

Second-Round Notes – Friday, April 2, 2021

Course Setup: Par 70 / 6,891 yards

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Second-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Andrew Novak	62-67—129 (-11)
2	David Lipsky	68-64—132 (-8)
T3	Adam Svensson	67-66—133 (-7)
	Josh Hart	66-67—133 (-7)
5	Stephan Jaeger	67-67—134 (-6)

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Andrew Novak's short game keeps him on top at Emerald Coast Classic at Sandestin

MIRAMAR BEACH, Fla. – After two rounds of the Emerald Coast Classic at Sandestin, the storylines atop the leaderboard are a beautiful reflection of what makes the Korn Ferry Tour special.

For a second consecutive day, Andrew Novak paces the field and is rediscovering the winning form derailed by last year's COVID-19 pandemic hiatus. Novak's three-stroke lead is the largest 36-hole lead since Dylan Wu carried a seven-shot lead into the weekend at The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay in January 2020. The Raleigh, North Carolina native followed Thursday's 8-under 62 with a 3-under 67 Friday morning. Novak had a mere 23 putts (one fewer than Thursday) and salvaged pars nine of the 10 times he missed a green in regulation.

"Not going to be able to keep doing that and shoot under par," Novak said of his ball striking. "My short game is what I would say is the strength of my game. It's good I've got that going. But, again, I'm going to have to hit the ball better than I did today."

Novak developed his short game and scrambling skills before he was even serious about golf. Nobody in his family played, so Novak's introduction to the game involved plastic balls and sweeping hook shots around the house.

"Before I started playing, started working at it, that's all I would do. That's what golf was," Novak said. "I'd take plastic balls, hit around the yard just feeling shots... or throw a ball into the woods and see if I could hit it into our yard without hitting a tree. I've always had pretty good hands as far as just getting the club on the ball, knowing what the ball is going to do when it hits, and having a good imagination.

"I take pride in being able to get those shots up and down some people might not expect you to."

Three shots behind Novak is David Lipsky, who birdied four of his first seven holes and closed with two more for a bogey-free 6-under 64, tied for the lowest round of the day. Lipsky collected his first Korn Ferry Tour win at last July's TPC San Antonio Challenge at the Canyons and could move into the top five of the points standings with a victory this week.

Tied for third and four strokes back is last week's winner, Adam Svensson, who graduated from the Korn Ferry Tour in 2018, admitted he lost his PGA TOUR card due to a lackluster work ethic, then completely rewired himself this past offseason for a run at another TOUR card. Svensson's 4-under 67 Friday was his ninth consecutive round in the 60s.

And rounding out the cluster of players within four shots of the lead is Josh Hart, a 36-year-old Monday qualifier with conditional Mackenzie Tour status who thought his career ended last spring. The Jupiter, Florida resident carded a 4-under 66 Thursday and a 3-under 67 Friday.

Hart graduated from Methodist University in Fayetteville, North Carolina and moved to Florida with aspirations of playing professional golf in 2007. He earned a Korn Ferry Tour start at the 2008 Miccosukee Championship, but would not make another PGA TOUR-sanctioned start until 2017 on the Mackenzie Tour.

In between those events, Hart worked as an assistant pro at Hobe Sound Golf Club for nearly four years before he returned to the Florida mini-tours. He's a 17-time winner on one mini-tour, even winning four times in a 50-day stretch earlier this year.

"It's been a slow road, I guess, but it's been fun," Hart said. "There have definitely been a lot of times where I thought it was kind of the end of the road. A lot of bad golf. But I kept wanting to stick it out, stick it out, and thought, eventually, things would kind of change. Since the beginning of this year, I've been playing pretty well. It seems like everything is snowballing now."

Amid some of the rough stretches, Hart admitted he looked at a number of online job postings. When the COVID-19 pandemic brought competitive sports to a halt last year, Hart figured his golfing career ended, too.

"There wasn't anything going on, wasn't playing that well at the time," Hart said. "Then I played a mini-tour event when they started back up in June or July down in south Florida as kind of a last hurrah. I ended up winning that tournament and continued on from there."

Now Hart finds himself in contention on the Korn Ferry Tour. While Hart conceded there were some nerves, he felt comfortable for the majority of his first 36 holes. And when asked about the highlight of his professional career to this point, Hart offered a concise response.

"This?" Hart said. "I don't know."

What a beautiful weekend it's going to be.

Third-round tee times will run from 7:20 a.m. to 12:40 p.m. local time Saturday off the first tee.

Friday Notes

- Weather: Sunny and breezy, high of 63 degrees, wind N/NE at 13-18 mph (gusts up to 23 mph)
- The 36-hole cut was made at 1-over par, with 66 professionals advancing to the weekend
- John VanDerLaan made his first hole-in-one as a Korn Ferry Tour player with a 5-iron at the 228-yard, par-3 16th
- Novak projects to jump from 30th to 13th in the Korn Ferry Tour points standings with a win; he is also looking to become the fifth 18-hole leader/co-leader to go on to win this season
- Novak is a 36-hole leader for the first time in his Korn Ferry Tour career
- Prior to this week, Lipsky never sat higher than T4 after 36 holes of play on the Korn Ferry Tour
- Svensson is looking to become the first player to win consecutive tournaments on the Korn Ferry Tour since Michael Putnam in 2013 (El Bosque Mexico Championship by INNOVA, Mid-Atlantic Championship)
- Stephan Jaeger (5th / -6), who played on the PGA TOUR last week at the Corales Puntacana Resort & Club Championship, has five top-10s in his last eight Korn Ferry Tour starts
- There were seven bogey-free rounds carded Friday – Matt Atkins (66), Erik Barnes (65), Paul Haley II (67), Jaeger (67), David Kocher (65), Lipsky (64), and Mito Pereira (64)
- Friday's low round was a 6-under 64 carded by Lipsky, Pereira, and Joshua Creel
- Hart led the five Monday qualifiers who made the 36-hole cut
- This week's purse is \$600,000 with \$108,000 going to the champion; the champion will also receive 500 Korn Ferry Tour points
- The Emerald Coast Classic at Sandestin is the fourth event of 2021 and the 27th of the 2020-21 combined season
- The combined 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour schedule will conclude with 25 PGA TOUR cards awarded in August at the 2021 Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Aetna, with an additional 25 cards awarded at the conclusion of the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Finals

Second-Round Course Statistics

- Toughest Hole – No. 11, Par 4, 522 yards (4.362 – six birdies, 42 bogeys, nine double bogeys or worse)
- Easiest Hole – No. 17, Par 5, 546 yards (4.612 – six eagles, 70 birdies, 20 bogeys or worse)
- Scoring Average (Front 9) – 35.257
- Scoring Average (Back 9) – 34.914
- Scoring Average (Total) – 70.171

Cumulative Course Statistics

- Scoring Average (Front 9) – 36.321
- Scoring Average (Back 9) – 35.220
- Scoring Average (Total) – 71.541