

Sweet Redemption: Beck Wins U.S. Mid-Am for Elusive USGA Title

By David Shefter, USGA

What Happened

The USGA redemption tour for Evan Beck is officially complete. In dominating fashion, the 34-year-old from Virginia Beach, Va., finally put his name on a USGA trophy with a 9-and-8 victory over Bobby Massa in Thursday's 36-hole U.S. Mid-Amateur championship match at Kinloch Golf Club.

A two-time USGA runner-up, including last year's 3-and-2 defeat to Stewart Hagestad at Sleepy Hollow Country Club, in Scarborough, N.Y., and a 2008 shellacking (10 and 8) from Cameron Peck in the U.S. Junior Amateur final at Shoal Creek, in Alabama, Beck became the first Virginian to hoist the Robert T. Jones Jr. Memorial Trophy, and the first from the Commonwealth to capture any USGA title since Lauren Greenlief's triumph in the 2015 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur.

Beck also became the first medalist – he shared those honors in stroke play with Segundo Oliva Pinto at 8-under 133, and was seeded second for match play – to win since Scott Harvey a decade ago at Saucon Valley Country Club, in Bethlehem, Pa.

The fourth competitor to reach consecutive finals since the championship's inception in 1981, Beck joined George Zahringer (2001-2002) as players to have captured a title a year after losing in the final.

His margin of victory was the second largest in championship history after Kevin Marsh's 10-and-9 decision over Carlton Forrester in 2005 at The Honors Course, in Ooltewah, Tenn.

With his triumph, Beck, a Wake Forest University graduate who is No. 32 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking®/WAGR®, earned an exemption into the 2025 U.S. Open at Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club as well as a likely invitation into next April's Masters Tournament.

"It's pretty sweet," said Beck of finally ascending to the top of the USGA mountain. "I've always dreamt of winning one of these. It's incredible that it happened so close to home.

"To get all the way there and come up short [twice] is gut-wrenching. To be able to push through and prove that you can do it to yourself, more than anything, it's pretty awesome."

After closing out Stephen Behr Jr. in the semifinals on Wednesday afternoon, Beck talked about getting off to a fast start in the final, something he failed to do in the loss to Hagestad last September. At one point in that match, Beck faced a 7-down deficit.

The narrative completely flipped in 2024. Beck played a flawless opening 18, shooting the equivalent of 3-under 68 with no bogeys. While he didn't have a birdie after the seventh hole of that opening 18, he played fairways-and-greens golf against his more powerful and much longer opponent.

Massa, a professional trainer from Dallas, Texas, who advanced to the quarterfinals of last month's U.S. Amateur at Hazeltine National Golf Club, in Chaska, Minn., never could replicate the magic he showed in winning his semifinal match over Drew Kittleson when the long-hitting 36-year-old shot a first-nine 29 with five birdies, an eagle 2 and a three-putt bogey.

In the morning round, he only managed one birdie – a 5-footer on No. 11 after a perfectly executed wedge approach to cut his deficit to 4 down – in shooting the equivalent of 5-over 76 and an 8-down deficit. When he lost the second hole to a Beck birdie, it was the first time Massa had trailed in 65 holes. Prior to Thursday's final, he only had trailed for three holes the entire championship and that was in his Round-of-32 encounter against Richmond, Va., native Jordan Utley.

Massa, a former University of Texas-Arlington standout who tried professional golf for eight years before regaining his amateur status in 2018, had two great chances to make a dent in Beck's lead on Nos. 12

and 13, only to miss birdie putts inside of 10 feet. His 7-footer on the par-5 12th slid to the right. Then he drove the green at the 306-yard, 13th hole, leaving a delicate shot from just above the putting surface. But the ensuing pitch drifted 9 feet past the flagstick, and he missed the comebacker for birdie.

From there, his game continued to slide with three consecutive bogeys where he failed to get up and down, missing from 7 feet (No. 14), 20 feet (No. 15) and 5 feet (No. 16).

