

2023 The Panama Championship
(3rd of 26 events on Korn Ferry Tour 2023 Schedule)
[Tournament Media Site](#) | [Interview Transcripts](#)

Panama City, Panama
Panama Golf Club

February 2-5, 2023
Par/Yards: 35-35—70/7,534

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

Final-Round Notes – Sunday, February 5, 2023

Weather: Partly cloudy, high of 90. Wind N/NW at 8-20 mph, gusts up to 30 mph.

[Final Leaderboard](#)

Pierceson Coody *	72-68-71-66 - 277 (-3)
Sam Saunders	74-68-68-67 - 277 (-3)
Mac Meissner	71-65-73-68 - 277 (-3)
Wil Bateman	71-68-70-69 - 278 (-2)
Joe Highsmith	70-71-67-70 - 278 (-2)
Two Players Tied	279 (-1)

* - Won with birdie on first hole (No. 18) of sudden-death playoff

Charting The Champion (stats entering the week)

Category	Pierceson Coody
Age	23 (January 7, 2000)
2022 Korn Ferry Tour Points List	No. 32
Starts – wins – top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (2022)	11-1-3
Starts – wins – top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (2023)	2-0-0
Starts – wins – top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (Career)	13-1-3
Starts – wins – top-10s at The Panama Championship	0-0-0

Pierceson Coody outlasts field, wins The Panama Championship in a three-man playoff

PANAMA CITY, Panama – Another year, another emerging star winning on the Korn Ferry Tour. In this case, it is one of the same winners from a season ago, with Pierceson Coody joining illustrious company by rallying for a playoff victory at The Panama Championship, his second Korn Ferry Tour win in what was his 14th career start.

Coody, who entered Sunday's final round of The Panama Championship at 1-over par and five strokes behind outright leader Christopher Petefish, teed off just under two hours before the final group and carded a 4-under 66. Following a multi-hour wait for the field, only Sam Saunders and Mac Meissner, with rounds of 3-under 67 and 2-under 68, respectively, matched Coody at 3-under par for the tournament.

"It honestly wasn't as bad as I thought it would be," Coody said of the wait. "You're refreshing the leaderboard, you're putting, you're hitting balls, but once it was time to get in the playoff, all that kind of anxious feel went away and I was just happy to be playing golf again, happy to be in contention."

The trio headed back to the 18th tee at Panama Golf Club, and Coody made quick work of the playoff. The Plano, Texas "juiced" a driver and left himself a 126-yard approach shot. With the wind whipping, adrenaline pumping, and firm greens, Coody grabbed a lob wedge and played for a stock shot to the front of the green, 105 yards. Coody hit his target, the ball rolling within a foot of the hole and setting up a tap-in birdie.

"It feels fake," Coody said. "I had surgery in the offseason and missed the (first) two cuts (of 2023), so to say I wasn't very high on my game would be an understatement. I had a great second round, felt like I got myself back in the tournament, and from there things just kind of kept going my way. This final round was awesome. I did a lot of things really well and made some putts down the stretch that just gave me this chance.

"I hit one of the best shots of my career to whatever – six inches, a foot – to win and I just couldn't be happier."

Quite a lot to unpack there.

First off, the illustrious company Coody joined Sunday afternoon.

Coody [won his third career start](#) at the 2022 Live and Work in Maine Open, running away with a five-stroke victory, and won his third start of 2023.

Fourteen career starts, two victories. Only three other players since the start of 2019 recorded two wins on the Korn Ferry Tour prior to their 20th start on Tour.

Kris Ventura accomplished the feat the quickest among the group, winning his fifth and eighth career starts early in the 2019 season. One piece of additional context for the difference in starts between Ventura and Coody, however, was the fact Coody turned professional last summer immediately joined the Korn Ferry Tour by virtue of finishing No. 1 in the 2022 PGA TOUR University Velocity Global Ranking, meaning this week was his 14th start as a professional, while Ventura, a representative of Norway, played seven Challenge Tour events back home in Europe before he earned Korn Ferry Tour membership for 2019 .

