[00:21:53] >> And Russell Henley's third.

[00:22:02] >> Might better coming out of the rough. Doesn't have to deal with as much spin. Yeah.

[00:22:06] >> He would make birdie from there.

[00:22:08] >> And Akshay Bhatia's third.

[00:22:13] >> Good at flighting the ball down, Damon, into the wind. Boy, he looks comfortable. Starting out very comfortable.

[00:22:23] >> Here's McCarthy.

[00:22:24] >> Oh, it's a good looking roll. He does it again. Denny with that putter.

[00:22:32] >> The one at 2 looked like it was going in. The one at 3 looked like it, and it did. Boy.

[00:22:38] >> All the way up at the 18Th, the third at the par-5 18th for Christiaan Bezuidenhout.

[00:22:46] >> Just a sand wedge for his third shot with some helping breeze. Should not be a big problem. And it isn't for him.

[00:22:54] >> A beauty.

[00:22:54] >> He's got it going.

[00:22:56] >> Joe Highsmith. Kind of stabbing it out of that bunker, dropping it in. How about that?

[00:23:03] >> I feel like we've seen a ton of holed shots from off the green the last couple weeks.

[00:23:10] >> Max Homa on the 9th for birdie.

[00:23:18] >> He'll move to 3-under.

[00:23:27] >> As we go back out to Brendon Todd now for birdie at 3.

[00:23:32] >> And --

[00:23:32] >> Get there.

[00:23:33] >> Get in.

[00:23:33] >> Yeah. It sure did get there. Good putt.

[00:23:40] >> Jordan Spieth with his second.

[00:23:46] >> Needs to get something going.

[00:23:50] >> There's a champ from 2021. Par 4, drivable today. Going to be a lot of fun watching the leaders today. Lanto Griffin, second. How about it? That'll help the scorecard. Tough Start for Lanto. And to 6. Thorbjorn Olesen, his third. Missed the green.

[00:24:17] >> Uphill the whole way.

[00:24:21] >> Some fireworks on this Saturday. Got a special invitation to the Masters. Good time of year. Here's Jordan Spieth looking for a birdie.

[00:24:42] >> Tough start, Damon. He needed to make birdie. He bogeyed 1 and 2 right out of the gate. So, got to get this thing turned around.

[00:24:53] >> Stewart Cink from downtown for birdie at the 8th. Makes it. Nicely done.

[00:25:04][ Applause ]

[00:25:13] >> Sixth hole now, Nick Hardy, his second at the par 4. How about it? The struggle today, that's a beauty.

[00:25:30] >> A tap in birdie.

[00:25:31] >> Up at 7, Jordan Spieth. At one point, he was 4-over par on Day 1. And he had that hole in one that he birdied 17. And now, look at him. He's made birdies at 3-under.

[00:25:44] >> You want to know how good that birdie was? That's the first birdie made at the 7th hole today.

[00:25:51] >> Joe Highsmith, he was making it from off the green. Now, he's got three straight birdies coming into this par-5 18th.

[00:25:57] >> Should be able. With this club, a full club with spin, should be able to fly it almost all the way back there.

[00:26:05] >> He would make birdie.

[00:26:08] >> To 14, Vincent Norrman, fourth shot at the par 5 just a moment ago.

[00:26:13] >> I mean, how many hole outs are we going to see today?

[00:26:18] >> It's amazing.

[00:26:19] >> How about that?

[00:26:21] >> Up at the 12, here's Hideki.

[00:26:27] >> Just a sand wedge after a great drive. Back left.

[00:26:32] >> Will he get to stop?

[00:26:37] >> Yeah.

[00:26:39] >> An easy birdie from there. Rory McIlroy's second on the par-4 6th.

[00:26:46] >> Can actually flight this one down here and maybe control the spin just a bit more here. And playing this one through the air very high. Well, he's got it dialed in here.

[00:26:59] >> Part of his game. We talk about so much, that wedge play. He says his iron play getting better and better.

[00:27:08] >> Back behind us here at 18, second shot to par 5 for Alex Noren.

[00:27:13] >> The hole location all the way in the back.

[00:27:22] >> Oh, right in --

[00:27:23] >> Oh, look at that.

[00:27:23] >> -- the gap.

[00:27:23] >> Yeah.

[00:27:24] >> What a good shot this is.

[00:27:25] >> Threading the needle. Look at this shot.

