



# 2023 Visit Knoxville Open

(11th of 26 events on 2023 Korn Ferry Tour Schedule)

**Tournament Media Site** | Interview Transcripts

Knoxville, Tennessee May 25-28, 2023 Points: 500 (winner)

Holston Hills Country Club Par / Yards: 35-35—70 / 7,218 Purse: \$1,000,000 / \$180,000 (winner)

First-Round Notes - Thursday, May 25, 2023

Weather: Mostly sunny with temperatures in the 70s throughout the morning and an afternoon high of 83. NE winds with gusts up to 10 mph.

### **First-Round Leaderboard**

| Nelson Ledesma  | 63 (-7) |
|-----------------|---------|
| Alejandro Tosti | 63 (-7) |
| Rico Hoey       | 64 (-6) |
| David Kocher    | 64 (-6) |
| Mason Andersen  | 65 (-5) |
| 15 players tied | 66 (-4) |

### Things to Know

- Two-time PGA TOUR Latinoamérica winner and Korn Ferry Tour rookie **Alejandro Tosti** recorded a 7-under 63 to earn the best 18-hole position of his career, shares the 18-hole lead with fellow Argentinian **Nelson Ledesma**
- Ledesma, a two-time Korn Ferry Tour winner making his 89th career start on Tour, holds an 18-hole lead/co-lead for the fourth time in his Tour career
- Making his first Korn Ferry Tour start, sponsor exemption and University of Tennessee alum Spencer Cross opens in 4-under 66 and stands T6
- Four-time Korn Ferry Tour winner Ben Kohles made a hole-in-one at the 149-yard par-3 fourth
- 18 players sit within three strokes of the lead after 18 holes
- Four players recorded bogey-free rounds Thursday at Holston Hills Country Club

#### **First-Round Lead Notes**

- 7 First-round leaders/co-leaders to win Visit Knoxville Open
  - Anders Alberston (2022, 1st) Greyson Sigg (2021, T1), Martin Piller (2014, T1), Jarrod Lyle (2008, T1),
     Heath Slocum (2001, T1), Dave Rummells (1997, 1st), Frank Connor (1991, T1)
- O First-round leaders/co-leaders to win on Tour in 2023
  - o Last: David Lingmerth 2022 Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship

#### Charting the Leaders (stats entering the week)

| Category  | Nelson Ledesma     | Alejandro Tosti   |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| Age   | 32 (July 25, 1990) | 26 (May 30, 1996) |
| 2023 Korn Ferry Tour Points List                    | No. 68             | No. 20            |
| Starts – wins – top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (2023)   | 9-0-1              | 9-0-3             |
| Starts – wins – top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (Career) | 88-2-10            | 11-0-3            |
| Starts – wins – top-10s at Visit Knoxville Open     | 2-0-0              | 0-0-0             |

# Nelson Ledesma (Co-Leader / -7)

- Holds the 18-hole lead/co-lead for the fourth time in his Korn Ferry Tour career; he previously converted one of those leads/co-leads into a win (2019 The Ascendant presented by Blue)
- Makes seven birdies, including four in a seven-hole stretch (Nos. 12, 14, 16, 18), en route to bogey-free 7-under 63
- Two-time winner on the Korn Ferry Tour with victories at the <u>2019 The Ascendant Presented by Blue</u> and 2018 LECOM Health Challenge
- Has six made cuts and two top-25s in nine starts this season, highlighted by a T10 at the Astara Chile Classic

- Win at The Ascendant Presented by Blue and pair of top-3 finishes in the 2019 season culminated in his first PGA

  TOUR card
- Finished No. 192 in the 2020-21 FedExCup Standings, relegating him to the Korn Ferry Tour
- Hails from Tucuman, Argentina and turned professional in 2007 at just 17 years old

