

Partial First-Round Notes – Thursday, May 5, 2022

Course Setup: The Grove (Par 72 / 7,368 yards)

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Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
T1	José de Jesús Rodríguez	65 (-7)
	Tom Whitney	65 (-7)
	Quade Cummins	-7 (13*)
T4	Eight Tied	-6

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José de Jesús Rodríguez, Tom Whitney share 18-hole lead upon suspension of Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation

COLLEGE GROVE, Tennessee – José de Jesús Rodríguez and Tom Whitney carded matching 7-under 65s Thursday at the Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation, giving each of them a share of the 18-hole lead upon the suspension of play. The first round was suspended due to lightning at 3:42 p.m., and while it resumed at 5:40 p.m., play was suspended due to darkness at 7:30 p.m., as 49 players had holes remaining.

Among those who had not completed their first round, Quade Cummins stood 7-under par through 14 holes. Cummins, a Korn Ferry Tour rookie who finished No. 6 in the inaugural PGA TOUR University Class of 2021, will play the final four holes of the front nine Friday morning in an attempt to secure his first 18-hole lead on the Korn Ferry Tour.

In the first group off No. 1, Rodríguez, a 41-year-old native of Irapuato, Mexico, opened his bogey-free round with three consecutive birdies. Rodríguez added another birdie at the par-4 eighth, followed by birdies on three of his last five holes (Nos. 14, 16, and 18) for his third 65 of the season.

“I had a spectacular round, especially because I was bogey-free,” Rodríguez said. “We took advantage of all the birdies we had. I’m super happy about it.”

Rodríguez left his home country of Mexico and embarked on a [remarkable journey](#) to the United States, and ultimately his path to the PGA TOUR, at age 15. He turned professional in 2007 and worked his way onto PGA TOUR Canada, winning twice in 2011 and winning the Order of Merit. As he continued his pursuit of PGA TOUR status, Rodríguez played PGA TOUR Latinoamérica in 2012, posting three top-10s to finish No. 9 on the Order of Merit in his first season. The following year, Rodríguez captured two wins en route to the No. 2 spot on the Order of Merit, earning Korn Ferry Tour status for 2014.

Rodriguez toiled between Korn Ferry Tour and PGA TOUR Latinoamérica, winning twice in 2017, until a strong 2018 season on the Korn Ferry Tour. A win at the 2018 United Leasing & Finance Championship propelled Rodriguez to a No. 12 finish in the regular season and his first PGA TOUR card.

"It just took a lot of dedication," Rodriguez said of his career. "It's time away from home, it takes a lot of family support. I have to fly back and forth to see my family and my two kids and try to make the best out of it.

"Sometimes you don't play good or you don't have a successful week, but you use it as an experience and a lesson and keep going."

Missing 13 cuts in 23 starts as a PGA TOUR rookie, Rodriguez finished 177th in the 2018-19 FedExCup Standings, sending him back to the Korn Ferry Tour. Rodriguez has since posted four top-10s, highlighted by a runner-up finish at the 2020 Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr Pepper, along with a T3 at the 2022 Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by MISTRAS back in March.

Whitney, who entered the week with seven missed cuts in 10 starts this season, made a field-leading eight birdies Thursday.

"On my written down goal list I had 'miss five cuts or less,' and that went out the window pretty quickly," Whitney laughed. "I just had to stay mentally tough through that knowing that every season, no matter how many missed cuts I have, I'm in contention a handful of times. The cuts that I have made, I've proved that so far."

The 32-year-old Dallas, Texas resident carded four birdies in his first seven holes before his only bogey of the day, a five at the par-4 eighth. The Air Force veteran scattered four more birdies across his final nine holes and posted his third round of 65 or better this season.

"It's nice to get off to a good start," Whitney said. "I rattled off four birdies before my first bogey and anytime you're ahead of the curve you're just more comfortable when the mistakes happen. I had a loose drive on No. 8 that went in the lateral (penalty area). I almost saved par but just barely missed that 10-footer. It's good to be in the so-called 'driver's seat' as far as my swing goes, and my focus out there, not a lot phased me. I didn't have any bad breaks and I just kept it in play all day."

Whitney played collegiately at the United States Airforce Academy from 2006 to 2010, where he won four times individually and was twice named an All-America Scholar. Upon graduation from the Air Force Academy as a First Lieutenant, Whitney fulfilled his four-year active duty stint as a nuclear missile operator before [pursuing professional golf](#) full time in 2014.

Whitney spent the 2016 season on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica and earned Korn Ferry Tour membership ahead of the 2017 season. After two years with just one top-10 across 26 starts, Whitney returned to PGA TOUR Latinoamérica for the 2019 season and earned his first and only PGA-TOUR sanctioned win came at the Abierto OSDE del Centro. Whitney earned a promotion to the Korn Ferry Tour at season's end by virtue of a No. 2 finish on the Order of Merit.

Whitney secured fully exempt status for the 2022 season as he finished inside the top 75 of the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points List; he recorded four top-10s and nine top-25s across 40 starts,

with the highlight being a career-high finish (solo third) at the 2021 Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by MISTRAS.

The first round will resume at 6:35a.m., with second-round tee times running from 7:05 a.m. through 2:47p.m. local time off the first and 10th tees.

First-Round Notes

- **Robby Shelton** (T4 / -6), winner of the 2019 Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation, opened with a bogey-free 6-under 66
- Middle Tennessee State University alum and sponsor exemption **Jason Millard** (T4 / -6) has seven holes remaining in his first PGA TOUR-sanctioned round since the 2021 Pinnacle Bank Championships presented by Aetna
- Vanderbilt University alum **Will Gordon** (T4 / -6) has been in the top five after the first round twice this season; he was T1 through 18 holes at the Lake Charles Championship (finished T41) and T5 at the LECOM Suncoast Classic (finished T6)
- Two-time Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament medalist **Zack Fischer** (T4 / -6) sits inside top five through the first round for a second consecutive week; he stood T1 after the first round of last week's Huntsville Championship and eventually finished T26
- **Fabián Gómez** (T4 / -6) has status on both the PGA TOUR and Korn Ferry Tour this season; he is a two-time PGA TOUR winner and earned his only Korn Ferry Tour win back in 2010
- Of players who completed their first round, **Brandon Harkins** (T4 / -6) and **Jay Card III** (T12 / -5) were the only two with multiple eagles; Card made threes at the par-5 second and 18th, while Harkins made his threes at the par-5 seventh and 18th
- **Lukas Euler** (T4 / -6) paces the eight Monday qualifiers; he still has seven holes remaining in his first round
- The Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation is the 11th 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