

Youth Does Not Necessarily Have to Be Served: Davies Beats Brehm at Michigan Am



Photo by Kevin Frisch / Resort and Golf Marketing

The Heather, Hole No. 5, Boyne Highlands

Jack Berry

Five-foot-seven Greg Davies was the giant-killer of the 95th Michigan Amateur Championship, knocking medalist and 2002 champion Korey Mahoney in the quarterfinals, then Michigan State golf team member Brandon Cigna, 5-4, in the semifinal and dusting Spartan All-Big Ten 6-foot-5 Ryan Brehm by the same stunning 5-4 margin to earn the Staghorn Trophy.

“This is the Granddaddy tournament, the one every amateur wants to win,” said Davies who has played the Amateur for nearly 20 years.

Davies was outdriven by nearly every rival but he won with nearly flawless fairways and greens play. Davies, a 38-year-old financial advisor from West Bloomfield, is the oldest champion in the usually collegian-dominated Amateur since

Randy Lewis won in 1999 at the age of 42.

Davies played college golf, too — he graduated from Oklahoma in 1990 and was on the golf team with Todd Hamilton, winner of the 2004 British Open and Craig Perks, winner of the 2002 Players Championship.

“I knew my game didn’t match

those guys so I figured I'd better get a job," Davies said, laughing.

He's compiled a good amateur record including the 2005 Golf Association of Michigan Mid-Amateur title which he also won at Boyne Highlands, two Syron Memorials, two Michigan Publinx Match Plays, and a Michigan Medal Play championship. It was at the Horton Smith/Michigan Medal Play earlier this year that a case of the yips led him to switch to a long putter. He tucks the end of the grip into his left armpit and he's been making nearly everything since.

Davies was 1-under-par in defeating Brehm who rarely used his balky driver in favor of a 2-iron. Consequently, Brehm's tee shots landed in the same area as Davies' driver. But Davies' iron shots invariably finished below the hole and Brehm had scary downhill putts. With the Heather course's greens firm and sun-baked, anything above the hole was fatal.

"I dug myself into a hole," said Brehm, 20, who will be a junior at MSU in the fall. "The greens were faster than they were in the morning (semifinal when he defeated John Barry, 3-2) and they were in tough spots but they were fair. "I dug myself a hole early when Greg birdied the third hole and I was 5 down at the turn. I tried to make things happen, I scratched and clawed and it was pretty much that way all week."

But Brehm said he felt good about going into the Michigan Open at the Bear and Davies will be there too. So will Mahoney, who finished his college career at Eastern Michigan and is turning pro at the Open on the Bear at Grand Traverse Resort and Spa.

This was the second time the Amateur's been played at the Heather; the jewel of northern Michigan golf, designed by Robert Trent Jones and celebrating its 40th anniversary, never looked better as it proved once again it is a championship course with its 10 doglegs, and 60 deep bunkers with sparkling new PGA Tour sand. With no rain since Monday, the greens were lightning-quick for putts from above the hole. Davies' putt on the par 3 sixth slid down off the green and nearly went into the bog. He had to chip back and bogied the hole as did Brehm who three-putted it.

There was another slippery slope for slow players during the championship. The GAM adopted the Pace of Play policy that's been in effect in a number of other states. The pace is 15 minutes per hole and if the whole group is behind that time at the turn, each one is penalized a stroke. If the group finishes the 18th hole after the expected time there is a two stroke penalty if it is the second breach, a one stroke if the first.

"It takes away officials holding stop watches," Director of Rules and Competition Ken Hartmann said. "There are atomic clocks at the fifth, ninth, 14th and 18th greens so players can see their time."

Six players were penalized over the first two days of qualifying stroke play and the word spread fast to keep pace. **MG**



The Heather, Hole No. 1, Boyne Highlands