

2024 The Panamá Championship
(3rd of 26 events on 2024 Korn Ferry Tour Schedule)
[Tournament Media Site](#) | [Interview Transcripts](#)

Panamá City, Panamá February 1-4, 2024 Points: 500 (winner)
 Panamá Golf Club Par/Yards: 35-35—70/7,534 Purse: \$1,000,000 / \$180,00 (winner)

Second-Round Notes – Friday, February 2, 2024

The second round was suspended due to darkness at 6:29 p.m. ET and resumed Saturday morning at 8:15 a.m., with six players needing to complete the second round. The 36-hole cut was made Saturday morning at 2-over 142, with 69 professionals and one amateur advancing to the weekend.

Weather: Partly cloudy. High of 92. Wind N at 4-20 mph.

Leaderboard

Pos.	Player	R1	R2	Total
T1	Isaiah Salinda	70	65	135 (-5)
	Augusto Núñez	65	70	135 (-5)
	Ryan Gerard	69	66	135 (-5)
	Austin Hitt	66	69	135 (-5)
5	Ross Steelman	68	68	136 (-4)
T6	Seven Players Tied			137 (-3)

Things to Know

- Four players seeking their first Korn Ferry Tour win – **Ryan Gerard, Austin Hitt, Augusto Núñez, Isaiah Salinda** – share the 36-hole lead at 5-under 135, one stroke ahead of **Ross Steelman** in solo fifth
- None of the four co-leaders have held a 36-hole lead / co-lead in a Korn Ferry Tour event
- Salinda carded one of three 5-under 65s recorded in the second round, with the others belonging to **Curtis Luck** and **Nelson Ledesma**
- Playing in the same group, **Emilio Gonzalez** and **Keenan Huskey** make the first holes-in-one of the season at the 187-yard par-3 sixth and 162-yard 17th, respectively
- The second round was suspended due to darkness and resumed Saturday morning at 8:15 a.m. ET, with six players needing to complete the second round
- Panamanian amateur Omar Tejeira records birdie-par-par finish on Nos. 16-18 Saturday morning to post second-round 1-under 69 and total 2-over 142, becomes the first amateur to make the cut in The Panamá Championship history (20th playing of the event this week)

Charting the Co-Leaders

Category (Stats entering week)	Salinda	Núñez	Gerard	Hitt
Age	26	31	24	26
Starts – Wins – Top-10s in Korn Ferry Tour Career	23-0-1	111-0-12	9-0-1	3-0-0
Starts – Wins – Top-10s on Korn Ferry Tour (2024)	0-0-0	2-0-0	2-0-0	2-0-0
Starts – Wins – Top-10s at The Panamá Champ.	Debut	4-0-0	1-0-0	Debut

Isaiah Salinda (T1/-5)

- Cards six birdies (par-4 first, fifth, and seventh, par-5 12th, and par-3 13th and 17th) against one bogey at the par-3 sixth for 5-under 65, tying the low round of the day
- Holds first 36-hole lead / co-lead in what is his 24th career start on the Korn Ferry Tour (previous career-high 36-hole position: T4/2023 AdventHealth Championship/finished T9)

- Making first start of the 2024 season after a No. 80 finish on the 2023 Korn Ferry Tour Points List, which earned him conditional membership and an exemption to Second Stage of 2023 PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry
- Finished T21 at Final Stage of 2023 PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry for guaranteed starts in the first 12 events of the 2024 season
- Qualified for Final Stage of 2023 PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry through the Valencia, California site of Second Stage
- Recorded a top-10 on both the Korn Ferry Tour (T9/2023 AdventHealth Championship) and PGA TOUR (T7/2023 Shriners Children's Open) last season
- Played the 2021 season on the Forme Tour, and 2022 season on PGA TOUR Canada
- Turned professional in 2019 after four seasons at Stanford University (2015-19), where he was a 2019 All-America Second Team selection and helped Stanford win the team national title at the 2019 NCAA Championship, which was the program's first national title since 2007

Augusto Núñez (T1/-5)

- Follows 5-under 65 with even-par 70, maintains share of lead (co-led with Trey Winstead after first round)
- Counters bogeys on two of first three holes (par-4 first and third) and double bogey at the par-4 10th with four birdies (par-4 ninth and 11th, par-3 13th, and par-4 18th)
- Holds first 36-hole lead / co-lead in what is his 112th career start on the Korn Ferry Tour (previous career-high 36-hole position: T2, twice; 2018 Astara Golf Championship/finished T29, 2022 BMW Charity Pro-Am presented by TD SYNEX/finished T3)
- Entered the week with missed cuts in both season-opening events in The Bahamas
- Playing from Tucuman, Argentina, finished No. 180 on the 2022-23 FedExCup Fall standings as a PGA TOUR rookie; he earned his first PGA TOUR card via a No. 6 finish on the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Points List
- Turned professional in 2012, playing predominantly on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica for the first five years of his career; he owns three career wins on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica, and notably finished No. 2 on the circuit's 2016 Order of Merit, followed later by a No. 1 finish on the circuit's 2019 Order of Merit

Ryan Gerard (T1/-5)

