

Baker's Brilliant Ascent: Four Rounds of Escalating Excellence in the Algarve

Tournament Summary

Alex Baker claimed his first TEG Trophy in the most satisfying way imaginable - by getting better every single day. In a tournament defined by divergent fortunes and collapsing leads, Baker's metronomic progression from 41 to 45 to 47 and finally to an all-time record 51 points delivered an 11-point victory margin that felt both inevitable and hard-earned. Meanwhile, David Mullin secured his ninth Green Jacket with a 12-stroke gross victory, though his Stableford collapse from Round 3 onwards meant the Tournament Trophy - the one that truly matters in this handicapped affair - slipped through his fingers like sand in a Portuguese breeze.

The tournament's defining narrative was the spectacular divergence between Mullin's two campaigns. Leading the Stableford by eight points after a dominant 49-point opening round, he controlled 68 of 72 holes in the gross competition but managed to lead the Trophy race for just 37. His Round 3 implosion - three triple bogeys in five holes, a catastrophic 31-point collapse - opened the door for Baker's charge and Gregg Williams' unexpected surge to second place in the Stableford standings.

Williams' runner-up finish deserves particular mention, as the consistent performer had never won the Trophy but put together a remarkably solid 173-point campaign to claim his first-ever podium finish. His 48-point second round represented the tournament's finest single display until Baker's record-breaking finale. At the other end of the spectrum, John Patterson's Wooden Spoon was secured with the kind of mathematical certainty usually reserved for celestial mechanics - 20 zero-point holes, 22 worse-than-double-bogeys, and a final margin of 32 points that suggested he might have been playing a different sport entirely.

The return to the Algarve after a five-year absence brought new courses into the TEG rotation. Palmares made its debut with mixed results - the Praia/Alvor and Alvor/Lagos configurations proved challenging in ways that statistics alone cannot capture - while bookending rounds at familiar Boavista provided both symmetry and Mullin's course-record gross performance. This was a tournament that rewarded patience, consistency, and the ability to improve under pressure. Baker possessed all three; Mullin had only the first two when they mattered most.

Round-by-Round Report

Round 1: Mullin's Statement

David Mullin arrived at Boavista with intent, and by the time the opening round concluded, he'd stamped his authority on both competitions with prejudice. His 49-point display - featuring three birdies across holes 13, 14, and 16 - represented both a personal best and established an eight-point Stableford lead that suggested this might be a procession rather than a contest. His +4 gross total gave him a four-stroke cushion in the Green Jacket race, and with 11 pars or better from 18 holes, this looked like a man operating at a different level.

But beneath Mullin's dominance lurked the seeds of a more competitive tournament. Alex Baker sat second in the Stableford despite a round that oscillated wildly between competence and calamity - his 41 points included three disasters and two zero-point holes, yet also three four-point contributions that kept him within touching distance. The opening holes set an ominous tone: multiple players traded the lead across the first hole alone, with Baker, Jon Baker, and Mullin all briefly claiming top spot before reality reasserted itself.

The carnage was widespread and democratic in its distribution. Baker's triple bogey at the second hole cost him the early Stableford lead he'd seized. By the eighth, he'd added a quadruple bogey to compound his misery, while Jon Baker's prospects took a terminal blow courtesy of a quintuple bogey on the same hole. Stuart Neumann's back nine became a procession of horrors - quadruple bogeys on the 15th and 17th, capped by a sextuple bogey at the 18th that defied both mathematics and sanity.

Williams managed 38 points despite four disasters and four zero-point holes, his solitary birdie on the 13th providing brief respite in a round characterized more by survival than excellence. Jon Baker's 37 points kept him in touch, though three disasters including zeros at both the 12th and 18th suggested his usual gross consistency might not translate to Stableford success this week.

Patterson's opening 29 points established a pattern that would define his tournament - five disasters, five zero-point holes, and the dawning realization that Portugal was not going to be kind to him. His quintuple bogey at the eighth merely foreshadowed worse to come.

After Round 1: Mullin 49pts (+4 gross), Baker 41pts (+28), Williams 38pts (+25), Jon Baker 37pts (+18), Neumann 32pts (+36), Patterson 29pts (+31). Mullin's eight-point lead looked commanding, but four rounds remained and consistency would prove more valuable than brilliance.

