

First-Round Notes – Thursday, February 3, 2022

Course Setup: Panama Golf Club – Par 70 / 7,325 yards

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Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Jimmy Stanger	64 (-6)
T2	David Kocher	65 (-5)
	Matt McCarty	65 (-5)
	Carl Yuan	65 (-5)
	Taylor Montgomery	65 (-5)
	Zack Fischer	65 (-5)
	Conner Godsey	65 (-5)

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Jimmy Stanger takes first career solo lead at The Panama Championship

PANAMA CITY, Panama – Following a hot start which consisted of three birdies in the first four holes, Jimmy Stanger sits alone atop the leaderboard after the first round of The Panama Championship.

Behind seven birdies (tied for the most in the field Thursday), Stanger’s 6-under 64 was all the more impressive given this week’s venue, Panama Golf Club, finished four Korn Ferry Tour seasons (2004, 2008, 2009, 2019) with the highest scoring average relative to par. The course also featured five of the 50 toughest holes relative to par from the 2019 Korn Ferry Tour season.

Stanger, a 26-year-old Tampa, Florida native, went off the first tee and made three birdies in a row on Nos. 2-4. Stanger parred the remaining five holes on the front nine and began the back side with consecutive birdies, including one at the 487-yard par-4 11th, Panama Golf Club’s toughest hole. Stanger also sandwiched birdies at Nos. 15 and 17 around his only bogey of the day, a five at the par-4 16th.

“It’s early in the tournament, so I’m just happy with what happened out there today,” Stanger said. “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.”

Stanger, playing his fourth season on the Korn Ferry Tour and making his 86th start, holds an outright lead after the opening round for the first time in his career. He did, however, share the lead after a 6-under 65 in the first round of the 2020 Nationwide Children’s Hospital Championship.

“My mindset, it’s like being T1 through four holes,” Stanger said. “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.”

A University of Virginia alum, Stanger finished the last two seasons inside the top 75 of the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings to maintain fully exempt status, posting nine top-10s in 64 starts across the 2019 and 2020-21 seasons. His best finish on Tour came at the 2020 NV5 Invitational presented by First Midwest Bank, where he shared T2 with 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour graduate Will Zalatoris and ended one stroke behind the champion and eventual 2020-21 graduate, Curtis Thompson.

Stanger appeared primed for a run at a PGA TOUR card last season after a T8 at the 2021 BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by TD SYNEX, but in similar fashion to 2019, his final six starts of the regular season resulted in four missed cuts, a T62, and a T67.

“It’s crazy how when you’re playing good golf it feels like the most important thing and the best thing ever,” Stanger said. “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.”

Second-round tee times will run from 6:40 a.m. through 1:35 p.m. ET off the first and 10th tees.

First-Round Notes

- With a 5-under 65, **David Kocher** (T2 / -5) tied the lowest first-round score of his Korn Ferry Tour career (this week marks his 47th start), equaling his 6-under 65 from the opening round of the 2021 REX Hospital Open
 - Kocher sits inside the top five after the first round for the second time in his Korn Ferry Tour career, with the only previous occurrence being a T2 after 18 holes of the 2021 AdventHealth Championship
 - Kocher, a three-time All-Big Ten Conference selection at University of Maryland (2015, 2016, 2018), was one of seven Korn Ferry Tour rookies to win last season, as he won a playoff against 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour graduates Chad Ramey and Paul Barjon at the 2020 El Bosque Mexico Championship, the final event prior to the COVID-19 pandemic hiatus; he finished 37th in the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings
- Making his third career Korn Ferry Tour start, **Matt McCarty** (T2 / -5), carded a season-best 5-under 65; he previously finished solo 18th and T51 in the first two events of the season, with his best round being a 4-under 68 in each of those outings
 - McCarty played five seasons and earned a master’s degree at Santa Clara University, turning pro in the summer of 2021 and posting three top-10s in six Forme Tour starts
 - McCarty birdied two of the final three holes at Final Stage of the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament and finished on the number (T39) for guaranteed starts for the first eight events of the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour season
- McCarty recorded one of the three bogey-free rounds posted Thursday, with the others coming from **T.J. Vogel** (T16 / 3-under 67) and **Michael Kim** (T29 / 2-under 68)
- **Taylor Montgomery** (T2 / -5) is coming off a T11 at last week’s Farmers Insurance Open on the PGA TOUR; a birdie by Aaron Rai on the 72nd hole knocked him out of T10 position and out of a guaranteed spot in the field at this week’s AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am

- Montgomery finished 26th in the both the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings and 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Finals, falling one place shy of a PGA TOUR card on both occasions
- Making his 57th Korn Ferry Tour start, **Carl Yuan** (T2 / -5) is inside the top five after the first round for the second time in his career; he was T1 at the 2021 Huntsville Championship, where he eventually finished T16
 - Yuan represented China in the Olympic Men's Golf Competition last summer, which effectively ended his 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour season at the 2021 Wichita Open Benefitting KU Wichita Pediatrics last June
 - Following the 2021 Wichita Open, Yuan ranked 27th in the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings, and he finished the regular season ranked 36th
- **Zack Fischer** (T2 / -5) has missed cuts in each of his last six Korn Ferry Tour starts, a streak dating back to the 2017 WinCo Foods Portland Open; he regained Korn Ferry Tour status (and is fully exempt this season) when he [captured medalist honors](#) at Final Stage of the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament
- **Conner Godsey** (T2 / -5) birdied four of his final six holes to post a 5-under 65, marking his lowest score in a Korn Ferry Tour event since a 5-under 65 in the opening round of the 2018 Ellie Mae Classic at TPC Stonebrae
- **Quade Cummins** (T7 / -4) paced the four Monday qualifiers in the first round; he played collegiately at University of Oklahoma and finished No. 6 in the inaugural PGA TOUR University presented by Velocity Global Class of 2021
- The Panama Championship is the third 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 2023