

## Second-Round Notes – Friday, February 11, 2022

**Host Course Setup:** Country Club de Bogota (Lagos) – Par 71 / 7,237 yards

**Satellite Course Setup:** Country Club de Bogota (Pacos) – Par 70 – 6,249 yards

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### Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Ben Griffin	68-61—129 (-12)
T2	Ryan McCormick	61-69—130 (-11)
	MJ Daffue	63-67—130 (-11)
T4	Rob Oppenheim	67-64—131 (-10)
	Vincent Norrman	66-65—131 (-10)
T6	Six Tied	132 (-9)

### Quick Links

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

### Ben Griffin takes 36-hole solo lead at Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard

**BOGOTA, Colombia** – In just his 13th career Korn Ferry Tour start since turning professional in 2018, and less than a year after stepping away from golf to work as a loan officer, Ben Griffin sits alone atop the leaderboard after 36 holes at the Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard. Griffin carded a 9-under 61 on Country Club de Bogota’s Pacos course Friday, taking him to 12-under par for the tournament and putting him one stroke ahead of Ryan McCormick and MJ Daffue.

Griffin began the second round in T36 position, but concluded it with his first lead of any kind on the Korn Ferry Tour.

A 25-year-old native of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Griffin made 10 birdies Friday, the most in a single round on the Korn Ferry Tour this season. It also marked Griffin’s best score in PGA TOUR-sanctioned play by three strokes, as his previous career-low round was an 8-under 64 in the final round of his win at the 2018 Staal Foundation Open presented by tbaytel on PGA TOUR Canada.

“Hit it very well. Actually hit it pretty good yesterday, too,” Griffin said. “Just staying patient yesterday and couldn’t quite get the putts to drop, then today the putter was very hot. Played my game, played a little bit of angle golf. It’s a shorter course, but you can short side yourself, so it’s important to be on the right side of the pins. I was able to do that, and made a lot of putts. That was the key today.”

Griffin teed off the 6,249-yard Pacos course on the par-4 10th, where he made birdie. He birdied every other hole (Nos. 12, 14, 16) before a bogey at the par-4 18th. Following the bogey, Griffin birdied the first four holes of his back nine and added two more at the par-5 seventh and par-4 ninth.

“I three-putted for bogey,” Griffin said of the 18th. “I was a little disappointed. That lit a fire in me to get going, because I knew there were a lot of birdie holes ahead.”

Griffin, who posted finishes of T8 and T12 in the Korn Ferry Tour’s season-opening events in The Bahamas, earned guaranteed starts for the first eight events via a T29 at the Final Stage of the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament. Ironically, the tournament which got Griffin back on Tour was far from his mind in the spring of 2021, when stepped away from golf due to a combination of burnout and financial stress. Griffin took a job as a loan officer for a mortgage group in North Carolina.

A highly-touted junior player and a multi-time All-America Honorable Mention at North Carolina, Griffin enjoyed immediate success on PGA TOUR Canada.

In Griffin’s first event, roughly a week after the 2018 NCAA Championships concluded on May 28, he finished solo fourth. A month later, Griffin won the Staal Foundation Open. He ended the season ranked eighth on the Order of Merit, with one of the biggest perks he earned being an exemption for the Final Stage of the Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament. A T100 finish there left Griffin without guaranteed starts for 2019.

Saddled with a low priority ranking number, Griffin split the 2019 season between Korn Ferry Tour (six missed cuts in eight starts) and PGA TOUR Canada (three missed cuts in four starts), but combined for less than \$4,000 in official money across both tours. After a failed run on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica (four missed cuts in four starts) for the 2020-21 season, Griffin became a loan officer.

“Before there was a lot more of me questioning myself and my belief, but when I was sitting at my desk thinking about how I was asking myself those questions a couple months prior, I was like, ‘Man, I am good enough!’” Griffin [told PGATOUR.com last November](#). “I just didn’t have that self-confidence and belief six months ago and now I’m realizing you’ve got it and you have everything you need.”

Now Griffin is 36 holes away from another significant change in career status.

“The tournament is not even close to over. A lot of golf left,” Griffin said. “I’ve been feeling really good about my golf game. I’m just trying to keep the patience and keep doing my thing.”

