

Evan Grenus Wins 113th Connecticut Amateur



Evan Grenus of TPC River Highlands put on a spectacular display of golf en-route to capturing the 113th Connecticut Amateur Championship, defeating Greg Reily of CC of Darien, 5 and 4. The state's most prestigious amateur championship was conducted June 15th - 19th at Black Hall Club in Old Lyme, Conn.

Grenus, a rising sophomore at Wofford College, entered the finals of the Connecticut Amateur hoping to capture his second CSGA major championship in as many years, having won the Connecticut Junior Amateur last year. At just eighteen years of age, Grenus played a "golf marathon" of sorts, needing 10 extra holes to win his first three matches. Even with a decisive 7 and 6 victory in his semifinal match over defending champion Zach Zaback, he had already played 112 holes in four days. With a 36-hole final standing between him and the title, no doubt his youth and past experience in match play was a key entering the day.

"I definitely thought about the Junior Am heading into today, having won five matches last year to win," said Grenus. "I felt good last night knowing I hadn't lost in match play in a while."

But the morning would not start off easy for Grenus, who quickly found himself 2-down through the first 4 holes after Reilly strung together three birdies in the first four holes.

"To be honest, I wasn't too worried at that point. I knew he had a hot start and made a few putts of length to start off the round," said Grenus. "I knew he was putting well so there wasn't much I could do about it, but I knew I would come back and make some birdies."

Indeed, Grenus would bounce back in remarkable fashion, winning six of the next eight holes (#5-11) to go from 2-down to 4-up in just under two hours. Reilly won the 12th hole with a par, and the two halved the next six holes to enter the break with Grenus holding a 3-up lead.

“I felt good at the break and felt confident going back out there,” said Grenus. “I knew I was playing well and I knew my putter was hot so I wasn’t stressed out too much.”

However, with a full 18-holes left to play, there was still plenty of time for Reilly to forge a comeback. Despite faltering in the middle of the morning round, he made a plethora of putts down the stretch to keep his hope of his first Amateur title alive.

“Starting out in the afternoon on the front nine, I really just wanted to win a couple of holes in a row and put some pressure on him,” said Reilly. “I won a few holes, but I could never win two in a row. I only hit six greens in the afternoon, and he just played solid out there.”

Unfortunately for Reilly, the front nine of the afternoon 18 was a metaphorical see-saw, with the two trading birdies but the gap never getting closer than three. After Reilly won the 28th hole to bring the deficit back to 3-down, it looked like he might have a chance to put on a late charge.

But a wayward tee-shot on the 458-yard par-4 12th, the 30th of the match, seemed to be the key to the match. He would lose both the 30th and 31st holes to birdies, and a closing par on the 32nd hole for Grenus was all that was needed to secure the title.

“I knew I had a lead in the match, and it never got to two or one, so I felt pretty good throughout the round,” said Grenus, who became the first former Junior Amateur Champion to go on to win the Amateur since Kevin Gai of Indian Hill CC (1983 Junior Amateur and 1996 Amateur Champion). He also became just the second player to win the Junior Amateur and Amateur titles in consecutive years.

“It means a lot to me to win my second CSGA championship. This was a big goal of mine heading into the season and now I can check it off the list. This will definitely give me a lot of confidence going forward into other tournaments.”

Despite falling short on the final day, it was Reilly’s first appearance in the finals and a tremendous accomplishment for one of Connecticut’s rising amateur stars.

“I didn’t play my best today, but obviously I played really well from the 6th hole on Monday all the way through until today. I knew I was going to be tough to beat this week, and I had a great feeling all week that I was going to win. Even when I was 3-down in the afternoon, I felt like I was going to win.”

Grenus and Reilly will be competing in the 81st Connecticut Open Championship, which will be played later this summer at The Patterson Club in Fairfield, Connecticut. Both are certainly on the short list of amateur players who will look to become the first amateur since Jeff Hedden (2009) to capture the title.

The 2016 Amateur Championship is scheduled for June 20th - 24th at Wethersfield Country Club, former site of the Travelers Championship, who will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in conjunction with the tournament. No doubt Grenus will be a favorite to defend his title, as he is also a member of Wethersfield CC and the reigning Club Champion.

Courtesy of the ShowMeGolfers platform and BobItGolf, the CSGA had live coverage of the final match available on the tournament website. The entire 36-hole final was broadcast live shot-by-shot, and spectators across the state were able to watch the match through the Live Round Tracker. The innovative system tracked each player's position on the course and included stats such as driving distance, fairways hit and greens in regulation.

The CSGA is back in action July 6th – 9th, when it hosts the Connecticut Junior Amateur Championship presented by Cobra-Puma at Watertown Golf Club. Admission is free and spectators are encouraged to attend. For more information on Connecticut Junior Amateur, visit CTJunior.com.

About the Connecticut Amateur Championship

The **Connecticut Amateur Championship** is one of the nation's oldest state amateur golf championships and is one of 18 championship tournaments conducted by the Connecticut State Golf Association. The challenging format tests the state's best amateur golfers over two rounds of stroke play to determine the low thirty-two match play qualifiers. Two rounds of match play each day culminate in a thirty-six hole final to crown the top amateur player in Connecticut.

36-Hole Final Match

Evan Grenus, TPC River Highlands def. Greg Reilly, CC of Darien, 5 and 4