

2023 Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard
(4th of 26 events on Korn Ferry Tour 2023 Schedule)

[Tournament Media Site](#) | [Interview Transcripts](#)

First-Round Notes – Thursday, February 9, 2023

Weather: Partly cloudy with a high of 71. Wind /NE 5-10 mph, gusts up to 12 mph.

First-Round Leaderboard

David Kocher	62 (-8) Pacos
Kevin Dougherty	63 (-7) Pacos
Dawson Armstrong	64 (-6) Pacos
Abel Gallegos	64 (-6) Pacos
Jonas Blixt	64 (-6) Pacos
Thomas Rosenmueller	64 (-6) Pacos
John Augenstein	64 (-6) Pacos
Alex Weiss	64 (-6) Pacos

Things to Know

- **David Kocher** cards a bogey-free 8-under 62 and holds the second 18-hole lead / co-lead of his career
- Seventeen of the 18 lowest scores relative to par Thursday came from the Pacos course; the exception was **Joey Garber** (T9), who carded a 5-under 66 on the Lagos course
- **Abel Gallegos** (T3), a 21-year-old Argentine and last week's 36-hole leader, fires a 6-under 64 and leads the 18 players in the field representing Latin American countries and territories
- **Alex Weiss** (T3), the second-to-last player in the 156-man field this week (i.e. – No. 154 of 156), opens his first start of the 2023 season with a 6-under 64 to stand inside the top five through 18 holes of a Korn Ferry Tour event for the first time in his 19th career start
- Rounds 1 and 2 will be played with preferred lies

Charting the Leader (stats entering the week)

Category	David Kocher
Age	26 (April 13, 1996)
2022 Korn Ferry Tour Points List	No. 35
Starts – wins – top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (2022)	25-1-1
Starts – wins – top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (2023)	3-0-0
Starts – wins – top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (Career)	72 – 2 - 3
Starts – wins – top-10s at the Astara Golf Championship presented by Mastercard	2-0-0

David Kocher (Leader / -8)

- Holds the 18-hole lead / co-lead for the second time in his Korn Ferry Tour career; held a share of the 18-hole lead at the 2022 Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr Pepper and went on to earn his second Korn Ferry Tour victory
- Posted a bogey-free 8-under 62 with eight birdies, including three in a row on Nos. 7-9
- Career-low 62 eclipsed previous career-low round of 9-under 63 from Round 1 of the 2022 Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr Pepper
- Two-time winner on the Korn Ferry Tour with victories at the 2022 Price Cutter Charity Championship presented by Dr Pepper (broke 72-hole tournament scoring record en route to [six-stroke win](#)), and 2020 El Bosque Mexico Championship by INNOVA ([won sixth career start in playoff](#), also final event prior to COVID-19 pandemic hiatus)
- Earned Korn Ferry Tour membership for first time via No. 3 finish on 2019 PGA TOUR Series – China Order of Merit, largely off strength of a win at the 2019 Haikou Championship
- Top-40 finisher on Korn Ferry Tour Points List the last two seasons (No. 37 in 2020-21, No. 35 in 2022)

- 26-year-old from Morristown, New Jersey now resides and plays from Charlotte, North Carolina
- Turned professional in 2018 out of the University of Maryland, where he played from fall 2014 through spring 2018

Quotables

- **David Kocher** on his first-round 8-under 62: "I hit a lot of really good shots, hit a lot of really good chips. I played the shorter course today, so you're driving it right up next to the greens. Had some short-sided chips, hit a few tight and tapped in a few times. Changed putters yesterday, so rolled it a lot better today than I did last week and earlier this week."
- **David Kocher** on Pacos course compared to the Lagos course: "The short course [Pacos] is definitely a lot easier, in my opinion, because you're right around the green a lot of times, but the long course [Lagos] is a great course as well. You have to hit a lot of really good shots on both courses, so I'm just looking forward to it tomorrow."
- **Dawson Armstrong** on his opening round: "Two days ago I found out I was playing with Wesley Bryan. He and I are basically two of the same people. Even after I made two bogeys in a row, he came up to me and just made me start laughing like crazy, so this was by far the most relaxing and enjoyable round I've had, probably ever, since I've turned professional. Obviously the good golf helped a lot, but didn't really matter how we played, we were just having a good time out there anyway. I feel like I hit the ball really well. Didn't really make anything crazy long or chip in or anything, just kept it in front of me."
- **Dawson Armstrong** on the start of the 2023 season: "The first two weeks, I didn't have my driver. It broke the day before I left for Exuma. I tried other drivers, different stuff, didn't work out super well. Missed the cut on the number in Panama and I feel like it's been pretty solid the last few weeks. I've never had this start of the season before where you missed three straight cuts. This is just a week where my wife and I had been talking about where maybe we had been trying too hard, taking it too seriously and just come into this week and have a great time, enjoy it. It's the last one before a five-week break. And obviously again playing with Wesley made it a lot more fun."

Notes

- **Kevin Dougherty** (2nd / -7) sit inside the top five after 18 holes for the first time since the 2021 MGM Resorts Championship
- **Abel Gallegos** (T3 / -6) is in his rookie season on the Korn Ferry Tour following a T17 at Final Stage of the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament, with this week being his fourth start on Tour; he held the 36-hole lead prior to a T63 finish at The Panama Championship last week
- **Dawson Armstrong** (T3 / -6) stands T3 or higher through 18 holes for the second time in his career (co-led 2022 The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club / finished T7)
- Six bogey-free rounds were posted from Pacos course: **David Kocher** (1st), **Thomas Rosenmueller** (T3 / -6), **Alex Weiss** (T3 / -6), **David Skinns** (T9 / -5), **Rick Lamb** (T37 / -2) and **William Holcomb V** (T76 / E)
- **Mac Meissner** (T53 / -1) was the only player to card a bogey-free round from Lagos course
- **David Kocher** (1st), **Brady Calkins** (T9 / -5) and **Jacob Bridgeman** (T16 / -4) each made a field-leading eight birdies on the Pacos course, while **Joey Garber** (T9 / -5), **RJ Manke** (T26 / -3) and **T.J. Vogel** (T26 / -3) carded a field-leading seven birdies on the Lagos course
- Colombian amateur **Daniel Faccini** (T37 / -2) led the sponsor exemptions with a 2-under 68 on Pacos
- Three of the four open qualifiers are inside the projected cutline through 18 holes: **Daniel Robinson** (T26 / -3), **RJ Manke** (T26 / -3), **Brendon Doyle** (T53 / -1)

Course Statistics - Lagos

- Scoring Average (Par 71): 72.564 [+1.564]
- Scoring Average (Front Nine – Par 35): 35.833 [+0.833]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine – Par 36): 36.731 [+0.731]
- Toughest Hole: No. 13, Par 4, 439 yards – 4.526 [+0.526]
- Easiest Hole: No. 10, Par 5, 585 yards – 4.718 [-0.282]

Course Statistics - Pacos

- Scoring Average (Par 70): 68.260 [-1.740]
- Scoring Average (Front Nine – Par 35): 33.818 [-1.182]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine – Par 35): 34.442 [-0.558]
- Toughest Hole: No. 2, Par 3, 191 yards – 3.403 [+0.403]
- Easiest Hole: No. 9, Par 4, 330 yards – 3.377 [-0.623]