



Pre-Tournament Notes – LECOM Suncoast Classic

On-Site PGA TOUR Media Contacts: Zach Dirlam, 517-262-5109, ZachDirlam@pgatourhq.com

Hagan Parkman, 817-983-3251, HaganParkman@pgatourhq.com

Preston Edwards, 904-294-3724, PrestonEdwards@pgatourhq.com

Dates: February 17-20, 2022

Where: Lakewood Ranch, Florida

Course: Lakewood National Golf Club – Commander (Par 71 / 7,113 yards)

Course Designer: Arnold Palmer (2017)

Field: 144 players

Defending Champion: Hayden Buckley

Purse: \$750,000 (\$135,000/winner)

Format: 72-hole stroke play

Quick Links

- [Title Sponsor Extension Announcement](#)
- [Tournament Media Site](#)
- [Inside the Field](#)
- [Tee Times](#)

Things to Know

- On January 25, 2022, the Korn Ferry Tour and Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine announced a three-year extension (through 2026) of the annual event
- The LECOM Suncoast Classic, hosted by Lakewood National Golf Club's Commander course since its inaugural playing in 2019, is the fifth tournament of the 26-event 2022 Korn Ferry Tour schedule and the first in the United States, as the Tour opened the season four international events
 - Twenty-five PGA TOUR cards will be awarded to the top-25 players in the Korn Ferry Tour standings following the conclusion of the 23-event regular season at the Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Aetna (August 11-14)
 - Another 25 PGA TOUR cards will be awarded through the three-event Korn Ferry Tour Finals at the conclusion of the Korn Ferry Tour Championship presented by United Leasing & Finance (September 1-4)
- The 2022 Korn Ferry Tour season is following an unprecedented 46-event combined 2020-21 season
 - The LECOM Suncoast Classic was one of 12 events played in 2020 and 2021
- Last season's champions Andrew Novak (2020) and Hayden Buckley (2021) both earned their first PGA TOUR cards at season's end, with Novak finishing No. 16 in the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings, and Buckley finishing No. 7 in the Korn Ferry Tour Finals
- Buckley, the reigning champion, won last year's event after he began Thursday morning as the first alternate; he arrived at 6 a.m., gained entry into the field 15 minutes before a 7:17 a.m. tee time, shot a bogey-free 3-under 68 in the first round, and eventually won the tournament with a 10-foot birdie putt on the first hole of a playoff against **Taylor Montgomery** and **Dawson Armstrong**
 - Montgomery finished No. 26 in the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings, missing a PGA TOUR card by a single spot; he would have finished No. 18 had he won the playoff
 - Montgomery also missed a PGA TOUR card by one spot in the Korn Ferry Tour Finals, as he once again finished No. 26
- Montgomery, just over two weeks removed from a T11 at the PGA TOUR's Farmers Insurance Open, starred at this event last season, posting a solo third in 2020 and a T2 in 2021
- **Mark Hubbard**, who won the 2019 LECOM Suncoast Classic, is the only past champion in the field; his 26-under 262 remains the 72-hole tournament scoring record

- **Albin Choi**, who Monday qualified into last year's field and tied the 18-hole tournament scoring record with a first-round 9-under 62 last year, is playing this week via Korn Ferry's sponsor exemption
 - Choi was the 2013 Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year and 2013 All-America Second Team selection as a junior at North Carolina State University, where he won nine individual titles
 - Across seven years (2013-19) and 110 starts, Choi had just six top-10s and lost Korn Ferry Tour status following the 2019 season, leaving him financially unable to continue his career; he quit professional golf and caddied six days a week (oftentimes 36 holes per day) at Old Palm Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida
 - Choi caddied for Sungjae Im, who he'd befriended in their 2018 season together on the Korn Ferry Tour, at the 2020 Honda Classic, Im's first PGA TOUR win, and remained on the bag until the 2020 BMW Championship, after which Choi resumed his own playing career
- Last week's winner, **Brandon Matthews**, is 134 points away (equivalent to a solo fourth or higher finish) from crossing the 900-point threshold the Korn Ferry Tour is currently using to declare players #TOURBound

