

First-Round Notes – Sunday, January 16, 2022

Course Setup: Sandals Emerald Bay Golf Course – Par 72 / 7,001 yards

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Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
T1	Harry Hall	68 (-4)
	Xinjun Zhang	68 (-4)
	Evan Harmeling	68 (-4)
T4	Fabián Gómez	69 (-3)
	Clay Feagler	69 (-3)
	Akshay Bhatia	-3 (16)

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Three past Korn Ferry Tour winners share lead at The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay

GREAT EXUMA, The Bahamas – A trio of recent Korn Ferry Tour winners share the 18-hole lead in the season-opening 2022 The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay, as Harry Hall, Evan Harmeling, and Xinjun Zhang carded 4-under 68s Sunday at Sandals Emerald Bay Golf Course.

Play was suspended due to darkness at 5:45 p.m., as 30 players had holes remaining in their first round.

Hall hit the opening tee shot of the 2022 season off the 10th tee at 6:45 a.m. ET, and he only needed two holes to shake off what little winter rust he accrued. Birdies at the par-3 11th, par-4 14th, par-5 15th, and par-4 17th, and par-5 first took him to 5-under par through 10 holes. The Las Vegas, Nevada resident stalled the rest of the way, though, making seven pars and a bogey at the par-4 fifth as he fell into a tie atop the leaderboard.

“Definitely gained a lot of strokes off the tee, which is something I’ve worked on,” Hall said. “With the tightness of the course and the wind, just being able to keep it in the fairways was nice.”

Hall attributed the quick start to the fact he stayed active during the offseason. A T8 as a sponsor exemption at the 2021 Shriners Children’s Open earned him another PGA TOUR start at the 2021 Butterfield Bermuda Championship this past October. Hall also took a trip to Pebble Beach, followed by [a return home](#) to Cornwall, England, where he spent time with family and played at West Cornwall Golf Club for the first time in two years.

“My goal is to, every time I go home, have a little bit better career than I did the last time. That was definitely the case,” said Hall, who earned his first career Korn Ferry Tour win at the 2021 Wichita Open Benefitting KU Wichita Pediatrics. “It was nice to go home and play the golf course I grew up on, see how my game is different from the last time I played it. That was the end of November, and I stayed until the middle of December, then went back to Vegas and had a nice Christmas and New Year.”

Harmeling signed his scorecard just before sunset. It featured six birdies, including two on his first and final holes of the day, the par-4 10th and par-5 ninth, respectively, along with two bogeys. None of those birdies were the highlight of his round, though.

“The highlight is going out on the back nine here and just being out on the cliffs,” Harmeling said.

A native of Boston, Massachusetts who plays out of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, Harmeling earned his first career Korn Ferry Tour victory at the 2020 Club Car Championship at The Landings Club. The strong finish to 2020 never translated to 2021, as Harmeling missed 13 cuts and did not record a top-25 in 21 starts last year.

“I know what I need to do to play well. It just isn’t always the easiest thing to do that all the time,” Harmeling said. “Practice like I should, eat right, do everything mentally to stay sharp. I worked harder (in the offseason). I also go into some tournament play before the season, which was great, to come in here in shape.”

Zhang carded five birdies against one bogey for his 68, as he begins his third Korn Ferry Tour season since the start of 2017.

A native of Shanxi, China, Zhang graduated from the Korn Ferry Tour following the 2017 season, joining Zecheng Dou (the 2019 champion of The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay) as the first players from China to earn a PGA TOUR card. Zhang fell back to the Korn Ferry Tour in 2019, but skyrocketed back to the TOUR with a pair of victories, a solo second, and two T3s for a No. 1 finish in the Korn Ferry Tour Regular Season Points Standings.

Zhang spent the past two seasons on the PGA TOUR, finishing 78th in the 2019-20 FedExCup Standings, but 173rd in 2020-21, which lost him TOUR membership.

The first round will resume at 7 a.m. ET, while second-round tee times will remain the same and run through 1:15 p.m. ET off the first and 10th tees.

First-Round Notes

- **Harry Hall**’s hometown club, West Cornwall Golf Club, is also the proud home of four-time major championship winner and World Golf Hall of Fame inductee “Long” Jim Barnes, as well as 1999 Walker Cup player Philip Rowe, who was an Associate Head Coach when Hall played at University of Nevada-Las Vegas
- Should he remain T1 at the conclusion of the first round, **Evan Harmeling** will be leading a Korn Ferry Tour event for the first time since the 2020 Club Car Championship at The Landings Club, where he led or co-led the final three rounds
 - Prior to that event, Harmeling’s highest position at the end of any Korn Ferry Tour round was T5 at the 2020 Memorial Health Championship presented by LRS

- Should he remain T1 at the conclusion of the first round, **Xinjun Zhang** will have at least a share of the 18-hole lead in a Korn Ferry Tour for the fourth time in his career; he previously led the 2017 LECOM Health Challenge (finished T16), 2019 Country Club de Bogota Championship (finished T34), and 2019 Dormie Network Classic at Briggs Ranch (went on to win)
- **Fabián Gómez** (T4) is a two-time PGA TOUR winner and won the 2010 Chitimacha Louisiana Open presented by MISTRAS on the Korn Ferry Tour; he played primarily on the PGA TOUR since the start of the 2014-15 season
- **Clay Feagler** (T4), who won a team title with Pepperdine University at the 2021 NCAA Championships, is making his first Korn Ferry Tour start
 - Feagler earned Korn Ferry Tour membership (and guaranteed starts in the first eight events) after he finished ninth top-10 on the 2021 Forme Tour Order of Merit and was T39 at the Final Stage of the Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament
- The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay is the first 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
- Sunday marked the Korn Ferry Tour's first international round since the final round of the 2020 El Bosque Mexico Championship by INNOVA on March 1, 2020
- Weather: Partly cloudy, high of 79 degrees, wind S/SE at 6-20 mph (gusts up to 25 mph)