Another bogey at the par-5 18th following an errant drive and a poorly executed pitch shot from right of the green left Massa in a deep hole going into the lunch break.

"I didn't drive it good today," said Massa, the father of a 16-month-old daughter (Palmer) and a boy set to be delivered by his wife, Kalloway, in February. "I couldn't read the greens today. I was off by just a little bit. Kept underreading them a little bit, then I started overreading them, kind of back and forth. Yeah, just wasn't my day.

"It sucks to lose, as you can imagine, but like I said, golf is hard. It's hard to keep it together for what feels like 10 straight days."

Beck, an associate portfolio manager in the Washington, D.C., office for Baltimore-based Brown Advisory, certainly can relate to what it's like to lose – and big in a USGA final. In 2008 at Shoal Creek, he made a run to the U.S. Junior Amateur finals as an alternate into the field, defeating future three-time major champion Jordan Spieth in the semis before running into Peck in the final. Similar circumstances occurred a year ago against the world's top mid-amateur, Hagestad.

His childhood friend/caddie Mikey Moyers said he sensed a different attitude all week from Beck, a two-time Virginia State Open champion. Never once did he bemoan a bad break or poor shot.

"The last two rounds were back to where he was," said Moyers, referring to the 5-and-3 semifinal win. "I think he was a little shaky in the middle [of the championship], but the thing that's changed about him is his whole attitude is completely different. He doesn't make excuses. He was in about four or five divots, and nobody probably knew it because he didn't huff and puff about it. [If] he hit a bad shot, we didn't talk about it. We just went up and hit the next one. We didn't think about the past at all.

"I think that kind of attitude is maturity and older age is what helped a lot. That's the biggest change I've seen him make. He's always hit it good."

Beck, now 12-2 in match play at the U.S. Mid-Amateur, trailed for only five holes the entire week, all in his 21-hole, Round-of-16 victory over recently reinstated amateur Michael Buttacavoli. And he didn't trail against Massa on Thursday, despite giving up 20 to 30 yards off the tee.

He built a 5-up lead in the morning 18, thanks to birdies on two, four and seven, and winning pars on eight and nine. And by lunch, he owned an 8-up lead. Not resting on his laurels, Beck holed a 40-foot birdie on the par-4 19th hole to go 9 up. And while Massa finally converted his second birdie on the par-4 21st hole, he immediately gave it back with his eighth bogey of the match on No. 22.

Massa's 7-foot birdie on the par-3 26th sent it back to 8 down, and Beck converted from 13 feet for birdie to win the par-4 27th. Massa's cold putter betrayed him there as well as he failed to match Beck's 3 with a missed 6-footer.

The match concluded one hole later when Beck made a 6-footer for par, his toughest par attempt of the entire 28-hole affair.

A nice gallery of 100-some spectators, which included Beck's parents, applauded the new champion who always looked up to Kinloch Golf Club co-founder Marvin "Vinny" Giles, a two-time USGA champion and four-time USA Walker Cup competitor.

Beck got emotional when asked about winning at this venue.

“You've seen me cry like three times,” said Beck, fighting some tears. “I'm probably going to do some more of that later. This is an incredibly special place.

Being from Virginia, Vinny's like my golfing hero. So, it's really cool to be here holding this trophy.”

And now the Commonwealth has another USGA champion.

What Champion Receives

- A gold medal and custody of the Robert T. Jones Jr. Memorial Trophy for one year
- Exemptions into the next 10 U.S. Mid-Amateur Championships
- Exemption into the 2025 U.S. Open Championship at Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club
- Exemptions into the 2025 and 2026 U.S. Amateur Championships at The Olympic Club, in San Francisco, Calif., and Merion Golf Club, in Ardmore, Pa., respectively
- Likely invitation to the 2025 Masters Tournament at Augusta (Ga.) National Golf Club in April
- Name inscribed on 2024 USGA champions' plaque that will live in the Hall of Champions inside the USGA Museum, Liberty Corner, N.J.