Field Notes (as of 2/15/22)

- Field includes 45 past Korn Ferry Tour winners with 58 total wins, led by **Tommy Gainey** and **Heath Slocum** with three apiece
- Field includes 13 past PGA TOUR winners with 24 total victories, led by **Aaron Baddeley**, **Sean O'Hair**, and **Heath Slocum** with four apiece
- The first four champions of the 2022 season are in the field:
 - **Akshay Bhatia** – The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay
 - **Brandon Harkins** – The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at the Abaco Club
 - **Carson Young** – The Panama Championship
 - **Brandon Matthews** – Astara Golf Club Championship presented by Mastercard
- Field includes 13 winners from the 2020-21 season: **Tyson Alexander**, **Joshua Creel**, **Roberto Díaz**, **Brett Drewitt**, **Tommy Gainey**, **Harry Hall**, **Evan Harmeling**, **David Kocher**, **Curtis Luck**, **Chad Ramey**, **Peter Uihlein**, **Jared Wolfe**, and **Brandon Wu**
- **Seonghyeon Kim**, making his fifth start of the season, is the only Korn Ferry Tour member sitting inside the top 200 of the Official World Golf Ranking; he is No. 190 this week despite consecutive missed cuts
- Field features 45 players in the field who finished in the top 75 of the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings, including 16 players who finished 40th or higher
- Five conditional members join the field this week by virtue of their top-10 finishes at last week's Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard: **Rob Oppenheim** (T5), **Marcus Montenegro** (T5), **MJ Daffue** (T9), **Tee-K Kelly** (T9) and **Jay Card III** (T9)
 - The top-10s marked career-high finishes for everyone except Oppenheim
- Eight players gained entry via open qualifying led by Laurel Oak Country Club site medalist **Brian Richey**, who shot a 9-under 63, as well as the four co-medalists who survived a 5-for-4 playoff at the Esplande at Azario Lakewood Ranch site
- **Cayden Pope**, a 17-year-old high schooler from Lexington, Kentucky and an Auburn University verbal commitment, is the only amateur in the field; he is playing via a sponsor exemption

2021 LECOM Suncoast Classic Recap (February 18-21)

Pos.	Player	R1	R2	R3	R4	Total
1	Hayden Buckley	68	65	68	70	271 (-13)
T2	Dawson Armstrong	66	70	68	67	271 (-13)
	Taylor Montgomery	66	70	68	67	271 (-13)
4	Billy Kennerly	66	67	68	71	272 (-12)
T5	Brent Grant	65	66	72	70	273 (-11)
	Dan McCarthy	64	74	67	68	273 (-11)

- From first alternate Thursday morning, to a birdie on the first playoff hole Sunday, Hayden Buckley earned his first Korn Ferry Tour win and later secured his first PGA TOUR card via the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Finals

- **Dawson Armstrong** and **Taylor Montgomery** tied the lowest final round with 5-under 67s, which earned both of them a spot in a three-man playoff against Buckley
- Armstrong's T2 remains his career-high finish across 48 Korn Ferry Tour starts
- Montgomery's T2 was one of three he posted last season, with the others coming at the 2020 Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship and 2021 Utah Championship presented by Zions Bank
- Billy Kennerly carried the 54-hole lead into the final round and held a two-stroke lead on the 17th tee box; he double bogeyed the 17th, bogeyed the 18th, and missed the playoff entirely
 - The solo fourth marked Kennerly's career-high finish until a T2 at the 2021 Huntsville Championship, where he lost in a three-man playoff
- In addition to being a career-high finish at the time, the T5 for **Brent Grant** was the second of five top-10s he logged during the 2020-21 season, which helped him finish inside the top 75 in the Regular Season Points Standings for fully exempt status in 2022
 - Grant posted another T5 three months later at the 2021 Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation

