

Third-Round Notes – Saturday, May 8, 2021

Course Setup: Par 72 / 7,368 yards

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Third-Round Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
T1	Brent Grant	74-65-64—203 (-13)
	Austin Smotherman	65-69-69—203 (-13)
T3	David Skinnis	68-69-67—204 (-12)
	Carl Yuan	70-67-67—204 (-12)
5	Paul Haley II	68-68-69—205 (-11)

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Brent Grant heats up, ties Austin Smotherman for lead at Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation

COLLEGE GROVE, Tenn. – Brent Grant’s game is spicier than a plate of Nashville-style hot chicken, while Austin Smotherman is staying cool, calm and collected, hitting fairways and throwing darts into The Grove’s elevated greens. Although their games and demeanors are practically polar opposites, Grant and Smotherman find themselves tied atop the leaderboard with matching 13-under 203s through three rounds at the Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation.

Grant fired the lowest round of the tournament, a bogey-free 8-under 64, which tied the lowest score of his Korn Ferry Tour career (and was actually a career-low score relative to par). A rookie making his 27th start, Grant opened the week with a 2-over 74 and stood T96 prior to a 7-under 65 – highlighted by a flawless 5-under 31 on the back nine – Friday evening. Grant has played bogey-free golf the last 30 holes, and he is 16-under par in his last 35 holes.

“It wasn’t anything incredibly impressive,” Grant said of his 64 Saturday. “Yesterday I stuffed a couple and got it going a little bit. Today was just steady. Made some really good putts early on, played it smart.”

Grant held the outright 36-hole lead at February’s LECOM Suncoast Classic, but lost his form on the weekend, finished T5 (his highest finish to date), and missed four of his next six cuts. This week, Grant is tied for second in the field in birdies (18) and one of three players with multiple eagles.

“This game is fickle,” Grant said. “I had a bit of a swing issue after the three weeks off. Just couldn’t quite get it in line. I’ve been finding a bit of rhythm each and every day just trying to make micro-improvements, and fortunately this week I’ve been able to minimize mistakes and capitalize on some of the opportunities.”

Smotherman shared the 18-hole lead with Stephan Jaeger after a bogey-free 7-under 65, followed it up with a 3-under 69 for the outright lead Friday, and carded another 3-under 69 Saturday to once again share the top spot on the leaderboard.

The Loomis, California native only had one bogey in his first 36 holes, but made three Saturday. Two of them were three-putt bogeys on the front nine. Still, Smotherman plugged away and fired approach after approach inside 10 feet. By the time Smotherman made the turn, he was even par with nothing to show for his ball striking. Smotherman turned to his yardage book and read his daily inscription: *when you focus on the good, the good gets better.*

“Just being positive. We could’ve been talking about how we were missing every 6-7-footer, but unreal to have that many looks inside 10 feet,” Smotherman said. “Called my mom (this morning) and told her what I put in it, too. She said, ‘I like what you wrote.’ It’s something I’m definitely going to keep doing. I’ve done it in the past. I don’t know why I stopped doing it. We’re our own coach out there.”

Putts which grazed the edge on the front nine fell on the back side for birdies at Nos. 10, 11, and 14. Following a bogey at No. 17, Smotherman lipped out an eagle chip at the par-5 18th and moved back to 13-under for the tournament with a tap-in birdie.

Smotherman, who leads the field in greens in regulation (45 of 54), has never held a 54-hole lead in his three years on the Korn Ferry Tour.

“I’m having a good time. Having the fans out, crossing some of these bridges, I feel like I’m a spectator out here. This is awesome,” Smotherman said. “The first hole is probably as uncomfortable as you’re going to be until you see what’s going on and how the course is playing, how other guys are playing. That’s the benefit of being in one of the last groups. You know what’s ahead of you and kind of control your own fate.”

Final-round tee times will be in threesomes and run from 7:30 a.m. to 9:46 a.m. local time Sunday off the first and 10th tees.

Saturday Notes

- With a win, Smotherman projects to go from 55th to 19th in the Korn Ferry Tour points standings, while a win for Grant projects to move him from 81st to 32nd
- Grant’s other 64s on the Korn Ferry Tour came at the 2020 Country Club de Bogota Championship (6-under in the first round) and the 2020 Utah Championship presented by Zions Bank (7-under in the final round)
- Prior to Saturday, Grant’s highest 54-hole position was T4 at February’s LECOM Suncoast Classic, while Smotherman’s was T2 at the 2020 TPC San Antonio Championship at the Oaks last July
- University of Tennessee alum **David Skinns** (T3 / -12) shot a 6-under 30 on the back nine and carded a 5-under 67 to climb into the top three; he leads the field with 20 birdies this week
 - Skinns is looking for his first top-15 finish since a solo fifth last July at the TPC San Antonio Challenge at the Canyons
- **Carl Yuan** (T3 / -12) carded a second consecutive 5-under 67 for his seventh score of 67 or better in his last 11 rounds
- Austin Peay State University alum **Erik Barnes** (T6 / -9) birdied two of his final three holes and posted a 4-under 68 to climb back into the top 10

- **Stephan Jaeger** (T6 / -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
- **Andrew Novak** (T6 / -9) 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)
- With a two-way T14 finish or better, **Lee Hodges** (T10 / -7) 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
- Middle Tennessee State University alum and Murfreesboro resident **Kent Bulle** (T16 / -6) shot an even-par 72 and fell nine places
- 17-year-old Dickson County (Tenn.) High School junior **Cameron Tankerley** (T31 / -4), the only Monday qualifier (of eight) to make the cut, shot a 3-under 69, highlighted by a hole-out eagle from 100 yards with a sand wedge at the par-5 11th
 - Tankerley's card featured five birdies (Nos. 2, 6, 9, 12, 14), an eagle, and three bogeys
- Four bogey-free rounds were carded – **Brent Grant** (64), **Joshua Creel** and **Peter Uihlein** (67), **David Kocher** (68)
- Weather: Mostly cloudy, high of 66 degrees, isolated showers possible, wind S/SW at 4-10 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

Third-Round Course Statistics

- **Toughest Hole** – No. 8, Par 4, 414 yards (4.443 – 5 birdies, 22 bogeys, 9 double bogeys)
- **Easiest Hole** – No. 2, Par 5, 539 yards (4.582 – 1 eagle, 37 birdies, 6 bogeys)
- **Scoring Average (Front 9)** – 36.620
- **Scoring Average (Back 9)** – 34.658
- **Scoring Average (Total)** – 71.278

Cumulative Course Statistics

- **Toughest Hole** – No. 3, Par 3, 210 yards (3.338 – 34 birdies, 76 bogeys, 32 double bogeys or worse)
- **Easiest Hole** – No. 2, Par 5, 539 yards (4.595 – 12 eagles, 171 birdies, 35 bogeys or worse)
- **Scoring Average (Front 9)** – 36.664
- **Scoring Average (Back 9)** – 35.388
- **Scoring Average (Total)** – 72.052