



2023 The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay
(1st of 26 events on Korn Ferry Tour 2023 Schedule)

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

Great Exuma, Bahamas
Sandals Emerald Bay

January 15-18, 2023
Par/Yards: 36-36—72/7,027

Points: 500 (winner)
Purse: \$1,000,000 / \$180,000 (winner)

Weather: Partly cloudy with a high of 77. Wind E/SE at 8-14 mph, gusts up to 18 mph.

[Final Leaderboard](#)

Chandler Phillips 69-68-69-68 – 274 (-14)
Cody Blick 68-70-70-68 – 276 (-12)
Peter Knade 75-66-64-71 – 276 (-12)
Five Players Tied at 11-under par

2023 The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay Champion (stats entering the week)

Category	Chandler Phillips
Age	26
2022 Korn Ferry Tour Points List	n/a
Starts – wins – top-10s in Korn Ferry Tour (Career)	15-0-1
Starts – wins – top-10s in Korn Ferry Tour (2022)	0-0-0
Starts – wins – top-10s at The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay	0-0-0

Chandler Phillips cards four back-nine birdies to win The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay

GREAT EXUMA, The Bahamas – Chandler Phillips lived with teammate and future PGA TOUR winner Cameron Champ at Texas A&M University. He represented the United States in international competition alongside the likes of Sam Burns and Collin Morikawa. And he even defeated Keita Nakajima, formerly the No. 1 player in the World Amateur Golf Ranking, in match play at the 2019 Arnold Palmer Cup.

As a professional, though, Phillips had little to show for his collegiate accolades. Until Wednesday evening in The Bahamas.

Phillips birdied four of the first six holes of the back nine at Sandals Emerald Bay Golf Club and held on for a two-stroke victory at the Korn Ferry Tour’s 2023 season-opening event, The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic. A native of Huntsville, Texas, Phillips carded a 4-under 68 Wednesday, erasing the three-stroke lead Shad Tuten carried into the final round.

“It will probably sink in after my first beer,” Phillips said of the victory. “I kept doing what I was doing and didn’t really try to force anything. I made a bad bogey on No. 17. Honestly, I hadn’t seen the scoreboard. I didn’t look at it. I didn’t know where I was, but I was really thinking that, ‘Here we go again ... just screwed myself again.’ But other than that, I just played really solid, didn’t do anything really crazy or anything. Kept the ball in play.”

While Phillips’ consistent scoring eventually won out (he carded two 3-under 69s and two 4-under 68s), playing the same ball from start to finish in all four rounds set him apart from a crowded top 10, as he was one of only two players in the top 10 who went without a double bogey or worse this week.

Runners-up Cody Blick and Peter Knade each made a double bogey (and Knade made a triple bogey in the first round). They both finished two strokes behind Phillips. Playing in the final group Wednesday, defending champion Akshay Bhatia doubled the par-5 15th for his second double bogey of the week. Bhatia finished three strokes behind Phillips in a five-way T4. There was also David Skinns, back on the Korn Ferry Tour after a season on the PGA TOUR; he finished four strokes behind Phillips with three double bogeys.

Phillips kept it simple. Given the wave of confidence he rode into the week, there was no need for anything extraordinary.

“Hard to have a bad week in The Bahamas,” Phillips said. “I played one practice round. That’s all I needed to see. You start playing too many, you start finding stuff you don’t need to find. You come into the week wanting to win... but I would have been perfectly fine with like a top-20.”

Phillips starred at Huntsville High School, where he earned four all-state honors, and enrolled at Texas A&M a year after Cameron Champ. The two lived together for a little over two years, with both racking up a number of collegiate honors. Phillips was a three-time All-American, including a first-team honoree in 2018, while Champ garnered an All-America Third Team selection in 2017 and represented the United States at the 2017 Walker Cup. Phillips was an alternate for the 2019 Walker Cup, but he made three consecutive Arnold Palmer Cup teams from 2017-19, joining Bryce Molder as the only other American in history to play the event three times.

Phillips also posted seven career wins, the most by a Texas A&M golfer in records dating back to 1994.

Success was harder to come by for Phillips once he turned professional in summer 2019 following his senior season with the Aggies. Although Phillips qualified for Final Stage of the 2019 and 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournaments, he left both times with relatively low conditional status. Phillips made just 15 starts in the Korn Ferry Tour’s 46-event 2020-21 season, and did not make a single start in 2022.