[00:27:27] >> He sure did.

[00:27:28] >> Wow.

[00:27:29] >> Going to go in.

[00:27:30] >> Oh, man. What a shot.

[00:27:33] >> Noren would make eagle.

[00:27:35] >> And back to back to back fashion in '60, '61 and '62. And Akshay has some drive chip and putt experience, John.

[00:27:42] >> Yeah, he does. And Curt, I thought you made a great point about the shot Akshay played. He took it high and took a club that couldn't go over. The other two took the low one that could. So I love that choice he made in the shot he played. It took long, completely out of play.

[00:27:55] >> And paid off. Didn't roll that in with some confidence. And that's a really good bounce back after making bogey.

[00:28:03] >> To 7.

[00:28:03] >> Tommy Fleetwood's turn.

[00:28:05] >> Also a 7-iron for Fleetwood.

[00:28:09] >> Oh, and also a good one. Nicely done. The best of the bunch in that group.

[00:28:16] >> He would make birdie.

[00:28:18] >> And the leader, Akshay Bhatia, to answer. There he does. Back to a three shot lead.

[00:28:35] >> Here's Bud Cauley with his third.

[00:28:41] >> Uphill, then downhill.

[00:28:44] >> Oh, come on.

[00:28:45] >> Another --

[00:28:45] >> Look at that.

[00:28:47] >> Another hole out.

[00:28:48] >> That's amazing. It's like what Damon said earlier. Hole out from everywhere.

[00:28:53] >> Hideki Matsuyama, his fourth in the par 5. We could have another one. Come on.

[00:29:04] >> Well, they call it moving day. And Hideki moves to within six of the lead.

[00:29:13] >> Ludvig Aberg.

[00:29:15] >> With his third just in front of the green.

[00:29:18] >> Yeah, playing out of this first cut. He's going to try to skip this on this back shelf. That's very nicely judged. That should be a nice kick in birdie for Ludvig Aberg. Having a nice day and two different drivers as well.

[00:29:33] >> Good time to do it. Masters Champion, headed down to Augusta along with a lot of other golfers in the field this week.

[00:29:43] >> Leader Akshay Bhatia for birdie on 9.

[00:29:45] >> That's a 1-under at 35 on the front nine for Akshay. And his lead, he is back to 12-under par.

[00:29:55] >> Bhatia firmly holding his lead with four shots at the end of Saturday. Hideki Matsuyama back in contention at fourth with six birdies. The final round is next.

[00:30:10] >> If they didn't have the skill, they wouldn't be here in the thick of the greatest golf on earth. But who has the grit? What it's going to take week in and out to scratch their way to the top of a field of anomalies? The stakes are higher, the play always better, the risk always real. And no one is getting what they. Want, only what they've earned.

[00:30:46] >> And we want to welcome you to Golf Channel's coverage of the final round of the Valero Texas Open. So much on the line on this Sunday. A coveted PGA Tour victory, perhaps a Masters invitation. The final group teed off about 45 minutes ago. Akshay Bhatia had a four shot lead heading into the day, and he has continued to play well. Let's go to some earlier highlights. At the 1st, much easier today with the different wind, and Hideki Matsuyama from the bunker. He bangs it in off the stick. Great start for Matsuyama. Ludvig Aberg, played very well yesterday with a Saturday 67. Started his day at the 1st. And he started his day with a putter in his hand from off the green. And he made a birdie there at 1. Rory McIlroy, yesterday, he double bogeyed the 1st. Today, it was a par. And then, he birdied 2. And now, here he was at the par-3 3rd. McIlroy dialed in early. That would be back to back birdies for the highest ranked man in the field, number 2 in the official World Golf Ranking. We talked about the easier conditions at the 1sr. Here was Brendon Todd, his second at 1. Down the fairway on the right side, and then did this. To kick in range. So Brendon Todd sneaking a little bit closer to the lead. He got to 9-under par. That lead was held overnight by Akshay Bhatia. The lefty trying to finish the business today and his second PGA Tour win after a 350-yard drive. He knocks it to 6 feet. And the dream start with a birdie at 1 from 6 feet to move to 16-under par. Happens. Bhatia to 16-under, a five shot lead at that point. And then, he continued at the par-5 2nd. Here's his third from the bunker. This bunker play has been fabulous all week long. And it was, again, moments ago.

