

First-Round Notes – Wednesday, April 13, 2022

Course Setup: Texas Rangers Golf Club (Par 71 / 7,010 yards)

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Leaderboard

Pos.	Name	Scores
1	MJ Daffue	62 (-9)
2	Justin Suh	64 (-7)
T3	Five Tied	65 (-6)

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

MJ Daffue Ties Tournament Scoring Record for Early Lead at Veritex Bank Championship

ARLINGTON, Texas – MJ Daffue posted a bogey-free 9-under 62 Wednesday evening to tie the 18-hole tournament scoring record and take a two-stroke lead over Justin Suh at the Veritex Bank Championship. Daffue's 62 tied the tournament record established by Anders Albertson and Paul Barjon in last year's inaugural playing, but Texas Rangers Golf Club's course record – a 59 by world No. 1 and Masters Tournament champion Scottie Scheffler in a non-competitive round on May 4, 2020 – remained intact.

The start of the first round was delayed 90 minutes due to lightning, and play was suspended due to darkness at 7:57 p.m., with 37 players still completing their first rounds. The lowest active rounds on the course belong to Chase Parker and John Pak, who are both 4-under par through 17 holes.

Daffue's round was a ball striking clinic, as he hit 16 of 18 greens in regulation and estimated he only made one birdie putt outside of 10 feet. The native South African and Kingwood, Texas resident opened the round with six consecutive pars, but back-to-back birdies at the par-4 seventh and eighth kickstarted Daffue's putter.

Daffue birdied the first four holes and three of the final four on the back nine to reach 9-under par and posted his career-low round in a Korn Ferry Tour event, eclipsing a 7-under 63 he shot in the first round of February's Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard.

"Great day," Daffue said. "The front nine, I probably had five birdie looks inside 10 feet and didn't make any, but I kept believing and focusing on rolling good putts. The first six holes (putts) were all within 15 feet, and I didn't birdie No. 9, which is a really short par 5. I wasn't happy, but that's maybe why I went on a heater. I had legitimate birdie looks on every hole. I think I only made one birdie putt outside of 10 feet, so I hit it really close today."

“Monday qualifying three years now... you try to birdie every hole,” Daffue continued, “I’ve always told people I’m very happy, very fortunate to have done what I’ve done in Mondays because it taught me to make a lot of birdies.”

Daffue turned professional out of Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas in 2012 but struggled to make it past the mini-tour level the first seven years of his career.

“Coming out of college, I thought it would be much quicker. But the timeline is the timeline,” said the 33-year-old Daffue. “I’ve had to deal with a few things... I had to grow up a little bit, I had to make a few changes, move to a different place, change coaches, and change my whole mindset as far as what’s important. I started focusing away from golf, and things started working out better.”

While Daffue earned conditional membership on the Korn Ferry Tour for the first time ahead of the 2018 season, his T138 at Final Stage of the 2017 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament left him buried in the priority ranking. Daffue would not make his first Korn Ferry Tour start until 2019, when he began a run of successful Monday qualifiers.

Daffue Monday qualified into five of his 10 career Korn Ferry Tour starts prior to the 2022 season, while another three were via top-25s following a successful Monday qualifier. Daffue also earned six of his 13 PGA TOUR starts via successful Monday qualifiers.

“My biggest thing was I needed a full schedule,” Daffue said. “Monday qualifying and playing 10 events a season isn’t good enough. There was pressure, but I kept telling myself just keep playing good golf, eventually it will be good enough.”

Daffue returned to Final Stage of the Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament last November, but he finished T50 and missed the top 40 – which left him without guaranteed starts for the 2022 season – by a single stroke. After a bout with COVID in January, Daffue was the seventh-to-last player in the field at the season-opening The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay, where he finished T15 and positioned himself to climb the priority ranking following the reorder.

“There was a strange start to the year,” Daffue said. “I got into Exuma and wasn’t really prepared. I didn’t touch a club for 12 days because I was really sick. When I went over there, I didn’t really have any expectations, top-15’d, and that set everything up.”

Daffue catapulted himself even further up the priority ranking with a trio of top-10s, highlighted by a T2 at the LECOM Suncoast Classic in late February, and another pair of made cuts.

“Any time you’re leading a tournament, it’s a good thing,” Daffue says. “Three more rounds left, but it’s just golf. We try to hit every shot as best as we can, and there are a lot more people out there fighting for different things, struggling with different things. My motto, I try to do the next right thing. If that’s hitting a golf shot, then that’s it.”

The first round will resume at 7:15 a.m., while second-round tee times will run from 7:15 a.m. through 2:20 p.m. off the first and 10th tees.

First-Round Notes

- Making his 18th career Korn Ferry Tour start, **MJ Daffue** (1st / -9) holds his first lead on the Korn Ferry Tour; his previous career-high 18-hole position on was T3 at the 2019 Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr Pepper, where he opened with an 8-under 64
- Riding a streak of four consecutive top-25s (and two top-10s in three starts) **Justin Suh** (2nd / -7) carded a 7-under 64, a career-low round in his 104th round in PGA TOUR or Korn Ferry Tour play
 - Suh eagled the par-5 ninth and 18th; the only other player in the field with multiple eagles in the first round was **Trace Crowe** (T43 / -2)
- Suh recorded his 12th round in the 60s in his last 17 Korn Ferry Tour rounds
- Suh's previous career-high 18-hole position in a Korn Ferry Tour event was T5 at the Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard this past February; he eventually missed the cut
- Fort Worth native and Dallas resident **Martin Flores** (T3 / -6) is playing this week via the Exempt Medical category; his 6-under 65 marked his lowest round in PGA TOUR-sanctioned play since a 7-under 64 at the 2019 Memorial Health Championship presented by LRS
- Defending champion **Tyson Alexander** (T3 / -6) opened with a 6-under 65, marking his fourth consecutive round of 65 or better at the Veritex Bank Championship; he is bidding to become the first player in Korn Ferry Tour history (established 1990) to successfully defend his title
- Last year's runner-up, Dallas resident **Theo Humphrey**, shot a 4-under 67 and stands T14
- **Patrick Fishburn** (T3 / -6) matched his season-low round with a 6-under 65
- **Shawn Stefani** (T3 / -6), a native of Baytown who plays from Mont Belvieu, carded his lowest Korn Ferry Tour round since a 6-under 65 in the second round of last year's Veritex Bank Championship
- Five players completed bogey-free rounds, while two other players have active bogey-free rounds
- The Veritex Bank Championship is the ninth 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): 70.121 [-0.879]
- Scoring Average (Front Nine – Par 35): 35.004 [+0.004]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine – Par 36): 35.117 [-0.883]
- Toughest Hole: No. 3, Par 4, 480 yards – 4.494 [+0.494]
- Easiest Hole: No. 9, Par 5, 532 yards – 4.529 [-0.471]