

First-Round Transcripts | The Panamá Championship | Thursday, February 3, 2022

Jimmy Stanger (-6, Solo Leader)

City Plays From: Tampa, Florida | Turned Pro: 2017 | College: University of Virginia
Exempt Status: Top 75 in 2020-21 Regular Season Standings (thru 2022)

On his 6-under 64 this afternoon...

"It's early in the tournament, so I'm just happy with what happened out there today. Going through some swing stuff in the offseason, it felt pretty good last week in Abaco. Just went out there today with a good game plan – fairways, greens. This is a really tough golf course. You've got to hit some quality shots. Hit some great shots the first three holes, and stayed in a good mindset, never really got ahead of myself, and never stopped hitting quality shots. It was a blessing to shoot 6-under today, and I'm excited to see how it carries over the next few days."

On shooting his best round at Panama Golf Club...

"It's a little bit of maturity, a little bit of understanding this is a tough track. In the past, I've looked at it as a lot of wedges (and) 9-irons and expected to get after it. Today, I was content hovering around par and trying to give myself as many looks as possible. That patient mindset really helped out there."

On having his first solo lead after 18 holes...

"I've had it a couple times in college and in junior golf. My mindset, it's like being T1 through four holes. You really don't pay attention to it. You're excited to start off well, but you're not thinking about it that much. It's the same mindset the next few days. If I can just hit quality shots, make the move I want to in the golf swing, and get out of my own head... I definitely thought over the last putt, 'Hey, you haven't led a tournament after the first round.' If I can keep those thoughts out of my head and focus on the moment, I'll be just fine."

On what was working for him today...

"Iron game was really good. With my pitching wedge through 8-iron, had a lot of those shots today and I knew where it was going. I struggled with that a lot at the end of 2021 and put a lot of effort into it in the offseason. I saw a lot of great results last week. Today, I hit a lot of great iron shots and kept it in the fairway. That works out well."

On his faith and how it plays a role on the course...

"Absolutely. I've got bible verses going through my head, just trying to keep myself remembering what's most important. It's crazy how when you're playing good golf it feels like the most important thing and the best thing ever. When you're playing bad golf it feels like the most important thing and the worst thing ever. If you can remember it's not the most important thing, it allows you to go play freely."

David Kocher (-5, T2)

City Plays From: Charlotte, North Carolina | Turned Pro: 2018 | College: University of Maryland
Korn Ferry Tour Wins (1): 2020 El Bosque Mexico Championship by INNOVA

On his performance en route to a 5-under 65 today...

I feel really good. I started the day off kind of a little weird. I snap-hooked it into the trees on the first and got up and down from 130 or so for par. But I putted really well today. I think I made quite a bit of putts over 30 feet for sure. But it was just a really good day. Didn't hit the ball the best but I gave myself a lot of chances and that's kind of all you're trying to do out here.

On how he feels about his game so far this season...

I feel really good about it. I worked really hard this offseason with a new coach and I feel really good about it. I'm just excited for the rest for the year and to be out here again.

On winning the 2020 El Bosque Mexico Championship by INNOVA and playing well prior to the COVID break...

It was kind of weird. I took a lot of time off right after that win just knowing that we might not play for a few months. I didn't play the best when I came back but just kind of battled through and finished, I think, like 37th on the points list last year. Looking to build on that and get to the PGA TOUR this fall.

On returning to play after the COVID break and what his main goal was...

It was just trying to be more consistent. I went through a few things with my coach that we really needed to work on, but overall, it was just consistency and playing well for four days in a row.

On how Panama Golf Club fits his style of play...

You just have to drive it really well. I hit the ball really well off the tee today and hopefully I can continue that the next couple days.

On how he's been spending his time in Panama City...

We went to a Brazilian steakhouse last night. We went to a few places to eat. I think the food's great here. I love this city, it's really cool. We went to see the Panama Canal last time I was here, so maybe we'll do that in the next few days.

Matt McCarty (-5, T2)

City Plays From: Scottsdale, Arizona | Turned Pro: 2021 | College: Santa Clara University
Exempt Status: Qualifying Tournament Finishers 11-40 and Ties (thru 2022)

On his performance today after finishing with a bogey-free 5-under 65...

It was a fun day. I hit the ball well. I kind of had a lot of looks at birdies. Just didn't really get anything to go early but then made a few putts and just kind of kept it rolling.

On making the cut in each of the past two tournaments and starting strong today...

I'm feeling really good. I gained a lot of confidence birdying two of my last three at Final Stage, so just kind of rolling off that and I've been playing well. Good first couple events and just trying to keep it going.

On how the Forme Tour prepared him for the Korn Ferry Tour...

I think it just kind of got my feet wet. I played with some of these guys that are out here now. Everything's a learning experience so it kind of got me started which was good.

On if this is his first time in Panama...

Yes, it is.

On how he likes the course and Panama City overall...

The course is good. The city is beautiful. We've been kind of exploring around the last couple days and it's really nice and we've been to some great spots and met some cool people.

On if the course fits any part of his game in particular...

No, I think you just have to hit the ball well. Some of these greens are kind of firm, so just kind of a ball striker's course. If you can be in the fairway, you definitely have a better chance. I drove it really well today which was nice. Just try to do the same the next few days.

On what his favorite movie is...

I don't know, I like a lot of the Avengers movies. I don't know. Off the top of my head, I don't really have anything right now but yeah, I like watching movies for sure.