Round 2: Williams Emerges from the Chaos

The new Palmares Praia/Alvor course greeted the field with immediate hostility. Patterson's opening hole produced a quintuple bogey or worse (10 strokes, +6 versus par, zero points) - precisely the kind of start that makes a man question his life choices. Williams and Neumann both found triple bogeys at the first, but while Neumann would struggle to recover, Williams was about to produce the round of his life.

Mullin maintained his Stableford lead through sheer consistency rather than fireworks, posting 42 points despite the absence of any birdies. His gross round of +11 still led Jon Baker by a single stroke in the Green Jacket race, but his Stableford advantage had shrunk from eight points to five. The pressure was mounting, and the cracks - though barely visible yet - were beginning to form.

Williams' 48-point explosion defined the round. His surge from holes 8-10 produced 12 points, anchored by a four-point hole at the ninth and a birdie at the tenth. That birdie on the par-4 10th - a rare three that felt like a small miracle given the day's carnage - capped a stretch from holes 6-11 that yielded 20 points and vaulted him from third to second in the standings. His gap to Mullin had been slashed from 11 points to five in a single round.

Alex Baker matched Williams' 45-point total with a performance split down the middle between heroism and horror. His birdie at the ninth gave him a five-point hole, and his 28-point front nine suggested he was building momentum. Then came the collapse: disasters at both the 16th (triple bogey, zero points) and 18th (another triple bogey) meant his back nine yielded just 17 points. He remained second overall at 86 points, but had failed to gain ground on Mullin.

Jon Baker's 45 points included an opening-hole birdie that provided four points, but like his namesake, he found disaster lurking in the closing stretch - a triple bogey at the 18th capping a round that felt better than its outcome suggested. More significantly for the Green Jacket race, his +10 gross gave him the round lead and elevated him to first in the gross standings overall.

Patterson's 35 points represented marginal improvement on his opening 29, though this qualified as progress only in the most charitable interpretation. His triple bogeys on holes 10, 11, and 13 told a story of relentless mediocrity punctuated by occasional disaster.

After Round 2: Mullin 91pts (+15 gross), Williams 86pts (+39), A. Baker 86pts (+51), J. Baker 82pts (+28), Neumann 69pts (+69), Patterson 64pts (+56). Mullin's lead had been halved, Williams had emerged as a genuine contender, and the tournament had compressed into something far more interesting than the opening round had suggested.

Round 3: The Championship Pivots

Five lead changes across 18 holes on the Palmares Alvor/Lagos course transformed this tournament from Mullin's coronation into a genuine contest. Alex Baker and Williams entered the final round tied at the top on 133 points each, while Mullin's catastrophic 31-point display - featuring triple bogeys on holes 9, 11, and 13 that yielded precisely zero points - dropped him to fifth in the Stableford despite his gross score keeping him in Green Jacket contention.

The chaos began immediately. Baker's triple bogey at the opening hole cost him three strokes and early momentum, while Jon Baker's identical disaster at the first delivered zero points and set the tone for his 35-point struggle. By the fourth hole, the lead had changed hands three times - Baker taking it briefly with four points, Williams seizing it, then Mullin's triple bogey opening the door for Baker to reclaim it at the sixth with another four-pointer.

Mullin's Round 3 implosion stands as one of the great collapses in TEG history. After leading the Trophy race for two rounds, his stretch from holes 8-13 yielded just five points as the triple bogeys mounted. His zero at the ninth lost him the Stableford lead immediately. The triple at the 11th was merely painful; the one at the 13th felt fatal. He salvaged some dignity with birdies at the 15th and 17th, but a quadruple bogey at the 18th (zero points again) capped a round that began with him leading by five and ended with him in fifth place, 14 points off the pace.

Baker's consistency through the middle stretch - 18 points from holes 2-7 despite the opening disaster - kept him in contention even when his own quintuple bogey at the 13th (zero points) briefly handed the lead back to Williams. That disaster might have broken a lesser player, but Baker's four-pointer at the 17th steadied his nerve and set up the tightest possible final-round scenario.

Williams posted 47 points through relentless steadiness rather than spectacular shotmaking. His birdie at the 17th matched both Mullin and Baker's in that hole, giving him four points and keeping him level with Baker heading to the final round. He'd led for just eight of the tournament's 72 holes to this point, but all the momentum appeared to be with him.

