

## Bill Hermanson Wins 9th Senior Match Play Championship



Bill Hermanson of Black Hall Club, the number two seed, defeated four-time champion and medalist Dave Szewczul of Tunxis Plantation Country Club in the final match by a score of 4 and 3 to capture the 9th Senior Match Play Championship at the Golf Club at Oxford Greens.

Conducted by the Connecticut State Golf Association, the Senior Match Play Championship is open to Connecticut senior golfers who are fifty five years of age and over. The tournament challenges competitors with a round of stroke play to determine the low sixteen match play qualifiers. Following the qualifying round, four rounds of match play are conducted over consecutive days, culminating in an eighteen-hole final match.

After successfully defeating Frank Geiger, of H.S. Richardson GC, in his morning semifinal match by a score of 5 and 4, Hermanson advanced to face Dave Szewczul, the medalist and overall number one seed. To knock off the defending champion would be a tall task for Hermanson, the 2012 Connecticut Golf Hall of Fame inductee. Since 2010, Szewczul has won the Senior Match Play Championship three straight years and has only lost one match in the event.

“I knew I had to play really well, pretty much mistake free to beat a guy like Dave,” said Hermanson “He’s been on such a roll for the last bunch of years. He doesn’t make mistakes and I knew that I couldn’t make them if I wanted to win.”

From the start, Hermanson dominated the final match. He won two of the first three holes, making a par-4 on the 1st hole and a ten-foot birdie putt on the difficult par-5 3rd hole. From there, Szewczul would close the gap briefly, to one after winning the 5th hole with a par. From there, Hermanson took control of the match. He won the 8th, 10th, and 11th holes to take a 4-up advantage with just seven holes to play, a lead he would never relinquish. Holding a 3-up lead with four holes to play, both players hit their approach shots on the par-4 15th hole to fifteen feet behind the hole. Needing some magic, Szewczul watched his putt narrowly slide by the hole, setting the stage for Hermanson to seal the victory.

“I played pretty solid, I wasn’t totally mistake free, like I was yesterday, but I didn’t make the big key mistakes,” said Hermanson. “I think I may have made maybe one or two mistakes, but I hit the ball really well”

After narrowly beating Jack Bracken, the 2013 Connecticut Senior Amateur champion, Hermanson never needed more than 15 holes to win his next three matches. He won both his quarterfinal and semifinal matches by a score of 5 and 4 over Jon Groveman and Frank Geiger, respectively.

For Szewczul, it was a narrow miss at a record, fifth straight title but another strong showing for the 2010 inductee into the Connecticut Golf Hall of Fame.

“I expected to give Billy a little better run for his money, but I didn’t get off to a good start,” said Szewczul. “Consequently, I was playing a little catch-up most of the way and I never could turn the tables to put a little pressure on him. I just made a few mistakes more than Bill unfortunately. I’ve been on that side of the table before and now its Bill’s turn and he deserved to win today.”

Aside from their impressive resumes, the pair are close friends and play together in numerous four-ball events throughout the year. Earlier this spring, they teamed up to win the Two Man Team Championship at Black Hall Club, an event that is named in honor of Hermanson.

“We reminisce and it’s just a wonderful thing to be able to do this for so many years, to compete and be friends,” said Szewczul. “I always say, you’re even on the first tee, there’s no defense in golf. The fellow that beats you on that given day, that given round, more power to him, you need to take your hat off and congratulate him and go onto the next tournament and see what you can do from there.”

The win marked Hermanson’s tenth individual CSGA championship, a resume that includes a record five Connecticut Mid-Amateur titles and one Connecticut Amateur title (1991). He is second all-time, only to Szewczul, who has amassed an amazing thirteen individual CSGA titles and two New England Senior Amateur titles.

“It’s different when you’re playing against the guy because you’re rooting for him but you are also trying to win, it’s difficult. You don’t ever want to see him hit a bad shot but you’re just hoping you hit enough good shots to win. We met 37 years ago in the first round of the state amateur. It was fate through golf and the CSGA that we me,” said Hermanson.

Both Hermanson and Szewczul will look to add to their collection of titles in a few short weeks when the 113th Connecticut Amateur kicks off, June 15th-19th at Black Hall Club in Old Lyme, Connecticut.

“It’s always a thrill to play in the CSGA events and it’s even more of a thrill to win them. I’m absolutely ecstatic to beat a guy like Dave in the finals, it’s as good as it gets,” said Hermanson.