Third-round tee times will run from 7:30-9:31 a.m. ET off the first and 10th tees at the Lagos course.

### **Second-Round Notes**

- The 36-hole cut was made at 4-under par, with 71 players advancing to the weekend
- Eight of the 12 lowest scores relative to par Friday came from the Pacos course, compared to 11 of the 13 lowest scores relative to par Thursday coming from Pacos
- Nine bogey-free rounds were posted, with six coming on the Lagos course; Thursday’s first round featured four bogey-free rounds on each course
- **Ben Griffin’s** (1st / -12) highest position prior to the final round of a Korn Ferry Tour event was T13 after the first round of the 2022 The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club

- Griffin and **James Nicholas** (MC / -1) carded the lowest rounds of the day on Pacos with matching 9-under 61s, while Colombian **Ivan Camilo Ramirez** (T57 / -4) shot the low round of the day at the Lagos course, an 8-under 63
- Of the five Colombians in this week's field, only Medellin native **Nicolas Echavarria** (T24 / -6) and Camilo Ramirez survived the 36-hole cut
- **Ryan McCormick** (T2 / -11), one of the 18-hole co-leaders, shot a 2-under 69 at the Lagos course to reach 11-under 130, beating his previous career-low 36-hole score by two strokes
  - McCormick previously combined for a 10-under 132 at the 2021 Memorial Health Championship presented by LRS, and his lowest 36-hole score relative to par remains the 12-under 132 from the 2020 The King & Bear Classic at World Golf Village
- McCormick and **MJ Daffue** (T2 / -11) both achieved the highest 36-hole position of their Korn Ferry Tour careers
  - McCormick's previous high was T4 at the 2018 North Mississippi Classic, while Daffue's was solo third at the 2019 NV5 Invitational Presented by First Midwest Bank
- **Rob Oppenheim** (T4 / -10) carded five consecutive birdies on Nos. 6-10 of the Lagos course en route to a 7-under 64, his lowest round in PGA TOUR-sanctioned play since a 7-under 64 at the 2020 Shriners Children's Open
- **Vincent Norrman** (T4 / -10) was bogey-free through 16 holes but logged a bogey-birdie finish for a 6-under 65 at the Lagos course; his round also featured an eagle at the par-5 10th
  - Norrman finished T2 at Final Stage of the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament to earn guaranteed starts for the first 12 events of the 2022 season; he has a T12 and T23 the last two events
- Four of the final eight players who gained entry to the 156-player field on their priority ranking number made the cut – No. 150 **Trace Crowe** (T6 / -9), No. 151 **Tee-K Kelly** (T6 / -9), No. 149 **Jay Card III** (T24 / -6), No. 156 **Tanner Gore** (T39 / -5)
  - Crowe was a two-time All-Southeastern Conference Second Team selection at Auburn University; his only other PGA TOUR-sanctioned starts were missed cuts at the 2021 The Fuzzy Zoeller Classic at Covered Bridge Golf Club on Forme Tour and 2017 Barbasol Championship
  - Kelly's only previous Korn Ferry Tour start came at the 2018 Rust-Oleum Championship, where he missed the cut
  - Card's missed cut at last week's The Panama Championship marked his first PGA TOUR-sanctioned start
  - Gore's only previous PGA TOUR-sanctioned start was a missed cut at the Korn Ferry Tour's 2019 TPC Colorado Championship at Heron Lakes
- **Chip McDaniel** (T57 / -4) was the only one of the four open qualifiers who made the cut
- The Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard is the fourth of 23 regular season events on the 26-event 2022 Korn Ferry Tour schedule; the first set of 25 PGA TOUR cards will be awarded at the regular season finale, the Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Aetna (August 11-14), and an additional 25 TOUR cards will be awarded following the three-event Korn Ferry Tour Finals, which conclude with the Korn Ferry Tour Championship presented by United Leasing & Finance (September 1-4)
- This week's purse is \$750,000, with \$135,000 going to the champion; the champion will also receive 500 Korn Ferry Tour points
  - All 2022 Korn Ferry Tour regular season events feature a minimum purse of \$750,000, a 25 percent increase from last season, and will boast minimum purses of \$1 million in 2023 for a [total increase of 66.7 percent](#) from 2021 to 2022