- Cards 4-under 66 with hole-out eagle at par-5 12th (third eagle of the tournament at No. 12), three birdies (par-4 14th, 16th, and fifth) and one bogey at the par-4 second
- Holds first 36-hole lead / co-lead in what is his 10th career start on the Korn Ferry Tour (previous career-high 36-hole position on the Korn Ferry Tour: T5/2023 Astara Golf Championship/finished T3)
- Held the outright 18-hole lead after a 6-under 64 at the 2023 Panamá Championship (finished T41)
- Entered the week with a missed cut and T27 in first two events of the 2024 season
- Played the first four events of the 2023 Korn Ferry Tour season, highlighted by a T3 at the 2023 Astara Golf Championship, but earned and accepted Special Temporary Membership on the PGA TOUR in April 2023 and played the rest of the year on TOUR
- Finished solo-fourth as an open qualifier at the 2023 Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches (stood T3 through 36 holes), followed by a T11 at the Puerto Rico Open, T71 at the Valspar Championship, and T56 at the Valero Texas Open en route to Special Temporary Membership
- Added a second top-10 on TOUR at the 2023 Barracuda Championship (5th)
- Finished No. 5 in the 2022 Fortinet Cup Standings on PGA TOUR Canada with a victory and two additional top-four finishes
- Turned professional in 2022 after five seasons at University of North Carolina (2017-22), where he won one collegiate event, garnered 2022 All-America Second Team recognition, and finished as the program's career scoring average leader (71.65), breaking the school record previously established by Ben Griffin (72.02)

Austin Hitt (T1/-5)

- Holds first lead / co-lead of any kind in what is his fourth career start on the Korn Ferry Tour (previous career-high 36-hole position: T3/2024 The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic at The Abaco Club/finished T11)
- Entered the week with back-to-back T11 finishes in the season-opening events in The Bahamas

- Gained entry to this week's field via his No. 3 finish on the 2022-23 PGA TOUR Latinoamérica Totalplay Cup standings (top five were guaranteed entry this week); he also earned Korn Ferry Tour membership for the first time via his top-five finish in the Totalplay Cup standings
- Finished T97 at Final Stage of 2023 PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry, leaving him with conditional status for the 2024 Korn Ferry Tour season
- Posted runner-up finishes in back-to-back events last season on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica en route to his No. 3 finish in the 2022-23 Totalplay Cup standings
- Also finished No. 16 in the 2021-22 Totalplay Cup standings with a runner-up finish and two other top-10s
- Played the 2021 and 2022 seasons on PGA TOUR Canada, finishing No. 68 and No. 33, respectively, in the Totalplay Cup standings
- Turned professional in 2021 after five seasons at University of North Carolina (2016-21), where he finished with the fourth-lowest career scoring average in program history (72.20)

Quotables

Isaiah Salinda on his 5-under 65 Friday... "The course was more gettable today. Playing in the morning today was playing a lot easier than playing in the afternoon yesterday with the wind. The conditions were pretty ideal, just had to take advantage of the birdie opportunities I gave myself. Just hit a lot of greens, made more putts than yesterday, which is nice."

Salinda on struggling in the back end of the 2023 season... "Last year was good to get almost a full season under my belt. It was my first full season out here. Definitely learned a lot. It was a little disappointing at the end and didn't play well in kind of the last second half of the season. Now that I know the courses a little bit and know what I need to work on, I think it will help me this year. I think it was more mental than anything. When you start stacking missed cuts, you lose confidence and you start losing belief. You just start pressing a little bit, I think. I think I was just forcing it trying to birdie every hole when you really don't need to do that out here. I think that was kind of one of the main lessons."

Ryan Gerard on the biggest lesson he learned playing the PGA TOUR last season... "Just patience. Patience and trusting it. You never know when you might play well and then, all of a sudden, you have a PGA TOUR card. You've just got to really stay patient, trust that your game is good enough. I feel like I'm very confident in what I've been doing and continue to do. And my team around me has done a really good job of helping me kind of build that confidence and build it to the point where I feel like I can play out here, I feel like I can play on the PGA TOUR. Just a lot of trust, a lot of confidence, and just staying patient in the moment."

Additional Player Notes

- **Ross Steelman** (5th/-4) stands T6 or higher for the sixth time in the last seven Korn Ferry Tour rounds (finished solo third at The Bahamas Great Exuma Classic; T4, T1, T6 in Rounds 1-3 at The Bahamas Great Abaco Classic; T5 and solo fifth in Rounds 1-2 at The Panamá Championship)
 - Steelman finished No. 4 on the 2023 PGA TOUR University Ranking for Korn Ferry Tour membership last season, and finished T28 at Final Stage of 2023 PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry for guaranteed starts in the first 12 events of the 2024 season
- Sponsor exemption and conditional member **John Pak** (T14/-1) bounces back from 2-over 72 with 3-under 67; he has one previous appearance at this event, which was his Korn Ferry Tour debut in 2022 (finished T32)
 - Pak, who finished No. 1 in the inaugural 2021 PGA TOUR University Ranking, previously held Korn Ferry Tour membership in 2022, when he finished 145th on the Korn Ferry Tour Points List (one top-25, seven missed cuts, one withdrawal)
 - Pak won the 2023 Elk Ridge Saskatchewan Open on PGA TOUR Canada en route to a No. 8 finish in the Fortinet Cup standings, which earned him Korn Ferry Tour membership for 2024; he finished T113 at Final Stage of 2023 PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry for conditional status this season
 - Without a sponsor exemption this week, Pak would have been the 34th alternate
- **Curtis Luck** (13th/-2) and **Nelson Ledesma** (T34/+1) both card 5-under 65s – tied with **Isaiah Salinda** (T1/-5) for the low round of the day – improved from their first round by eight and 11 strokes, respectively
- Rookie **Trey Winstead** (T6/-3), one of two 18-hole co-leaders, falls out of the top five after 2-over 72