The others needed a few more starts than Coody. Those two were Cameron Young and Scottie Scheffler.

Young, the 2021-22 PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year, won back-to-back events in his 17th and 18th career starts in May 2021, nine months after he earned Special Temporary Membership with an incredible run of top-15s after a successful Monday qualifier. Scheffler, the 2022 Masters Tournament winner and fifth Korn Ferry Tour graduate in history who ascended to No. 1 in the Official World Golf Ranking, won his 12th and 19th career Korn Ferry Tour starts in the second half of his rookie season in 2019.

Back to The Panama Championship, Coody became the seventh player in history to win a 72-hole Korn Ferry Tour event with a winning score of 3-under par or higher.

Highest Winning Scores Relative to Par in Korn Ferry Tour History (72-Hole Events; * - playoff winner)

Score	Player	Tournament
288 (E)	Omar Uresti	2007 Livermore Valey Wine Country Championship
287 (-1)	Doug Martin*	1993 South Texas Open
286 (-2)	Kyle Thompson	2017 The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay
285 (-3)	Richard Johnson	2000 Monterey Peninsula Classic
281 (-3)	Paul Gow	2000 Hershey Open
277 (-3)	Scott Dunlap	2008 The Panama Championship
277 (-3)	Pierceson Coody*	2023 The Panama Championship
284 (-4)	Ahmad Bateman	1997 UNC Health Championship presented by STITCH
284 (-4)	Pat Bates	2001 Korn Ferry Tour Championship presented by United Leasing & Finance
276 (-4)	Edward Loar	2012 The Panama Championship

Then there was this week's first round, a 2-over 72 with three bogeys and just one birdie, which left Coody in T75 position. The last Korn Ferry Tour winner who stood outside the top 50 after the first round was Seth Reeves, who was T111 after the first round of the 2020 Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Aetna. Coody also joined Reeves as the only other player since the start of the 2020-21 season who began the final round outside the top 15 (Coody was T24, while Reeves was T27) and won the tournament.

Coody bounced back with a 2-under 68 in the second round, but found himself 3-over par at the turn Saturday afternoon. He responded with three birdies and a bogey on the back nine, then backed it up with five birdies and a bogey in regulation Sunday.

Counting the playoff birdie, Coody played his final 28 holes at 7-under par. Such scoring stretches are the norm for Korn Ferry Tour winners, but Coody's was all the more impressive given the fact Panama Golf Club played 1.722 strokes over par this week, the highest scoring average relative to par for any Korn Ferry Tour event since the 2020 season opener.

"This one's really sweet," Coody said. "Maine was... I don't want to say it felt easy, but it was almost like an out-of-body experience the way I started, and it was kind of cruising in on the back nine. This (one), the whole time, I was chasing."

Much was expected of Coody when he turned professional last summer following a highly decorated amateur career. Son of a professional golfer and a grandson of 1971 Masters Tournament champion and three-time PGA TOUR winner Charles Coody, Pierceson was a member of the victorious 2021 Walker Cup and Arnold Palmer Cup teams, won the 2020 Western Amateur, and reached No. 1 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking.

Pierceson and fraternal twin brother Parker – also a Korn Ferry Tour member this year – led the University of Texas to a team national title at the 2022 NCAA Championships as they concluded their collegiate careers.

The victory in Maine and a top-five in Wichita, Kansas gave Pierceson a legitimate chance at a PGA TOUR card with just five regular season events remaining in the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour season. Coody came up seven spots short as he missed three of the final five cuts.

There was a second chance and fresh start in the Korn Ferry Tour Finals – which is getting [its own fresh start](#) this year – but a wrist injury [forced a withdrawal](#) from the season-ending event and ultimately led to surgery.

"It was really stressful not being able to play much golf until early December," Coody said. "And then being kind of thrust into the season in The Bahamas, and things just go so fast. It's already three weeks traveling, playing. I can't imagine how fast this season's going to feel. Everything snowballs. And injury, so many guys have bounced back, but until you actually do bounce back, you always kind of doubt it in the back of your head. I'm so happy I bounced back."