Past Champions

Year	Player	R1	R2	R3	R4	Total	Margin
2021	Hayden Buckley	68	65	68	70	271 (-13)	Playoff
2020	Andrew Novak	69	64	66	66	265 (-23)	1
2019	Mark Hubbard	65	66	64	67	262 (-26)	2

Course Information – Lakewood National Golf Club (Commander)

- Years Hosted: 2019-Present
- Scoring Average (2021): 70.512 / -0.488
- Toughest Hole (2021): No. 2, Par 4, 491 yards – 4.426 / +0.426
- Easiest Hole (2021): No. 4, Par 4, 298 yards – 3.438 / -0.562

Tournament Scoring Records

- Low 18-Hole Score: 62, Robert Garrigus (2020, Round 2) and Albin Choi (2021, Round 1)
- Low 36-Hole Score: 128, J.T. Griffin (2019) and Maverick McNealy (2019)
- Low 54-Hole Score: 195, **Mark Hubbard** (2019)
- Low 72-Hole Score: 262, **Mark Hubbard** (2019)
- Largest Margin of Victory: 2, **Mark Hubbard** (2019)

Last week on Tour – Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard (February 10-13)

Pos.	Player	R1	R2	R3	R4	Total
1	Brandon Matthews	67	65	66	66	264 (-19)
T2	Ryan McCormick	61	69	69	66	265 (-18)
	Ben Griffin	68	61	68	68	265 (-18)
4	Joey Garber	69	64	64	69	266 (-17)

- **Brandon Matthews**, who won the 2020-21 PGA TOUR Latinoamérica Order of Merit and earned fully exempt status for the 2022 season, followed his career-high finish (T2 at The Panama Championship) with his first Korn Ferry Tour win
 - Playing in the penultimate group, Matthews birdied the par-4 16th and 17th, and hit a 9-iron to 5 feet and poured in an eagle putt on the par-5 18th; **Ben Griffin's** potential tying eagle putt horseshoed out and left him one stroke behind Matthews
- Matthews rose to the top of the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings, reaching 766 points and moving 245-plus points ahead of this season's first three winners

- Griffin held the outright 36-hole lead and co-led after 54 holes en route to his second top-10 and third top-15 in his fourth start of the season; his career-high finish in nine Korn Ferry Tour starts prior to 2022 was a T29 at the 2019 REX Hospital Open
 - Griffin [quit professional golf last spring](#) and worked as a mortgage loan officer in his hometown of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, until he returned to the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament and earned eight guaranteed starts with a T29 at Final Stage
- A bogey-free 5-under 66 for **Ryan McCormick** capped a career-high finish in what was his 52nd career Korn Ferry Tour start; his previous career-high finish was T6 on three occasions, with the most recent coming last May at the 2021 AdventHealth Championship
- **Joey Garber** co-led after 54 holes and logged his second consecutive top-10, as he finished T10 the previous week at The Panama Championship
- Garber also recorded his highest finish since winning the 2018 REX Hospital Open

About Korn Ferry Tour

Founded (1990), owned and operated by the PGA TOUR, the Korn Ferry Tour identifies and develops golf's next stars, preparing them to compete and win on the game's biggest stage. The Korn Ferry Tour, which has served as a path to the PGA TOUR since its inception, began providing 50 PGA TOUR cards annually in 2013. Each season, the top 25 players secure PGA TOUR cards via the Korn Ferry Tour's regular season, and an additional 25 players secure promotion through the Korn Ferry Tour Finals.

With more than 600 PGA TOUR titles, 25 major championships and six FedExCup champions, Korn Ferry Tour alumni make up over 80 percent of the PGA TOUR's current membership. To learn more about the PGA TOUR, the Korn Ferry Tour and to follow the season-long quest for a PGA TOUR card, visit PGATOUR.com or follow the Korn Ferry Tour on social media.