[00:32:46] So now, for a birdie, birdie start in the final round. The 22-year-old to get to 17-under par to extend that lead to six shots. Will Akshay continue to dominate or will someone catch him? Let's find out together.

[00:33:05] >> Birdie, birdie to start. Birdie at 17 and 18 yesterday. That's four consecutive birdies for Akshay Bhatia. And the lead has blown up to six shots. Guys are trying to catch him. They're trying to go low, but it's awfully difficult.

[00:33:20] >> This is Tyson Alexander at the 11th, hitting his second.

[00:33:27] >> Another front hall location that these guys can attack from the fairway.

[00:33:33] >> Tyson.

[00:33:34] >> Yeah.

[00:33:34] >> Bhatia now on the par-4 4th, 112 yards left to the pin.

[00:33:48] >> Turning it over. Good line.

[00:33:49] >> Just keeps attacking flagsticks. He driving it great, setting himself up to be able to attack. And he's taken advantage of it.

[00:33:59] >> Here on the green at 4, Denny McCarthy. Hate to say it this early, John, but, boy, this feels like a must make for Denny. It's already given away two opportunities. And not this time. So Denny makes his birdie. Now, Bhatia. Three birdies in his first four holes and the lead is back to six once again.

[00:34:43] >> Here's Kuest, his third from just off the green.

[00:34:46] >> Plenty doable, though. A little false front there. Pitch it up on top.

[00:34:51] >> Oh, would have been birdie number six for Peter.

[00:34:55] >> Send you over to 11, Steve Sands, Curt Byron with a call.

[00:35:01] >> Dan, thank you.

[00:35:02] >> Three hundred ninety-three yard par 4 today, curt. Where's Jordan Spieth?

[00:35:06] >> A very gettable hole location in the front speed, trying to hole it with a wedge. So that'll be a tap in birdie for him.

[00:35:17] >> Akshay Bhatia, after missing the green with his second, he'll try to chip this close and save par.

[00:35:28] >> He'll have a tap in.

[00:35:34] >> Up to 16. And Max Homa playing this Valero Texas Open and pretty good shape. Three-under, although it's a long way away from Akshay and company. But Max gearing up for the first major of the year. And he's on a little bit of a birdie run here after some tough bogeys the first half of his round.

[00:36:01] >> Bhatia for birdie to extend his lead.

[00:36:04] >> He bounced back.

[00:36:04] >> Will it get there?

[00:36:05] >> He bounced back huge.

[00:36:06] >> It does get there. Amazing. Ten years ago, he's competing at Augusta National, the drive, chip and putt national finals. Here he is trying to win his second PGA Tour event.

[00:36:19] >> Victor Perez on the 8th hole for birdie.

[00:36:23] >> So Perez solidifying his position a little bit more in that Aon Swing 5 department.

[00:36:36] >> Long look down the hill. Should come off that bunker to his right. Look to his left. It shows you what a big difference it is from the rough to the fairway, Smylie. He hits that wedge hard, which means he put as much spin on it as he could have from there and still couldn't get any spin to stop it.

[00:36:56] >> This is the type of downhill putt you can make, too. Downhill right to left. Probably playing it just on the inside of Akshay's coin.

[00:37:08] >> And if anybody can hoop it, McCarthy can. Another good call, Smylie Kaufman.

[00:37:16][ Applause ]

[00:37:25] >> Justin Lower now on the final hole, staring down a 30-foot birdie putt. It goes. He finishes at four under, tied for 25th.

[00:37:41] >> Let's go back to 13. Gorgeous look from behind.

[00:37:50] >> Starting at the left edge of the green, cutting towards the center. Let's see about the distance.

[00:37:55] >> Oh, he did get it right. This took a big bounce.

[00:37:58] >> Oh, this could end up really, really great.

[00:38:01] >> What a break. Tee shot just like Matsuyama. Even better.

[00:38:04] >> Oh, there's that pressure we talked about. Denny is 6-under on the par 3s already this week. He'll have a great look to get to 7-under. Back to 18 again.

[00:38:16] >> For the birdie before he goes to a place that he loves that really, I think, brings out the best in his skills, Smylie.

[00:38:24] >> Definitely. Just being able to play creative and seeing good results this week as far as the ball striking goes.

[00:38:35] >> Now, Akshay and the rest of us wait to see if Denny can make this one after a tremendous tee shot. And the lead is now down to three. Denny McCarthy making Akshay earn it all the way here.