Notable

Runner-up **Bobby Massa** received a gold medal and exemptions into the next three U.S. Mid-Amateur Championships as well as the 2025 U.S. Amateur Championship. He was already exempt into the U.S. Amateur based on his quarterfinal showing at Hazeltine National Golf Club.

This was the first time since 2019 at Colorado Golf Club that the U.S. Mid-Amateur finished on schedule. While no championship was contested in 2020 due to COVID-19, the 2021 (Sankaty Head) and 2023 (Sleepy Hollow) championships both ended on a Friday due to weather. The 2022 Mid-Am at Erin Hills was extended into Saturday morning due to more than 5 inches of rain falling in suburban Milwaukee on the second day of stroke play.

Evan Beck's caddie, **Mike Moyers**, is a childhood friend who is currently the assistant golf professional at Greene Hills Country Club, in Stanardsville, Va. He caddied for Beck in 2023 through U.S. Open local and final qualifying. Beck has advanced to final qualifying on three occasions.

Peter Gasperini, who caddied for **Bobby Massa**, is a part-time caddie at Kinloch Golf Club, one of 75 local caddies used in this year's championship. He also has caddied this year for Korn Ferry Tour player **Connor Burgess**, a Lynchburg, Va., native who played at Virginia Tech.

Massa will return to SandersFit Performance Center on Monday where he helps golf clients gain speed through flexibility and weight training. The gym is owned by former pro basketball player **Melvin Sanders**, who was a standout at Oklahoma State.

West Texas native **Mickey Jones** served as the referee for the morning 18 of the championship match, while USGA Executive Committee member **Sinclair Eaddy**, of Baltimore, Md., was the referee for the afternoon round. He also served as the first-tee starter.

Danny Yates, the 1992 U.S. Mid-Amateur champion, was on the grounds for the final on Thursday. Yates is part of the Concession Cup, a Walker Cup-style competition between top mid-amateurs and senior amateurs from the USA against Europe (seven players from Great Britain and Ireland, and five from Europe). The event will be held Nov. 4-8 at The Landings Golf & Athletic Club, in Savannah, Ga. **Evan Beck** is already on the team based on points, while runner-up **Bobby Massa** would need to be a captain's pick.

The inaugural Giles Invitational, a mid-amateur/senior amateur event named for two-time USGA champion and Kinloch Golf Club co-founder **Marvin “Vinny” Giles**, is scheduled for next May at Kinloch. Sixty elite mid-ams and 30 top senior amateurs (55 and older) will be invited to compete. **Evan Beck** has also been doing a lot of promoting to fellow mid-amateurs.

Quotable

“That’s a tough memory there. I got beat pretty bad that week [in] 2008 [by] Cameron Peck. He did the same thing, he came out hot, and it took me however many years to learn how to do it the right way. Slow learner, but I got it.” – **Evan Beck** on the 16 years between his first USGA final and Thursday’s triumph

“I’ve been thinking about it every day. Tried not to get emotional, tried to stay in the moment, and hit one shot at a time. Mikey [Moyers] ... my caddie did a really good job of keeping me in it. We played, what, 28 holes, and I must have said ‘Come on, Mike’, like 750 times to try to like stay thinking about what we’re doing and not thinking about what comes with this [victory].” – **Beck** on how he remained focused knowing the perks for the champion

“Just like the agony of getting smoked by Stewart [Hagestad last year], and just so nervous. I mean, I didn’t sleep at all the last couple nights and couldn’t eat breakfast. Just knowing that you have to come out with everything, and you can’t just make pars and hope the other guy makes mistakes.” – **Beck** on his mindset for the 36-hole final

“He was very solid today. Great player. I definitely didn’t put a lot of pressure on him. That maybe made it a little easier for him. I wish I would have given him a better run at it.” – **Bobby Massa**

“Obviously, I know I can do it, which is half the battle. It’s just about putting it all together and finishing the job.” – **Massa** on what he learned from getting to the quarters of last month’s U.S. Amateur and the final of the U.S. Mid-Amateur

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