

Trio Share Medalist Honors in 72nd U.S. Junior Amateur at Inverness

By Ron Driscoll, USGA

What Happened

Three players – William Mouw and Ricky Castillo of California and William Moll of Houston, Texas – completed 36 holes at 4-under-par 138 to share medalist honors as the 156-player field for the 72nd U.S. Junior Amateur Championship was trimmed for match play on Tuesday at Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio.

Sixty-five players completed 36 holes over the historic Donald Ross-designed layout at 8-over-par 150 or better. Eight players who finished at that 150 total will play off for the final seven spots in the match-play bracket on Wednesday, beginning at 7 a.m. on No. 10. The Round of 64 will also be contested on Wednesday, starting at 7:40 a.m.

After starting his round with back-to-back bogeys, Castillo, 18, of Yorba Linda, Calif., played his final 16 holes in 5 under, with 12 pars, three birdies and an eagle on the 522-yard, par-5 13th hole. Castillo, who will attend the University of Florida in the fall, was the No. 2 seed in last year's championship at Baltusrol Golf Club and has advanced to the Round of 16 in each of the past two years.

"It's pretty special knowing that you have come out on top of 156 players, with two really good friends," said Castillo, who is No. 22 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking (WAGR), second-best in this week's field. Of his eagle, Castillo said, "I took the more aggressive route [with his drive] and had only 156 yards in. I hit a pitching wedge just 20 feet left of the hole. Just tried to hit a good putt and it fell."

Mouw, 18, of Chino, Calif., birdied his final hole on Tuesday, the par-4 ninth, to complete a pair of 2-under 69s. Mouw, who at No. 26 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking (WAGR) holds the third-highest position in the field this week, captured the California State Amateur two weeks ago and will attend Pepperdine University in the fall.

"It's cool, but it's not the win," said Mouw of sharing medalist honors. "I'm not too pumped. The job's not finished."

Moll, 18, overcame a double-bogey 6 on the 349-yard 18th hole, his ninth hole of the day, to tie the low round of the day, a 3-under 68. Moll, who will attend Vanderbilt University in the fall, carded 10 birdies over the two rounds.

Defending champion Michael Thorbjornsen, 17, of Wellesley, Mass., recorded rounds of 71-68 in stroke play, one shot behind the leading trio at 3-under 139, and is the No. 5 seed. Thorbjornsen, who defeated Akshay Bhatia, 1 up, in last year's final at Baltusrol, hopes this week to join Tiger Woods, the only player to successfully defend his U.S. Junior Amateur title. Woods won a record three straight from 1991-93.

Thorbjornsen was joined at 139 by Luke Potter, 15, of Encinitas, Calif., who is competing in his first USGA championship. Potter led La Costa Canyon High School in Carlsbad to the 2019 state title as a freshman and is joined in match play by La Costa Canyon teammate Kenta Yamawaki, who finished at 4-over 146.

Bhatia, last year's runner-up, shot 70-71 in stroke play to earn the No. 6 seed. Bhatia, 17, of Wake Forest, N.C., is No. 4 in the WAGR, tops in the field this week.

What's Next

The final seven spots in match play will be decided Wednesday morning, followed by the Round of 64. Two rounds of match play will follow on both Thursday and Friday, and the championship will conclude with the 36-hole final on Saturday.

Notable

- James Song, of Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., is competing in his fourth Junior Amateur, most of any player in the field. Song, 18, who just finished his freshman year at the University of California-Berkeley, shot 74-73 to reach match play for the fourth time. In previous appearances, Song lost in the Round of 64 in his first two starts, and reached the Round of 16 last year as the No. 13 seed.
- The largest improvement between Rounds 1 and 2 was delivered by Matthew Sutherland, 18, of Sacramento, Calif., nephew of PGA Tour Champions player Kevin Sutherland. Sutherland, who got into the field by surviving a 6-for-1 playoff in Woodland, Calif., made six birdies on Tuesday for a 2-under 69, offsetting an 8-over 79 on Monday.
- The next-best rally was by Phichaksn Maichon of Thailand, who bettered his 79 on Monday by eight strokes on Tuesday. His even-par 71 was highlighted by an eagle on the 616-yard, par-5 eighth hole, one of two eagles on that hole on Tuesday. Nolan Piazza, of Canada, had the other one.
- The three players sharing medalist honors is the second-most in U.S. Junior Amateur history. Four players shared the honors at Singing Hills Golf & Country Club in El Cajon, Calif., in 1989. There were also three medalists in 2012 at the Golf Club of New England in Stratham, N.H.
- For the second straight day, play was halted for more than an hour for severe weather. The round was delayed for 1 hour, 6 minutes, from 3:10 to 4:16 p.m.

Quotable

"[Being medalist] is probably on top of my career because there are very few USGA events and they are really big deals. Just staying focused matters because every shot matters on this course." – **William Moll**, who shared medalist honors after shooting 70-68

"I need to make more birdies. I made one today, two yesterday. I think going into match play, I need to be slightly more aggressive and just work on the things that didn't fire today." – **Karl Vilips**, 17, of Australia, who is No. 47 in the WAGR (fifth-highest in the field) and shot even-par 142

"Yesterday, we fed off each other's positive energy and today we fed off each other's three-putting and missing putts. But playing with [Akshay] definitely helps. It's a fun round, not an awkward, quiet round." – **Vilips**, on playing with good friend and 2018 runner-up Akshay Bhatia

"The greens got bumpy toward the end after the rain delays but overall I'm OK with being under par for two days. It gets me in a good mindset knowing that I can play well on this golf course as long as I putt a little better, putt like I normally do. I'm just ready to go for match play." – **Bhatia**, the No. 4 player in the WAGR