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## **TEAM THORPE WINS FIRST-DAY PRO-AM; O'MEARA AIMING FOR FIRST CHAMPIONS TOUR WIN**

VALENCIA, CA – Combining for an 18-under score, Team Thorpe won the first day of the AT&T Champions Classic Pro-Am in a card-off over Team McCumber.

Headed by Champions Tour professional Jim Thorpe and his four amateur partners, Dave Nichols, Don Knabe, Dave Fleming and Greg McWilliams, the team fashioned a net score of 54, shortly after the team of Bob Feezor, Bryon McDaniel, Lori Lee, Ian McNeil and Champions Tour player Mark McCumber had established the number to beat. McCumber's group teed off just two groups ahead of Thorpe's group.

Third place went to Team Jacobs, which won in a match of cards at 17-under par. The team of professional John Jacobs, John Geraci, Michael Hogan, Lance Willis and Dan Marrow totaled 55 for the round.

The first-day of the Pro-Am was a re-introduction of sorts for Champions Tour "rookie" Mark O'Meara to the Valencia Country Club. The former Orange County resident said in an afternoon press conference that he hasn't played this course since his Junior golf days.

"The last time I played here – it had to be 34 years ago - maybe in a junior tournament," O'Meara said. "I know I played here. I just don't know how long ago. I remember some of the holes, so I know I played here before."

The AT&T Champions Classic is O'Meara's fourth event on the 50-and-over tour. Last week at the Toshiba Classic he finished tied for fifth. He opened his season at the Outback Steakhouse Pro-Am with a 38<sup>th</sup>-place finish and followed that up with a fifth place tie at The ACE Group Classic before heading west for the back-to-back Southern California tournaments.

O'Meara called his early performance on the Champions Tour a work in progress but stressed that his desire for a win is strong.

"You have to take little steps," said the 1998 Masters and British Open Champion. "The first three weeks I've taken some steps, and I am going in the right direction. Going into this week, I would like to continue down that path. My expectations are I would like to play well and win. It's been a while since I won on the regular tour, and in '98, winning the Masters and the British Open, was the icing on the cake for a guy who I think has had a very nice career."

O'Meara knows nothing will be easy on the Champions Tour.

"I have the utmost respect for the players playing on the Champions Tour," O'Meara said. "I know what kind of competitors they are, and I know how good they are, so I wasn't surprised to see the quality of golf I've seen the first three weeks."

The day ended with a stellar performance by music great Kenny Loggins, who performed at the Hyatt Santa Clarita for the Pro-Am participants, Champions Tour professionals and special guests.

Another Pro-Am takes center stage on Thursday as the professionals complete their final tune-up for first round play on Friday beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Tickets are for sale at the tournament main gate entrance for \$15 daily through Sunday.

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