

First-Round Notes – Thursday, April 15, 2021

Course Setup: Par 72 / 7,112 yards

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First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Kevin Dougherty	66 (-6)
2	Sam Saunders	67 (-5)
T3	Six tied at	68 (-4)

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Kevin Dougherty takes one-stroke lead after first round at MGM Resorts Championship at Paiute

LAS VEGAS – Teeing off in the second tee time of the day, Kevin Dougherty posted a 6-under 66 on Thursday to claim the 18-hole lead heading into the second round of the MGM Resorts Championship at Paiute. Dougherty leads Sam Saunders by one stroke at the Paiute Golf Resort’s Sun Mountain course.

With consistent wind of 15-20 miles per hour through the day, the first-round scoring average finished at more than a stroke over par (73.026).

“This morning when we got here at 5:30, it felt like it was 25 degrees,” laughed Dougherty. “I think for everyone on the range it was the coldest we’ve ever been. That part was tough, the warm-up was tough. I didn’t really pack for this weather so I was a little short-handed. But it turns into more of a survival game and just hitting certain shots rather than playing the perfect round of golf.”

Dougherty carded two eagles, the only player in the field to do so on Thursday, to distance himself from the field. Starting at the 10th, the Oklahoma State alum turned at 1-under before tallying two eagles, two birdies and a bogey on his second nine to reach 6-under.

“I definitely used my length to my advantage,” said Dougherty, who ranks sixth on Tour in driving distance. “There are probably not a lot of guys that can reach the third hole [in two], so being able to have an eagle putt there, and then converting was big. Getting the one on No. 7 was a bonus. It was a left pin with a left-to-right pin, so it was tough to get to. I made about a 50-footer.”

The 29-year-old entered the week 53rd in the Korn Ferry Tour points standings and has been steadily climbing over his last five starts. He was 134th in the standings prior to the stretch but has ascended with finishes of 2nd-MC-T36-T16-T10 in his last five starts.

Dougherty credited a renewed commitment to putting to his recent streak, especially over the past two months.

“Putting is something I’ve worked on a bunch ever since the mini-break after Sarasota,” said Dougherty. “I’ve been grinding really hard on putting and it’s become a strength. With good greens like these, if you get it started online, it’s got a good chance of going in.”

Monday qualifier Sam Saunders, the grandson of Arnold Palmer, fired a 5-under 67 to sit one stroke back while six players are T3 at 4-under 68. Saunders gained entry into the field after a 64 at Las Vegas National Golf Club on Monday.

Second-round tee times will run from 6:30 a.m. to 1:51 p.m. on Friday off of the first and 10th tees.

Thursday Notes

- Thursday’s weather: Sunny and windy with a high of 72 degrees and wind NW at 15-20 mph with gusts up to 27 mph
- The MGM Resorts Championship at Paiute is the fifth event of 2021 and the 28th of the 2020-21 combined season; Dougherty would project to move inside the top-20 with a win; four of 27 first-round leaders/co-leaders have gone on to win this season
- Dougherty hit just eight of 18 greens in regulation, but went eight for 10 in scrambling and finished with just 22 putts; the 22 putts set a new career-low in a round, replacing his previous career-low of 23 at the TPC San Antonio Championship at the Oaks last summer
- Max Greyserman (-4, T3) fired the only bogey-free round on Thursday
- Harry Hall (-4, T3) led the contingent of Las Vegas residents in the field
- Davis Riley (-3, T9) sits inside the top-10 early in his bid to earn his third Korn Ferry Tour win and immediate promotion to the PGA TOUR
- Mark Baldwin (+1, T79) got into the field as first alternate on Thursday morning when Matt Every withdrew
- 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 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

First-Round Course Statistics

- Toughest Hole – Par-3 14th (3.429)
- Easiest Hole – Par-5 16th (4.365)
- Scoring Average (Front 9) – 36.699
- Scoring Average (Back 9) – 36.327
- Scoring Average (Total) – 73.026