

First-Round Notes – Thursday, June 2, 2022

Course Setup: The Country Club at Wakefield Plantation (Par 71 / 7,269 yards)

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Leaderboard

| Pos. | Name | Scores |
|------|-----------------|---------|
| 1 | Jeremy Paul | 63 (-8) |
| T2 | Davis Thompson | 64 (-7) |
| | Patrick Newcomb | 64 (-7) |
| T4 | MJ Daffue | 65 (-6) |
| | Taylor Dickson | 65 (-6) |

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- [Tournament Media Site](#) (interviews, transcripts and other resources available for download)

Jeremy Paul takes first career lead at the REX Hospital Open

RALEIGH, North Carolina – Jeremy Paul carded a bogey-free 8-under 63 in Thursday’s first round of the REX Hospital Open, recording a career-low round and securing the outright lead. Paul holds a one-stroke lead, his first lead of any kind on the Korn Ferry Tour over Davis Thompson and Patrick Newcomb.

Paul’s 63 eclipsed his previous career-low round, a 5-under 65 in the first round of the 2017 Wichita Open Benefitting KU Wichita Pediatrics, as well as his career-low score relative to par, previously a pair of 6-under 66s from earlier this year at The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club and Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation.

The 28-year-old German split eight birdies (tied for the most in the field) evenly across both nines. Paul began his round with a birdie at the par-4 10th followed by three more at Nos. 12, 15 and 17. Paul circled another birdie at the par-4 third, which was the highlight of his round.

“I hit my ball in the left rough and the pin was tucked behind the bunker, so I just opened up the club face and made a pretty good swing,” Paul said. “I thought when I walked up to the hole that I had gotten it to roughly 15 feet, but I ended up hitting a perfect shot. It ended up being 5 feet (for birdie) and that got my round going.”

Paul followed up with a birdie at the par-5 fourth and another set of back-to-back birdies at the par-4 sixth and seventh for his first lead in 27 Korn Ferry Tour career starts.

“You always have to make a lot of birdies,” Paul said. “8-under is not going to win this tournament. I have to keep coming out here and shooting low scores, because I expect the winning score to be around 20-under. It helps if you get a couple birdies going early.”

Paul went through the 2016 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament as an amateur in the fall semester of his senior season at University of Colorado. A T72 finish at Final Stage left him with conditional status. Paul continued to play for Colorado (and earned his degree) until April 2017, when the United Leasing & Finance Championship awarded him a sponsor exemption. The BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by TD SYNEX did the same in May, but Paul would not reshuffle up the priority ranking until a month later at the 2017 Wichita Open Benefitting KU Wichita Pediatrics, where he finished T27 as a sponsor exemption.

By the end of the 2017 season, Paul had just four made cuts in 12 starts and ranked 200th on the money list. Paul spent the following three seasons playing predominantly on PGA TOUR Canada (2018, 2019, 2021), along with three starts on PGA Tour Latinoamérica.

Paul earned Korn Ferry Tour membership for the second time via a No. 10 finish on the 2021 PGA TOUR Canada Order of Merit, highlighted by four top-10s in eight starts, including a T3 at the Rolling Green Championship. With an exemption to Final Stage of the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament last November, Paul finished T11 for guaranteed starts in the first eight events this season.

Having played all 14 events contested this season, Paul entered this week with five top-25s, including a pair of top-10s in his last four starts – a career-high T5 at the Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation, and T7 two weeks ago at the AdventHealth Championship.

“My mindset was to just come in here and have a good time and enjoy the process,” Paul said. “When you play this many tournaments in a row it can happen where things don't go your way and you can go on a downward spiral. We're still playing golf and the tournament is run so well, it feels like you're playing on the highest level out here. You have to enjoy it more.”

Second-round tee times will run from 6:45 a.m. through 2:16 p.m. local time off the first and 10th tees.

First-Round Notes

- **Jeremy Paul** (1st / -8) previously had a career-high 18-hole position of T5 (2022 The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club)
- Paul, **Davis Thompson** (T2 / -7) and **Patrick Newcomb** (T2 / -7) led the field with eight birdies apiece
- Thompson sits inside the top five of the leaderboard for a third consecutive round; he was T1 after the third round and finished T5 at last week's NV5 Invitational presented by Old National Bank
- The only other time this season Thompson, a rookie, stood inside the top 15 after the first round was The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club, where he was T1 through 18 holes
- Newcomb established a career-high 18-hole position on the Korn Ferry Tour; his previous career-high position after the first round was T8 at the 2018 Club Car Championship at The Landings Club
- Newcomb's 7-under 64 matches his Korn Ferry Tour career-low round, an 8-under 64 from the second round of the 2018 Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr Pepper
- Gastonia, North Carolina native **Taylor Dickson** (T4 / -6) is inside the top five after the first round for the second time this season (T5 at Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard) and has his highest 18-hole position since he stood T3 after the first round of the 2021 Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr Pepper, where he eventually finished solo-third
- **MJ Daffue** (T4 / -6) stands T4 or higher after the first round for the third time in the last four weeks, fifth time this season, and seventh time in his career

- Chapel Hill, North Carolina native and University of North Carolina alum **Ben Griffin** (T19 / -4) positioned himself in the top 25, while Wake Forest resident **Akshay Bhatia** (T77 / -1) will begin the second round outside the projected cut line
- **Jacob Bridgeman** (T19 / -4) leads the eight Monday qualifiers in his Korn Ferry Tour debut; he finished No. 2 in the [PGA TOUR University presented by Velocity Global Class of 2022](#) after four seasons at Clemson University, where he won six times individually, including the 2022 Atlantic Coast Conference Championship en route to being named the 2022 ACC Player of the Year
- The REX Hospital Open is the 15th 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

First-Round Course Statistics

- Scoring Average (Total - Par 71): 69.596 [-1.404]
- Scoring Average (Front Nine – Par 36): 35.103 [-0.897]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine – Par 35): 34.494 [-0.506]
- Toughest Hole: No. 14, Par 4, 454 yards – 4.173 [+0.173]
- Easiest Hole: No. 4, Par 5, 600 yards – 4.635 [-0.365]