### Alejandro Tosti (Co-Leader / -7)

- Earns the first lead/co-lead of any kind in his young Korn Ferry Tour career (making 12th career start this week)
- Previous best career-high position after any round was T2 after 18 holes (2023 Veritex Bank Championship/finished T10; 2023 Club Car Championship at The Landings Golf & Athletic Club/finished T25)
- Rolls in a career-high 11 birdies and four pars against two bogeys and a double bogey en route to 7-under 63, tying his career-low round on Tour (8-under 63/2023 Veritex Bank Championship/Round 1)
- Ties Tim Widing (Astara Chile Classic/Round 2) and Jack Maguire (Club Car Championship at The Landings Golf & Athletic Club/Round 4) for the most total birdies in a Korn Ferry Tour round this season with 11
- Cards four birdies in a row from Nos. 2-5 and five birdies in his final six holes (Nos. 13, 14, 16, 17, 18)
- Owns three top-10s in nine Korn Ferry Tour starts this season, including a career-high solo-fourth at last week's AdventHealth Championship
- Also boasts a T10 from the PGA TOUR's 2023 Mexico Open at Vidanta
- 26-year-old native of Rosario, Argentia who now resides in Gainesville, Florida, earned Korn Ferry Tour
  membership for the first time via a No. 5 finish in the 2021-22 PGA TOUR Latinoamérica Totalplay Cup, and earned
  guranateed starts for the first eight events of the season with a T29 at Final Stage of the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour
  Qualifying Tournament
- Turned professional in 2018 after four seasons at University of Florida (2014-18), where he won four times individually, with the crown jewel being medalist honors at the 2017 Southeastern Conference Championship
- Played primarily on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica from 2018-2022, earning wins at the 2022 90 Abierto del Centro memorial Eduardo Gato Romero ptdo por Telecom and 2019 Termas de Rio Hondo Invitational

#### Quotables

**Alejandro Tosti** on his first-round 7-under 63... "I had a pretty good day. I mean, best birdies I ever made in my whole career, 11 in one day was like wow, one after the other after the other. Then I had a couple bad breaks where I made a double, but I again fought back and yeah, it's like just everything was hitting the ball great. I mean, the best in many years, putting the best in many years, so everything is kind of coming together."

Alejandro Tosti on how he his game feels... "I think every part of my game is coming along together and I'm just living in the moment. Very happy. I mean, [this is] the best I've done in my professional career. I have a good time. This is my first year on this tour and I'm showing some good results in the beginning, which is really good. Very motivating for what's coming. I mean, also those invites that I got -- well, the invite [into the Mexico Open] and turned that into a top-10. To be able to play in an elevated event next to Rory McIlroy and Jordan Spieth, all of those, and make the cut, just a lot of positive things and I just want to keep building for what's coming."

**Nelson Ledesma** on a bogey-free start to the week... "When we finished the round my caddie told me that is the first round we've had that was bogey-free, so we are happy about that. I struck well the ball, so I'm very happy with that.

I like the course, a typical course that we play in Argentina with some trees. I really like the greens, the greens are nice. We are OK."

## Notes

- Rico Hoey (T3 / -6), currently No. 4 on the Korn Ferry Tour Points List, sits inside the top 10 through 18 holes for the second time this season after birdies on five of his first 10 holes (started on No. 10) and a closing birdie at the par-4 ninth
- Two-time Korn Ferry Tour winner **David Kocher** (T3 / -6) cards a bogey-free 6-under 64 after opening with back-to-back birdies on Nos. 10 and 11 and adding four others on Nos. 4, 6, 7 and 15
- Rookie Mason Andersen (solo fifth / -5) earns his best 18-hole position in a Korn Ferry Tour start (previous best: T10/2023 The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club/finished T34) as he makes seven birdies against two bogeys
- Pontus Nyholm (T6 / -4) sits inside the top 10 after 18 holes for the second time this season (T2/2023 Astara Chile Classic/finished T18)

- The only player with two wins this season, **Ben Kohles** (T92 / +1) records a hole-in-one at the 149-yard par-3 fourth, marking the second hole-in-one at No. 4 since the tournament relocated to Holston Hills Country Club in 2021 (Michael Kim/2022/Round 1)
- **Jacob Bridgeman** (T6 / -4) eagles the par-5 18th to secure his best 18-hole position in a Korn Ferry Tour start (previous best: T7/2023 Veritex Bank Championsip/finished T7)
- Open Qualifier and Knoxville native **Ryan Hall** (T33 / -2) cards a 2-under 68 to tie the lowest round from Open Qualifiers alongside **William Nottingham** (T33 / -2)