

Second-Round Notes – Friday, May 7, 2021

Course Setup: Par 72 / 7,368 yards

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Second-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Austin Smotherman	65-69—134 (-10)
2	Stephan Jaeger	65-70—135 (-9)
T3	Andrew Novak	71-65—136 (-8)
	Paul Haley II	68-68—136 (-8)
T5	David Skinns	68-69—137 (-7)
	Carl Yuan	70-67—137 (-7)

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Austin Smotherman embraces nerves, takes solo lead at Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation

COLLEGE GROVE, Tenn. – All progress takes place outside the comfort zone.

Those were the words Austin Smotherman wrote in his yardage book Friday, a nod to the fact he'd only held a share of an 18-hole lead once in three years on the Korn Ferry Tour. A relatively stress-free 3-under 69 in the second round gave Smotherman the second 36-hole lead of his career, pushing him one stroke ahead of University of Tennessee-Chattanooga alum Stephan Jaeger at the Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation.

Smotherman knocked a 135-yard approach shot to three feet and tapped in for birdie on his opening hole, the par-4 10th. A bogey at the 12th brought him back to even, but birdies at the 14th and 18th took him to 9-under for the tournament and into a tie for first place with Jaeger. Much like Thursday's opening round, a scrambling par (this time at No. 1) kept the momentum going.

The Loomis, California native hit a toe hook off the tee and found tree trouble up the left side. After a flop-cut 8-iron came up 35 yards short of the flag, Smotherman pitched up the slope in an attempt to salvage a four. It did not roll it far enough. Well, not far enough forward.

"I hit this low skipper that gets to the top of the hill and starts trickling down," Smotherman said. "I took out my putter, fixed my pitch mark, walked around the green, and my ball is still rolling. I ended up on the fringe, almost in a sprinkler head. We're playing the ball up, so I got to move it closer to the green on the fringe edge at about 45 feet. At this point, I'm thinking auto five. And it ends up going in. Unreal putt, breaking six feet up the hill. I was blown away that putt went in."

Smotherman's unlikely par at No. 1 was the first of seven in a row. The streak was not due to a lack of quality birdie looks, though. Putt after putt from 6-8 feet rolled toward the edge of the cup and dove off at the last moment. Finally, Smotherman poured in a 15-footer for birdie at the par-4 8th, The Grove's third-toughest hole Friday, and took sole possession of the lead at 10-under par.

"I was not trying to make a three," Smotherman said. "I think I started walking after it just begging it to go in."

Smotherman, who played collegiately at Southern Methodist University, has just one bogey through 36 holes, a feat accomplished by only one other player this week. He is also tied for the lead in greens in regulation (29 of 36) and tied for second in fairways hit (26 of 28).

Given the fact the only other 36-hole lead of his career was at last July's TPC San Antonio Championship at the Oaks (he eventually finished solo fourth), Smotherman knows there will be nerves as he plays alongside Jaeger in Saturday's final pairing.

Smotherman isn't worried, though. His trusty yardage book will be right in his back pocket.

"If you get uncomfortable out there, it'll settle you down," Smotherman said. "Just embracing it... enjoy it. Why not?"

Friday's other prominent storyline was 17-year-old amateur Cameron Tankersley. The Dickson County (Tenn.) High School junior made three consecutive birdies on Nos. 15-17 and parred his final hole, the par-5 18th, to move to 1-under par for the tournament and safely make the 36-hole cut.

Tankersley got off to a double bogey-birdie-double bogey start, but made two more birdies and a bogey to turn at 2-over par. He shot a bogey-free 3-under 33 on the back nine.

"It was a lot of fun the last couple holes," Tankersley said. "The last four holes, I don't know what was going on. I was just out there playing, just being myself. I loved every minute of it."

Third-round pairings will run from 6:40 a.m. to 1:05 p.m. local time Saturday off the first tee.

Friday Notes

- The 36-hole cut was made at even par; 78 professionals and an amateur advanced to the weekend
- With a win, Smotherman projects to go from 55th to 19th in the Korn Ferry Tour points standings
- Smotherman's 10-under 134 is the lowest 36-hole score of his career relative to par, and it matches the second-lowest 36-hole score of his career, one shot behind his 9-under 133 from the Orange County National Championship presented by Knight 39 last October
- **Stephan Jaeger** (2nd / -9), a Chattanooga resident, is seeking his third win of the season for immediate promotion to the PGA TOUR; he has six career Korn Ferry Tour wins, one shy of Jason Gore's all-time record
 - Jaeger carded a 2-under 70 Friday and was five of eight scrambling
- **Andrew Novak** (T3 / -8) shot a 7-under 65, matching **Brent Grant** (T11 / -5) and **Bryson Nimmer** (T11 / -5) for the lowest score of the day

- Novak holed a 129-yard approach with a pitching wedge for an eagle at the par-4 16th, and later added a tap-in eagle at the par-5 2nd for the third round of his Korn Ferry Tour career with multiple eagles; he also holed a bunker shot for birdie at the par-3 5th
- Novak has top-10 finishes in the last four Korn Ferry Tour events, and a fifth consecutive top-10 this week would match **Will Zalatoris** for the season's longest streak
 - Zalatoris' top-10 streak was five consecutive starts, but across six Korn Ferry Tour events, starting with the Korn Ferry Challenge at TPC Sawgrass (June 11-14) and running through the TPC San Antonio Championship at the Oaks (July 15-18); he did not play the TPC San Antonio Challenge at the Canyons (July 9-12)
- University of Tennessee alum **David Skinnis** (T5 / -7) carded a 3-under 69 Friday
- Middle Tennessee State University alum and Murfreesboro resident **Kent Bulle** (T7 / -6) fired a 6-under 66 to climb 46 spots and move into the top 10
- Austin Peay State University alum **Erik Barnes** (T11 / -5) shot a 1-under 71 and fell seven places
- With a two-way T14 finish or better, **Lee Hodges** (T11 / -5) 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
- Cameron Tankersley was the only Monday qualifier (of eight) who survived the 36-hole cut
- Eight bogey-free rounds were carded in the second round, while six were posted in the first round
- Weather: Partly cloudy with a high of 68 degrees and wind NW at 4-18 mph
- 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

Second-Round Course Statistics

- **Toughest Hole** – No. 3, Par 3, 210 yards (3.416 – 8 birdies, 46 bogeys, 11 double bogeys or worse)
- **Easiest Hole** – No. 2, Par 5, 539 yards (4.641 – 7 eagles, 72 birdies, 14 bogeys or worse)
- **Scoring Average (Front 9)** – 36.636
- **Scoring Average (Back 9)** – 35.506
- **Scoring Average (Total)** – 72.143

Cumulative Course Statistics

- **Toughest Hole** – No. 3, Par 3, 210 yards (3.427 – 22 birdies, 67 bogeys, 31 double bogeys or worse)
- **Easiest Hole** – No. 2, Par 5, 539 yards (4.689 – 11 eagles, 134 birdies, 29 bogeys or worse)
- **Scoring Average (Front 9)** – 36.686
- **Scoring Average (Back 9)** – 35.753
- **Scoring Average (Total)** – 72.439