

Scott Hebert Wins His 6th Michigan Open

by Jack Berry

If the Michigan Open remains at Grand Traverse Resort, Scott Hebert may double Al Watrous's record of six Open victories.

Hebert, recently named head professional of Grand Traverse, tied the late Oakland Hills Country Club professional's record Thursday and did it in high style on a Chamber of Commerce and Tourism blue sky, total sun day.

With the Navy's Blue Angels roaring overhead, practicing for their weekend National Cherry Festival show, Hebert thundered around the Jack Nicklaus-designed Bear in 68-70-67-70—275, 12 under par, and won the \$92,000 championship by four shots over Brian Stuard of Jackson, a 2005 graduate of Oakland University who turned professional last fall and currently is playing on the Hooters Tour.

Randy Hutchison, 19, a sophomore at Michigan State and Traverse City resident who is a bag boy at the resort, bogied the 17th hole and fell into a third place tie with first round leader Scott Hayes of Ypsilanti's Miles of Golf.

Watrous, long known as "Michigan's Most Titled Golfer," won his six Opens on five different courses over a spread of 23 years, from 1926 to 1949. All six of Hebert's have come at Grand Traverse and they've come in a span of 10 years.

Hebert, a native of Escanaba, likes the north country. Formerly an assistant professional at Grand



Photo by Art McCafferty

Scott Hebert

Traverse, he first played the Bear in 1995 and finished 11th, his poorest finish. Since then he's been second twice, losing a playoff to Jeff Roth in 1998, third once and fourth the last two years while he was working at Sunnybrook Golf Club in Grand Rapids.

Hebert also has played various professional tours but now is settled Up North.

"My last day at Sunnybrook was one week ago so I've been on the job here one week," Hebert said, smiling. "It's sweet coming back. It hasn't sunk in yet (six titles) but that's a pretty major feat and I'm proud of it. I guess I'm still young enough that I may win another one – if it stays here it'd be pretty good for me."

The 5-foot, 9-1/2-inch, 170-pound Hebert isn't a particularly long hitter, unlike the many colleagues who play in the Open, but he's an accurate driver and a strong iron player, admirable qualities on any course but particularly on the Bear, once the most-feared course in Michigan golf and, back when the Open was first played on it 25 years ago, it was a nightmare for most. The "worst ball," the highest score on each hole, had nines of 81 and 80 in that first year when Randy Erskine won.

Hebert was tied with Erskine for most Open victories until this one and Erskine, 55, professional at Great Oaks Country Club in Rochester, said "I wouldn't be at all surprised to see him run past Watrous without any problem.

"I was trying to get six and got close at one point but I wouldn't say I let any get away. The best news for Scott is, he's a head pro now. I don't see any stopping him. He may win double figures," Erskine said.

While being head pro usually is a restriction on the pro's playing time, Grand Traverse wants Hebert to play and fly the resort flag. He still has a long way to match the Watrous overall record, though. Watrous won the Michigan PGA title nine times, first when he was 23 and last when he was 55. Hebert hasn't won one. But then, it hasn't been played on the Bear. **MG**

Michigan Open on the Web:

<http://michigangolfer.com/2006shows/michiganopen/>