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CANADIAN GOLFER COMPETES IN PGA ON HOME TURF

By Paul Lungen, Staff Reporter - June 14, 2019



Ben Silverman competes at the Maccabiah Games in Israel in 2013. (Maccabiah Canada photo)

When Ben Silverman was a teenager, he was pretty good at a lot of sports. He played hockey in the Greater Toronto Hockey League, was good at volleyball and played competitive baseball. Golf, not so much.

“As a teenager, I kind of sucked” at the sport, he readily acknowledges today. It’s an admission he can make without too much embarrassment, considering he’s now one of a handful of Canadians playing professionally on the PGA Tour.

The Tour came to Ancaster, Ont., recently, as the best golfers in the world competed in the RBC Canadian Open, which was held from June 6-9 at the Hamilton Golf & Country Club.

The event attracted a strong field one week ahead of the U.S. Open, and Silverman was among them. After a roller coaster opening two rounds, in which he shot +1 on Day 1 and nine under par on Day 2, he had a steadier performance over the weekend. On the last two days of the tournament, he shot 72 and 69 on the par 70 course, finishing in a tie for 20th place and earning more than US\$79,000 (\$105,000) and 39 FedExCup points.



Speaking to *The CJN* after heavy rain and lightning cancelled a scheduled Pro-Am on the day before the tournament opened, Silverman recalled that as a teenager, "Golf was my worst sport.... At 17, I was terrible."

His scores back him up. At his first Canadian Junior Golf Association Tournament, he shot 118 – not exactly the kind of result that screams pro potential.

Nevertheless, golf was becoming his sport, if not his passion. "I got hooked on it by the last year of high school. I quit all other sports to practice golf. I wasn't good at golf and it bothered me. I wanted to get better."

At 18, he took off a year to focus on his game. He got a job at the Launch Golf Centre in Vaughan, Ont., and also had a membership at the Mandarin Golf & Country Club in Markham, Ont.

That gave him plenty of opportunities to hone his skills. By the time the year was over, he had improved to a two handicap and he felt ready to take the next step – to challenge for a spot on a U.S. college team.

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A friend of his had been accepted to Johnson & Wales University and Silverman followed him south to Florida for a tryout, with the hopes of making it onto the university's golf team.

Despite facing a lot competition, he made the team. In his first and second years, he played in a limited number of tournaments. In his third year, he transferred to Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, where he continued to improve.

"I put in a ton of hours and slowly everything got better," he said. "I always wanted to be good."

His journey from college to the PGA was something of a long and winding road. In 2012, when *The CJN* first interviewed him, he was toiling on the Golfslinger.com circuit, with the goal of making it to the second-tier Nationwide Tour.

In 2013, he was named to the Canadian Maccabiah team. Talking about the experience still brings a smile to his face. Not only did he get the gold medal, winning the tournament at the Caesarea Golf Club by 11 strokes, he thoroughly enjoyed the two-week experience.

The opening ceremonies still stand out, as did touring the country in the company of his family. "It was a lot of fun," he recalled.

The experience also helped him develop contacts who would facilitate his career as a pro. One of his financial backers, an American who he met in Israel and who invested in him, gave him the wherewithal to continue the pro life, even when he wasn't doing much winning.

In 2014, Silverman played on the Mackenzie Tour in Canada, before graduating to the Web.com Tour in 2016.

In 2017, he had his greatest success on the Web.com Tour, winning the Price Cutter Charity Championship.



As a Top 25 money winner on the [Web.com](#) Tour, at age 30 in 2018, Silverman finally made it to the PGA Tour – the pinnacle of success for elite golfers.

Not many golfers finally make the PGA cut at 30, but as he said in Ancaster, “Golf is not a sport with a time limit.”

In his first year on the PGA Tour, his best result was a tie for seventh in the Sanderson Farms Championship. With two Top 10 and five Top 25 finishes that year, he earned US\$793,140.

This year hasn’t been quite as lucrative, however. In 17 tournaments so far, his best finish was a tie for 12th in the Corales Puntacana Resort & Club Championship. His tie for 20th in Ancaster pushed his season earnings to nearly US\$285,000.

“I’m not as happy as last year,” he acknowledged. “Last year I got off to a more successful start.”

Admittedly “playing catch up,” Silverman said that in the eight tournaments left in his season, he has to accumulate enough FedExCup points just to get him into the playoffs, to make sure he stays on the Tour next year.

With 134 points, he ranks 168th on the Tour. Finishing outside the Top 125 would mean that he’d have to go through a gruelling qualification process next time around.

Silverman didn’t qualify for the U.S. Open, so he plans to stick around Toronto with his wife, Morgan, and son, Jack Palmer, visit with his parents, Howard and Maureen, and then get back to work to earn the points to stay on the Tour.

With his work ethic and determination, don’t bet against him. He’s become pretty good at golf.



Paul Lungen, Staff Reporter

