

## First-Round Notes – Thursday, May 6, 2021

*Note: The first round was suspended due to lightning at 5:37 p.m. local time, and resumed at 7 a.m. Friday morning. The afternoon wave's final groups completed 10 holes prior to the suspension. This recap was updated Friday morning to reflect the completion of the first round.*

**Course Setup:** Par 72 / 7,368 yards

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### Partial First-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
T1	Stephan Jaeger	65 (-7)
	Austin Smotherman	65 (-7)
3	Mito Pereira	67 (-5)
T4	Eight Tied	68 (-4)

### Quick Links

- [Leaderboard](#)
- [Tee Times](#)
- [Tournament Media Site](#) (interviews and other resources available for download)

### Stephan Jaeger, Austin Smotherman share 18-hole lead at Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation

**COLLEGE GROVE, Tenn.** – A par save turned into the momentum-building moment of the morning for Stephan Jaeger and Austin Smotherman. Jaeger got up and down from a tricky spot near No. 1 green, while Smotherman escaped a greenside bunker at the par-4 12th, the opening round's second-toughest hole at The Grove. Jaeger and Smotherman carded matching 7-under 65s to share the 18-hole lead at the Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation.

Playing in the first group off the 10th tee at 6:45 a.m., and with temperatures in the 40s, Jaeger parred the first four holes of the day. The University of Tennessee-Chattanooga alum rattled off three straight birdies as the sun broke through the morning's light cloud cover, threw in another at the par-5 18th, made his key par save at No. 1, and drained four more birdies on the front nine. A three-putt bogey at No. 9, however, capped the day on a sour note.

"Once the sweater came off on No. 14, I started making some birdies, warmed up nicely, and got into a roll," Jaeger said. "I played solid, kept it in play, putted good. I made some really good swings on par 5s that gave me some pretty good eagle looks. I'm happy with it."

Jaeger, a native of Munich, Germany and current Chattanooga resident, won a month ago at the Emerald Coast Classic at Sandestin. It was the sixth victory of his Korn Ferry Tour career, moving him within one win of Jason Gore's all-time record. It was also Jaeger's second win of the 2020-21 season, and a third would earn him an immediate promotion to the PGA TOUR.

In three starts since the win in Miramar Beach, Florida, Jaeger has two missed cuts and a T37 finish.

“I think I’ve paid my dues missing some cuts,” Jaeger said. “You’re coming off a win, and you’re not missing a golf shot. Your expectations have to be totally different going into the week. New golf course, new sightlines, different greens, different green speeds. It’s really hard to adjust that quickly.

“There is so much golf left this week, but you ask any of the guys who’ve won twice, it’s in the forefront of their minds,” continued Jaeger, who is ranked No. 1 in the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour points standings and is one of five players already over the 1,700-point threshold the Korn Ferry Tour is currently using as its fail-safe number for players to finish inside of the top 25 and earn PGA TOUR cards. “The good thing is, I’ll be on TOUR no matter what at the beginning of September. It would expedite what I’m trying to do, and it gives you a chance to get in the (FedExCup) Playoffs and try to change your status a little bit for the next year.

“But, like I said, there is so much golf left. I’m not thinking too far ahead for now.”

Smotherman made the first of his seven birdies (against zero bogeys) at No. 2, a 539-yard par 5. The Loomis, California native closed the front nine with three consecutive birdies, then carded back-to-back birdies at Nos. 14 and 15. Smotherman finished his day with an 86-yard approach into the par-5 18th which stuck three inches shy of the cup for a tap-in birdie.

“I said, ‘Get down!’ Maybe talked too much to my ball there,” Smotherman said. “The big momentum saver was definitely No. 12. Caught the (greenside) bunker and hit it to 6-7 feet and made the par. After that, hit a good shot on the par 3 and made par, hit one in there to five feet (for birdie) on the next, eight feet (for birdie) on the next, a couple good pars (at Nos. 16 and 17) coming in, and then No. 18.”

Smotherman has four top-10 finishes since his first Korn Ferry Tour start in January 2019, with the most recent being a solo fourth last July at the TPC San Antonio Championship at the Oaks.

A Southern Methodist University alum, Smotherman is a top-15 player on Tour this season in driving accuracy percentage (10th) and greens in regulation percentage (12th).

“If you ask some of my college teammates, I was always the guy who hit first in our practice rounds,” Smotherman said. “Our coach would say, ‘Hit it at that tree.’ I’d hit it at the tree, we’d see if that was the right spot and the whole team would try and follow that. Even with Bryson (DeChambeau) being on the team; he’s pretty accurate.”

Jaeger and Smotherman also made par at No. 3, a par 3 which measured 173 yards for the first round and produced 11 double bogeys and another nine triple bogeys or worse, including a 13. It ended the round as the toughest hole on the course relative to par.

“The water protects the front of the green... if you hit it in the back bunker, I don’t think there’s a way to stop it on the green,” Jaeger said. “I’m glad they moved (the tee) up, because that back tee would be pretty brutal. It gets your attention. It’s one of those golf holes where you’d take three four days in a row.”

### Thursday Notes

- Jaeger would extend his lead in the Korn Ferry Tour points standings with a win, while a victory for Smotherman projects to move him from 55th to 19th
- Jaeger has led or co-led after 18 holes three times in his career, converting one into a win, but finishing outside the top 35 in the other two
  - The win came at the 2016 Ellie Mae Classic at TPC Stonebrae, where he carded the lowest round in Korn Ferry Tour history (a 12-under 58 in the opening round)
  - Jaeger's last 18-hole lead was at the 2020 Utah Championship presented by Zions Bank, where his 8-under 63 earned him a share of the lead
- Jaeger's 65 is his lowest score since a final-round 6-under 65 at March's Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by MISTRAS, while it is his lowest score to par since a 7-under 64 in the first round of the 2020 Orange County National Championship presented by Knight 39 last October
- Smotherman's 65 ties the fourth-lowest score of his Korn Ferry Tour career, and is his fourth round of 65 or better in his last five starts
- Smotherman's highest finish on the Korn Ferry Tour was a T3 at the 2019 Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail Championship
- Smotherman has co-led after 18 holes once in his Korn Ferry Tour career; he shot a 6-under 66 for a share of the lead at the 2020 TPC San Antonio Championship at the Oaks
- **Mito Pereira** (3rd / -5) is back in contention after falling to **Paul Barjon** (T133 / +4) in a three-way playoff at last week's Huntsville Championship
- University of Tennessee alum **David Skinns** shot a 4-under 68 and sits T4
- Austin Peay State University alum **Erik Barnes** shot a 4-under 68 and sits T4
- With a two-way T14 finish or better, **Lee Hodges** (T4 / -4) would cross the 1,700-point threshold the Korn Ferry Tour is currently using as its fail-safe number for players to finish inside the top 25
- Six bogey-free rounds were carded – Smotherman (65), Pereira (67), **KK Limbhaust** (68), **Tyson Alexander** (69), **Kevin Roy** (70), **Ryan Ruffels** (70)
- Weather: Partly cloudy with a high of 69 degrees, light and variable wind
- 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 Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation is the eighth event of 2021 and the 31st 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

### First-Round Course Statistics

- **Toughest Hole** – No. 3, Par 3, 173 yards (3.439 – 14 birdies, 21 bogeys, 20 double bogeys or worse)
- **Easiest Hole** – No. 2, Par 5, 539 yards (4.641 – 4 eagles, 62 birdies, 15 bogeys or worse)
- **Scoring Average (Front 9)** – 36.735
- **Scoring Average (Back 9)** – 36.000
- **Scoring Average (Total)** – 72.735