Patterson's 27 points featured a stretch from holes 12-14 where he scored precisely zero - disasters on all three - and extended his Wooden Spoon cushion to a margin that would require divine intervention to overcome.

After Round 3: A. Baker 133pts (+73 gross), Williams 133pts (+54), Mullin 122pts (+38), J. Baker 117pts (+48), Neumann 105pts (+98), Patterson 91pts (+92). Tied for the lead, four rounds completed, one to play. Everything would be decided back at Boavista.

Round 4: Baker's Record-Breaking Breakaway

Alex Baker's 51-point final round didn't just win him the Trophy - it established a new all-time TEG record for a single round and provided the most emphatic possible answer to the question of who deserved this title. His six-hole blitz from holes 5-10 produced 21 points and transformed a tied tournament into a one-horse race, with four-pointers at holes 6, 7, and 10 providing the knockout blows Williams simply couldn't answer.

Williams entered the day level on points but lost the Stableford lead at the very first hole with a bogey. He briefly reclaimed it with a birdie at the fifth - his fourth point there provided temporary hope - but Baker's response was swift and brutal. The four-pointer at the sixth coincided perfectly with Williams' quadruple bogey disaster at the same hole (zero points), and suddenly Baker led by six with 12 holes remaining.

The statistics from Baker's hot spell tell the story: 21 points from holes 5-10, featuring three four-point contributions and no disasters. This was consistency weaponized, patience rewarded, and the culmination of four rounds of progressive improvement. His lone disaster of the round came at the 15th - a triple bogey that felt almost obligatory given the week's pattern - but it barely mattered. His four-pointer at the 16th immediately restored order.

Mullin's 40-point round included a birdie at the 16th and secured his ninth Green Jacket by 12 strokes over Jon Baker, whose +15 gross gave him second place in a competition he'd briefly led after Round 2. But Mullin's Gross dominance couldn't compensate for his Stableford collapse - having led 68 of 72 holes in stroke play, he'd managed just 37 of 72 in the competition that actually mattered.

Williams and Jon Baker both posted 40 points, but Williams' second-place finish at 173 points represented career vindication - his first Trophy podium after years of solid but unspectacular performances. His quadruple bogey at the 18th (zero points) provided a disappointing finish to an otherwise remarkable week, but he'd done enough.

Patterson's 21-point horror show featured six disasters in the final round alone - zeros at holes 7, 8, 10, 17, and 18 - including a sextuple bogey at the eighth that pushed his gross score to territories best left unexplored. His tournament total of 112 points finished 32 points behind Neumann's 144, a margin that felt almost compassionate by comparison to the carnage it represented.

After Round 4: A. Baker 184pts (+90 gross), Williams 173pts (+76), Mullin 162pts (+51), J. Baker 157pts (+63), Neumann 144pts (+125), Patterson 112pts (+132). Trophy to Baker by 11 points, Green Jacket to Mullin by 12 strokes, Wooden Spoon to Patterson by margins better measured in psychological trauma than mere points.

Tournament Recap

Four rounds, four improvements. Alex Baker's ascent to his first TEG Trophy might be the most satisfying arc in tournament history - not because of dramatic comebacks or last-hole heroics, but because of the relentless, metronomic progression from good to better to excellent to record-breaking. His 41-45-47-51 sequence represented golf's equivalent of compound interest: small gains accumulating into an insurmountable advantage.

The split between Trophy and Green Jacket winners tells the real story of this tournament. Mullin's ninth Green Jacket came courtesy of dominating gross performance - 68 of 72 holes led in stroke play - but his Stableford implosion in Round 3 (49-42-31-40 across four rounds) meant the competition that actually matters in a handicapped tournament slipped away. There's poetry in that divergence: dominance in one format, collapse in another, all within the same 72 holes.

Williams' breakthrough to second place, Patterson's descent into Wooden Spoon infamy, and the dramatic Round 3 chaos that featured five lead changes all contributed to a tournament that justified the five-year wait to return to the Algarve. The Portuguese sun shone, the courses extracted their tribute, and Baker emerged with both a trophy and an all-time record. Some victories are seized; others are built hole by hole, round by round, point by methodical point. This was the latter, and all the more impressive for it.