

First-Round Notes – Thursday, August 11, 2022

Course Setup: The Club at Indian Creek (Par 71 / 7,721 yards)

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Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	Philip Knowles	65 (-6)
T2	Robby Shelton	66 (-5)
	Andrew Yun	66 (-5)
	Taylor Montgomery	66 (-5)
T5	Nine Tied	67 (-4)

Quick Links

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

Philip Knowles closes strong for outright lead at Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Aetna

ELKHORN, Nebraska – With back-to-back birdies at the par-5 15th and par-4 16th Thursday evening at The Club at Indian Creek, 25-year-old rookie Philip Knowles posted a 6-under 65 for a one-stroke lead at the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour regular season finale, the Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Aetna.

Knowles birdied four of his first seven holes, making threes at the par-4 third and sixth, and fours at the par-5 fourth and seventh. A bogey at the par-4 ninth dropped him to 3-under par at the turn. Knowles' bogey-free 3-under 32 on the back nine featured a birdie at the par-4 11th, as well as the aforementioned birdies at Nos. 15 and 16.

This is the first lead of any kind on the Korn Ferry Tour for Knowles, who is making his 16th start of the season and 18th of his career. Knowles' previous career-high standing through 18 holes was T15 at last week's Utah Championship presented by Zions Bank. Prior to last week, it was T19 at The Ascendant presented by Blue.

Knowles' highest standing after any round on the Korn Ferry Tour was T4 through 54 holes of the BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by TD SYNEX this past June.

"It was really good, it felt easy," Knowles said. "Golf feels easy when you're playing well for the most part. I feel like I've been playing a lot of good golf these last few weeks, just plagued by whatever it was – bad bounce here, lip out there. Today it was just pretty solid from beginning to end."

A native of Bradenton, Florida who now resides in Jacksonville, Knowles began the season with conditional status by virtue of a T73 at Final Stage of the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament. A T22 as a sponsor exemption at the LECOM Suncoast Classic, played roughly 15 miles from Bradenton, enabled him to climb the priority ranking via the reshuffle following the season's eighth event. For good measure, Knowles Monday qualified into the Lake Charles Championship and finished T69, providing him with extra points ahead of the mid-April reshuffle.

Although Knowles missed four consecutive cuts following the reshuffle, he bounced back with top-25s in three of his next four starts, including a career-high T12 at the BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by TD SYNEX.

Knowles entered the week at No. 87 on the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Eligibility Points List, meaning only a victory would give him a chance to move into The 25 and earn a PGA TOUR card. It would not take nearly as much for Knowles to play his way into the top 75, which grants entry to the three-event Korn Ferry Tour Finals, where another 25 TOUR cards are up for grabs, and fully exempt status for the 2023 season.

"As a guy who played two of the first eight events, then took Wichita [Open Benefitting KU Wichita Pediatrics] off, I don't have as many starts as a lot of guys do," said Knowles, who entered the week needing at least a 2-way T23 to eclipse Sam Saunders, the No. 75-ranked player on the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Eligibility Points List. "To be in the position that I am, I'm pretty happy, but golf is so much about your good finishes and making your good finishes really good finishes.

"All in all, it's the first full season I've played out here, so there are a lot of positives but there's a little work to be done."

Knowles prepped at Bradenton Christian School, where his now wife, Olivia, played alongside him on the boys golf team since it did not have a girls team. Olivia went to Clemson University and was a cheerleader, while Knowles played golf at University of North Florida in Jacksonville. The two wed in December 2018, midway through Knowles' senior season and roughly two years after the couple reconnected.

Knowles capped his four-season career at UNF with a 2019 All-America Third Team selection and Atlantic Sun Conference Player of the Year honors.

Knowles turned professional that summer, played a full season on PGA TOUR Canada, and reached Final Stage of the 2019 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament. A T105 at Final Stage left him buried on the priority ranking for what became the 2020-21 season, so Knowles played predominantly on PGA TOUR Canada. A victory at the 2021 Auburn University Club Invitational propelled him to a No. 7 finish on the Order of Merit, which granted him an exemption to Final Stage last November.

"It's been a pretty steady incline," Knowles said of his professional career. "I relate it to my college years. I had four years of college and in my first year I was not good, second year I was a little better, then third year and fourth year I was All-American. It gradually got better but it seems that I take a few years to get my feet under myself. Coming to Q-School (last) year, I was very excited. Game was in great shape and then finished outside of the top 40. It feels like I've incrementally been getting better and I've seen that in my game and I see that in the scores I've been shooting, but you need a platform.

“Out here, I've been able to show some good golf but I'm also able to look back and see where I still need to get better.”

Knowles also knows firsthand how quickly things can turn.

At last week's Utah Championship presented by Zions Bank, Knowles played the first two rounds with Andrew Kozan, who entered the week with 11 consecutive missed cuts. Kozan won the tournament and moved from No. 152 to No. 41 on the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Eligibility List.

“If you wouldn't have known that he missed however many cuts he had missed coming into that week, you would have thought he was a top-25 player,” Knowles said. “You just never know when it's coming.”

Maybe Knowles has it coming this week.

Second-round tee times will from 6:45 a.m. through 2:22 p.m. local time off the first and 10th tees.

First-Round Notes

- **Philip Knowles** (1st / -6) and **Tain Lee** (T14 / -3) led the field with seven birdies apiece
- After the first round, Knowles and **Brent Grant** (T14 / -3) are the only players projected to move inside the top 25 on the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Eligibility Points List, while **Anders Albertson** (T116 / +2) and **Vincent Norrman** (T67 / E) are the only players projected to fall outside the top 25
- 18-hole standings for Nos. 21-30 on the Korn Ferry Tour Points List
 - No. 21 **Anders Albertson** (T116 / +2)
 - No. 22 **Kevin Roy** (T24 / -2)
 - No. 23 **Ben Taylor** (T5 / -4)
 - No. 24 **Vincent Norrman** (T67 / E)
 - No. 25 **Michael Kim** (T14 / -3)
 - No. 26 **Brandon Harkins** (T43 / -1)
 - No. 27 **Ryan McCormick** (T24 / -2)
 - No. 28 **Brent Grant** (T14 / -3)
 - No. 29 **Pierceson Coody** (T87 / +1)
 - No. 30 **Akshay Bhatia** (T14 / -3)
- **Taylor Montgomery** (T2 / -5) sits inside the top 10 after 18 holes for the seventh time this season, while **Robby Shelton** (T2 / -5) sits inside the top 10 after 18 holes for the fifth time this season
- One player carded a bogey-free round: **Brad Hopfinger** (T67 / E), who made 18 pars
- The Pinnacle Bank Championship is 23rd and final regular season tournament of the 26-event 2022 Korn Ferry Tour schedule; the first set of 25 PGA TOUR cards will be awarded to the top 25 players (i.e. – The 25) on the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Eligibility Points List following the conclusion of Sunday's final round.
 - 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 \$850,000, with \$153,000 going to the champion; the champion will also receive 600 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

First-Round Course Statistics

- Scoring Average (Total - Par 71): 71.154 [+0.154]
- Scoring Average (Front Nine - 36): 36.135 [+0.135]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine - 35): 35.019 [+0.019]
- Toughest Hole: No. 9, Par 4, 478 yards – 4.224 [+0.224]
- Easiest Hole: No. 15, Par 5, 573 yards – 4.436 [-0.564]