Back at Final Stage for a third consecutive time this past November, Phillips finished T10 for guaranteed starts in the first 12 events.

“When I just stop caring about the outcome and just go and play each tournament round like another round of golf, that’s kind of when I finally started playing well,” said Phillips, who won the 2022 Oklahoma Open last August and logged seven top-four finishes in 13 starts last year on the All-Pro Tour. “I started practicing a week before this tournament. After Final (Stage), I did not touch a club until about a week or week and a half ago.”

Phillips had no trouble distracting himself this week. There was the scenery of The Bahamas, of course. But Phillips’ mind frequently wandered back home.

“I’ve been talking to my buddies every night. They’re duck hunting at home and I’m like, ‘I ain’t gonna lie, I’d rather be duck hunting.’” Phillips said. “Me and my buddies, we leave every Wednesday, Thursday, somewhere around there and come back on Sundays or Mondays. When I finished Final (Stage) and I knew the season was going to start this week... I was like, I have to miss out on the last three weeks of duck season.”

Duck season may be over for Phillips, but he will be hunting for a PGA TOUR card until next October rolls around.

Final-Round Notes

- **Peter Knade** (T2 / -12) recorded a runner-up finish in his first start as a Korn Ferry Tour member and second of his career; his only previous Korn Ferry Tour start was a missed cut as an open qualifier at the 2021 Club Car Championship at The Landings Golf & Athletic Club
 - Knade earned Korn Ferry Tour membership for the first time (and guaranteed starts for the first eight events of 2023) with a T29 at Final Stage of the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament back in November

- Making his 27th career Korn Ferry Tour start since turning pro in 2016, **Cody Blick** (T2 / -12) recorded a career-high finish, topping a T27 from the 2022 Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation
 - Blick, a conditional member last season, earned guaranteed starts for the first eight events in 2023 with a T17 at Final Stage of the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament
- Defending champion **Akshay Bhatia** (T4 / -11) closed with an even-par 72 and saw his title defense aspirations dissipate with a double bogey on the par-5 15th – his second double bogey of the week
- **Shad Tuten** (T4 / -11) carried a three-stroke lead into the final round but settled for his highest Korn Ferry Tour finish since a T3 at the 2021 Club Car Championship at The Landings Golf & Athletic Club
- Tuten became the first player since Justin Lower (2021 BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by TD SYNEX) who carried a lead of three-plus strokes into the final round but did not win the tournament
- **Wil Bateman** (T4 / -11), the 2022 PGA TOUR Canada Fortinet Cup winner, recorded his first top-10 in just his fourth career Korn Ferry Tour start; his previous career-high finish was T18 as an open qualifier at the 2022 Veritex Bank Championship
- **Daniel Miernicki** (T4 / -11) recorded a career-high finish in his 46th Korn Ferry Tour start; his previous career-high finish was T16 at the 2020 The King & Bear Classic at World Golf Village
- Miernicki was the only player aside from **Chandler Phillips** (1st / -14) who finished in the top 10 and did not record a double bogey this week
- **Brett Drewitt** (T4 / -11), who held PGA TOUR membership last season as a Class of 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour graduate, carded the low round of the day (6-under 66) and recorded his second top-five finish at this event (T3 in 2018)
- **Curtis Luck** (T40 / -2) led the field with 23 birdies, but also made eight bogeys, two double bogeys, a triple bogey, and a sextuple-bogey 10 throughout the week

Final-Round Course Statistics

- Scoring Average (Total): 71.353 [-0.647]
- Scoring Average (Front Nine): 35.676 [-0.324]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine): 35.676 [-0.324]
- Toughest Hole: No. 12, Par 4, 444 yards – 4.382 [+0.382]
- Easiest Hole: No. 1, Par 5, 532 yards – 4.544 [-0.456]

Cumulative Course Statistics

- Scoring Average (Total): 72.205 [+0.205]
- Scoring Average (Front Nine): 36.183 [+0.183]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine): 36.022 [+0.022]
- Toughest Hole: No. 5, Par 4, 499 yards – 4.344 [+0.344]
- Easiest Hole: No. 1, Par 5, 532 yards – 4.550 [-0.450]