[00:38:54] >> Tommy Fleetwood in close on the par-4 17th. This for birdie. He'll add one.

[00:39:05] >> This has been the strength of his game. He needs to lean on it again.

[00:39:12] >> Most of the break is at the end as it dies.

[00:39:24] >> Clutch putt by McCarthy.

[00:39:27] >> That's so impressive, the left and righters. I mean, just to be able to pick a spot and see that apex in the line, Denny McCarthy does it better than any tour player.

[00:39:40] >> Fleetwood for his birdie at 18. This would be excellent two putt. And Tommy's got it.

[00:39:49] >> Hit it much better this week. That's been part of the game he's been struggling with, which is something we're not accustomed to seeing from Tommy.

[00:39:57] >> Fifteen we go.

[00:39:59] >> Denny McCarthy's third.

[00:40:01] >> Yeah, you can't have more of a green light chip than this. Up the hill, moving slightly to his left.

[00:40:08] >> Oh, he's giving himself a chance. And it goes down. And McCarthy makes Bhatia think about it just a little bit more. Denny, some fireworks on this back nine.

[00:40:19] >> What a back nine he is putting together. Doing everything he can to put the pressure on. Bhatia hit it short right. And so, who knows? We might see another swing here. What a beautiful shot at a time where he really needed it. He's got this for five straight birdies. Bhatia still got a 2.5 footer left for par. But this to close the gap again. What a show McCarthy is putting on.

[00:41:11][ Cheering and Applause ]

[00:41:17] >> And so, this for par for Bhatia to now keep a one shot lead. Two holes left in regulation. McIlroy for birdie. Hopes this is his last shot before heads to another Masters.

[00:41:40] >> Should break a little left.

[00:41:43] >> And it is.

[00:41:44] >> Way to finish the week for Rory.

[00:41:46][ Cheering and Applause ]

[00:41:53] >> So, between the two of them, John Denny on the right, Akshay in the bunker left,. It'll be Bhatia to play first. Oh, how's that touch shot?

[00:42:05] >> What a shot.

[00:42:10] >> Akshay putting on a clinic from the bunker. That was so good. Spectacular touch there out of the bunker for Akshay. So now, it's Denny's turn to answer.

[00:42:25] >> Get him the hole.

[00:42:32] >> Well, Denny is cool, he's calm, he's confident. Now, he's just less than 3 feet away from a 7th birdie on this back nine.

[00:42:40] >> Well, he's putting on a clinic on this back nine.

[00:42:44] >> Bhatia birdied 17 and 18 yesterday. He's 4-under on the week on these two holes. This would go a long way to hoisting his second trophy perhaps on the PGA Tour.

[00:42:59] >> So the door is wide open for McCarthy to match Akshay at 19-under par here at the short par-four 17th.

[00:43:15] >> Denny McCarthy, we talked about his putting. He's had six in a row before. That came at 2021 in Bermuda. This for sixth in a row here at Valero and a tie for the lead. And he does. So two men now are at 19-under par. Denny McCarthy has made up the six shot deficit that he began on this back nine. And you see a whole bunch of circles there. Six birdies in a row, 7-under on this backside. He marches to the par-5 18th with a chance for his first ever PGA Tour win.

[00:43:51] >> This was Henley for his birdie. And this guy will roll into Augusta with loads of confidence with his third Top 5 finish in his last seven starts. And now, we're ready for these third shots.

[00:44:09] >> One-o-three, 97 covers right at it. And he can hit it up to 108, and it will still come back off that tier. So those are the numbers he's thinking about.

[00:44:21] >> Big, deep breath by Bhatia before he settled in.

[00:44:29] >> Taking in low left of the pin.

[00:44:32][ Cheering and Applause ]

[00:44:51] >> Get in the hole.

[00:44:54] >> Feathered in there.

[00:44:54] >> There's that slope. It's going to catch it.

[00:45:00][ Cheering and Applause ] And the old putting contest here, Dan.

[00:45:07] >> You know, just a little bit too close to not quite get enough spin to reel it all the way back.

[00:45:16] >> It looks like McCarthy is going to be first to play. It's about a foot farther away than Bhatia. And you talk back there on the tee about applying some pressure. Doesn't get any bigger than this, Smylie.