With 22 more events left in the season, as well as an additional five PGA TOUR cards awarded through the Korn Ferry Tour Points List, signs point to Coody playing his way onto professional golf's biggest stage this year.

History is already on his side.

Final-Round Notes

- **Pierceson Coody** (1st / -3) also had the highest 36- and 54-hole positions by a Korn Ferry Tour winner since the 2020-21 season
 - T21 through 36 holes, lowest 36-hole position for a winner since Greyson Sigg (T23 through 36 holes of 2021 Albertsons Boise Open presented by Chevron)
 - T24 through 54 holes, lowest 54-hole position for a winner since Seth Reeves (T27 through 54 holes of 2020 Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Aetna)

- **Mac Meissner** (T2 / -3), a second-year Korn Ferry Tour member, recorded the highest finish of his career, topping a pair of T5s from last season (NV5 Invitational presented by Old National Bank, Pinnacle Bank Championship presented by Aetna); he finished No. 46 on the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Points List
 - Meissner also finished T15 at the 2022 Panama Championship
- **Sam Saunders** (T2 / -3) recorded his fourth runner-up finish in a PGA TOUR-sanctioned event, and third runner-up finish on the Korn Ferry Tour (T2 at 2017 Korn Ferry Tour Championship presented by United Leasing & Finance, T2 at 2015 Puerto Rico Open [PGA TOUR], T2 at 2012 Utah Championship presented by Zions Bank)
- **Wil Bateman** (T4 / -2), a second-year Korn Ferry Tour member and winner of the 2022 PGA TOUR Canada Fortinet Cup, recorded his second T4 finish in his third start of the season; his best finish in three Korn Ferry Tour starts prior to the 2023 season was T18 at the 2022 Veritex Bank Championship
- Four players who finished T8 or higher this week were top-40 finishers at Final Stage of the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament: **Joe Highsmith** (T4 / -2; T24 at Final Stage), **Paul Peterson** (T6 / -1; T8 at Final Stage), **Rico Hoey** (T8 / E; T18 at Final Stage), **Carter Jenkins** (T8 / E; T39 at Final Stage)
- Highsmith, a Korn Ferry Tour rookie who finished No. 9 in the 2022 PGA TOUR Canada Fortinet Cup following a No. 10 finish on the 2022 PGA TOUR University Velocity Global Ranking, recorded his second consecutive top-15 and has not finished lower than T31 in the first three events this season
 - T31 – The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay
 - T12 – The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club
 - T4 – The Panama Championship
- **Christopher Petefish** (T8 / E), who held the outright 54-hole lead, settled for his second top-10 in his 19th career Korn Ferry Tour start, and first start of the 2023 season; he finished No. 90 on the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Points List as a rookie last season for conditional membership this year
- **Roberto Díaz** (T8 / E) recorded the highest finish among the 14 players with ties to Latin America in this week's field; he is playing the 2023 season out of the Past Champion 3-4 Years category following a 142nd-place finish at Final Stage of the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying Tournament

Final-Round Course Statistics

- Scoring Average (Total – Par 70): 71.135 [+1.135]
- Scoring Average (Front Nine – Par 35): 35.162 [+0.162]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine – Par 35): 35.973 [+0.973]
- Toughest Hole: No. 7, Par 4, 461 yards – 4.257 [+0.257]
- Easiest Hole: No. 4, Par 5, 604 yards – 4.635 [-0.365]

Cumulative Course Statistics

- Scoring Average (Total): 71.722 [+1.722]
 - Highest scoring average relative to par since 2020 The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic at Sandals Emerald Bay (+2.322 / 74.322)
- Scoring Average (Front Nine): 36.063 [+1.063]
- Scoring Average (Back Nine): 35.660 [+0.660]
- Toughest Hole: No. 7, Par 4, 461 yards – 4.402 [+0.402]
- Easiest Hole: No. 12, Par 5, 625 yards – 4.761 [-0.239]