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**First-Round Leaderboard**

Pos.	Name	Scores
T1	Braden Thornberry (CC)	65 (-7)
T1	Tag Ridings (PL)	64 (-7)
T3	Six players tied	(-6)

*\*CC – Crooked Cat, PL – Panther Lake*

[Full Leaderboard](#) | [Tee Times](#)

**Braden Thornberry and Tag Ridings tied after first round at Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament’s Final Stage**

**Winter Garden, Fla.**— For the second year in a row, former University of Mississippi standout Braden Thornberry earned a share of the first-round lead at the Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament’s Final Stage at 7-under. In 2018, Thornberry carded a 10-under 62 in the first round while still an amateur at Final Stage. The 22-year-old joined Tour veteran Tag Ridings at 7-under in soggy conditions.

“Anyone who says they’re not nervous – it means so much – everyone is going to be nervous,” said Thornberry, a former No. 1 amateur in the world. “Luckily, I’ve been able to get off to good starts at each one which makes it a lot easier. When you’re inside that number and you can play the way you’re supposed to instead of having to do anything extra, that’s huge.”

Beginning on Orange County National’s Crooked Cat course, Thornberry birdied his first two holes before making the turn at 3-under 33. He tallied birdies at the 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> and an eagle at the 14<sup>th</sup> to reach 7-under 65, one of 11 players to record a bogey-free first round.

“When you shoot 7-under obviously you make a couple of putts here and there,” said Thornberry. “On 14, I hit a driver and then 5-iron into about 70-feet and made that for eagle going up and over a ridge.”

Last year at Final Stage, Thornberry opened with a 62 but failed to record another round in the 60s before eventually finishing T74 and failing to secure guaranteed starts on Tour. While part of his struggles in 2018 could be attributed to his first experience at Final Stage, he also spent all week studying for exams.

“Last year, I think I took my last final on Tuesday of tournament week,” said Thornberry. “I played a practice round and took, I think, a psychology final. I had to do the ProctorU where

nobody is in the room and all that kind of stuff. This year, I can focus 100 percent on golf and that's the only thing that matter this week so that's a little refreshing."

Ridings, who estimated he had competed in the Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament 15 times, began the 2019 edition on the Panther Lake course at Orange County National. Starting on the 10<sup>th</sup> hole, the 45-year-old carded four birdies and a bogey on his first nine before adding four more birdies on a flawless second nine to reach a 7-under 64 on the par-71 Panther Lake course.

"I drove it really nicely...I hit a couple iron shots loose but made some good saves," said Ridings. "Basically, I putted fantastically. I got a new putter yesterday that seems to be very friendly."

Ridings added a new Piretti putter to his bag on Wednesday and credited his quick start to the new club. The University of Arkansas alum has made 206 starts on the Korn Ferry Tour in his career, including 26 top-10s and a victory at the 2002 Permian Basin Open.

Six players sit one shot off the lead at 6-under, while 3-under is currently the number to finish inside the top-40 (and earn guaranteed starts).

#### **THURSDAY NOTES:**

- \* Thursday's weather: Scattered showers, high of 77, winds E/NE 10-20 mph.
- \* Preferred lies were used during Thursday's round.
- \* This week's purse is \$480,000 with \$50,000 going to the medalist.
- \* The Final Stage of the Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament marks the last qualifying stage for the 2020 Korn Ferry Tour season with players competing for status on the 2020 Korn Ferry Tour. The medalist/co-medalist will secure fully exempt Korn Ferry Tour status, while finishers 2-10 (and ties) will secure starts for the first 12 events of the 2020 Regular Season. Finishers 11-40 (and ties) earn entry into the first eight events in 2020.
- \* Braden Thornberry, who hit 16 of 18 greens on Thursday, shares the first-round lead at Final Stage for the second consecutive year. In 2018, Thornberry held a share of the lead after the first round before finishing T74.
- \* After one round, Thornberry ranks T3 in putts per green in regulation after recording 26 putts on 16 greens.
- \* Tag Ridings, who has made 206 starts on the Korn Ferry Tour, hit 13 of 13 fairways at Orange County National's Panther Lake course.
- \* This year marks the first time since 2016 the Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament's Final Stage is being held at Orange County National. In 2016, Jim Renner took home medalist honors with a score of 17-under.
- \* Danny Walker, who took home medalist honors last year, sits T71 after posting a 1-under 71 on Thursday. Walker made nine cuts in 22 starts on the Korn Ferry Tour in 2019.
- \* Chase Koepka, the younger brother of Brooks Koepka, carded a first-round 72 and is currently T92.

\* Korn Ferry Tour veteran Vince India posted a 4-under 68 on Thursday. Last August, India double-bogeyed his final hole of the WinCo Foods Portland Open presented by KraftHeinz and failed to retain his 2020 Korn Ferry Tour status.

\* Alistair Docherty (T3,-6) fired a 7-under 29 on his first nine holes (Nos. 10-18) on the Panther Lake course Thursday.

**\*Orange County National Scoring Average:**

	Front	Back	Total	Cumulative
<b>Crooked Cat</b>				
<b>R1</b>	<b>35.169</b>	<b>35.468</b>	<b>70.636</b>	
<b>Panther Lake</b>				
<b>R1</b>	<b>35.221</b>	<b>34.610</b>	<b>69.831</b>	

*For highlights from today's round, or any 2019 event visit <http://bit.ly/kornferry2019video>*

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