[00:45:28] >> Woody, 91 total putts with this hole left for McCarthy. One more and he matches the fewest putts in a PGA Tour event. And it could end up giving him his first win.

[00:45:47] >> Get in the hole.

[00:45:47] >> And that caps off one of the greatest weeks of putting we have ever seen. Will it be good enough to give Denny McCarthy his first win in his 174th event?

[00:46:05] >> And Bhatia knows what he has to do now. Make and send it to a playoff. Unbelievable. Akshay matches it.

[00:46:23][ Cheering and Applause ] Denny McCarthy wondering, what in the world do I have to do to win one of these things?

[00:46:35] >> We got free golf in San Antonio, Dan. Unbelievable.

[00:46:46] >> Come on. Great routine.

[00:46:47] >> So McCarthy is away, and it looks like he is in definite layup territory.

[00:46:53] >> He pushed this all the way up to 73 yards in the 72nd hole. I bet he's thinking, let's try to get it a little closer to 90.

[00:47:01] >> That might squirt a little bit here. Trying to actually gauge a yardage is going to be difficult. He came out low and hot. It's going to probably chase up, though.

[00:47:14] >> So with a layup there for McCarthy, you saw Bhatia exchanging a slip of paper there with Ken Tackett with the PGA Tour. That was Akshay giving Ken his trainer's telephone number. So, Akshay is going to keep playing here, but he is requesting some assistance from his guy to check him out at some point on this first playoff hole.

[00:47:38] >> Right at that left. OK.

[00:47:41] >> He would definitely have enough in his 3-wood to get up there, but he would have to take it right up that left side. And he probably figures just a wedge contest is what he wants again. Right up that right side, similar to his last shot.

[00:48:03] >> Yeah, especially with a layup by McCarthy, it's not a time to be going for it.

[00:48:06] >> No, definitely not. That was the right decision. You saw him take his hand off of the club after, but still twirled it.

[00:48:18] >> McCarthy is next to play. So, Billy Ray, what's the yardage here?

[00:48:22] >> He's got 100 yards. And finally, to your point, I think he's laid it far enough back this time where you feel like he can hit a full shot and use all the aspects of the spin now.

[00:48:42] >> Yeah, he's caught this one a bit heavy. Oh my goodness.

[00:48:47] >> Oh my goodness. Of all the things.

[00:48:59] >> Eighty-five yards, 93 to the top of the tier behind this pin. Flying it past the hole.

[00:49:11] >> Well, I think it all worked out.

[00:49:13] >> Sure did.

[00:49:14][ Cheering and Applause ]

[00:49:33] >> Going to be his fifth shot. And you would think that he's got a hole this with the tee up there tight for birdie.

[00:49:41] >> That's almost for certain there. And he's draft in the first cut, Smylie, which I like. Gives him a little bit more cushion to play any kind of shot he'd like from this lie right here, but definitely has got to make this right here with the tee in there close.

[00:50:01] >> Going to catch that slope, but not in the position he needed it to be in. So Bhatia is just a couple putts away from where he is.

[00:50:10] >> And Denny's just done so many things right on this back nine and just hit the worst shot at the most unimaginable, imaginable time, chunking a ball into that penalty area. If you gave him 100 golf balls, he probably only does that one time.

[00:50:24] >> And that's even if McCarthy makes his for six.

[00:50:28] >> Boy, you know, there's one of those days where you didn't really want anybody to lose because the incredible golf they played. But for McCarthy to do what he did coming down the stretch and then just have that disappointed shot, it is just going to burn in him for a while you would think.

[00:50:52] >> What a week. What a day. This for bogey. And this weight to break through on the PGA Tour is going to continue in the most agonizing way you could possibly imagine. Seven straight birdies to pull even, and then to see it just all come undone. So Bhatia is going to pick up PGA Tour victory number 2 here in the most bizarre fashion that he could have ever imagined. That drops in. And Bhatia is a winner again.

[00:52:03][ Cheering and Applause ] A wild Sunday at TPC San Antonio. He's not even 23 years old. The dream continues for Bhatia, who becomes just the 10th player in the last 50 years to win more than one PGA Tour title before turning 23 years old, and his fiancee Presleigh.

[00:52:37] >> Sixty-three by McCarthy. He threw everything at Akshay before finding the creek on the first playoff hole.

[00:52:44] >> This concludes the PGA tours coverage of the Valero Texas Open.