

Jhared Hack wins 105th Western Amateur



Photo by Dave Richards / Resort and Golf Marketing

Pictured here is the Point O' Woods par 4, 420-yard 16th to which Hack dropped a wedge shot eight feet from the hole and drained the putt for birdie and the ultimate 1 up advantage.

Benton Harbor, Mich. (Monday, August 6, 2007) – Seventeen-year-old Jhared Hack, 2006 Western Junior champion, claimed the 2007 Western Amateur championship Monday at Point O' Woods G. & C.C., edging Alex Prugh 1 up in a match where neither player ever held more than a 1 up lead.

Hack, of Sanford, Fla., follows in the footsteps of 2007 NCAA champion Jamie Lovemark to become only the second player to win the Western Junior and Western Amateur in back-to-back years since the Western Golf Association started the national junior championship in 1914. Lovemark, who withdrew from

this year's Western Amateur after one round due to injury, won the Western Junior in 2004 and Western Amateur in 2005.

"This whole week's been a blur," said Hack, who had to wait until Monday to win the rain-delayed championship final. "I didn't have the best expectations com-

ing in this week. For me to win is awesome. It's the best feeling I've had so far in golf."

Hack, a freshman-to-be at the University of Central Florida, is also the second youngest player, after Lovemark, to win the Western Amateur. Lovemark also was 17 but didn't turn 18 until five months later; Hack will celebrate his 18th birthday Sunday.

Asked about the recent success of 17-year-olds in a championship traditionally dominated by seasoned collegiate players, Hack said more junior players are stepping up to amateur golf competition earlier.

"You have to start playing in these tournaments younger to learn to compete," said Hack, who gave up more than age to his match play opponents. In beating two-time, first-team All-American Dustin Johnson in the semifinals and Prugh in the final, Hack overcame a distinct distance disadvantage.

"I played with Dustin last week at the U.S. Amateur qualifier in Battle Creek, and he was averaging 50 yards longer than me off the tee," said Hack.



Photo by Art McCafferty

Jared Hack (left) shot 4 birdies while Alex Prugh's 3 birdies weren't enough to win the Western Amateur's final round of match play.

Hack's philosophy: "Just play your own game, and don't let people who drive it 50 yards by you bother you.

"I think it puts more pressure on them. It doesn't bother me at all," said Hack, who averages about 270 off the tee. "If I hit a good shot from 30-40 yards back, it puts pressure on the other guy."

Hack's wedge play and putting skill counter his lack of distance. In Monday's final, Hack closed out the match with three quality approach shots and one timely putt.

On the par 4, 420-yard 16th, Hack dropped a wedge shot eight feet from the hole and drained the putt for birdie and the ultimate 1 up advantage. On the par 3, 208-yard 17th he hit a 5-iron to within eight feet but narrowly missed the putt

that would have closed out the match. On the par 4, 421-yard 18th, he hit a pitching wedge to six feet that sealed the match, as Prugh missed a 12-foot birdie putt that could have forced extra holes.

"My putt at 16 was huge," said Hack. "It was just a great match ... an awesome match. We both played good, and it went

back and forth. This was the best match I had all week. We only won holes with birdies."

For Prugh, a 2007 All-PAC 10 selection from the University of Washington, three birdies weren't enough.

"I only hit maybe two or three bad shots," said Prugh, 22, of Spokane, Washington, who birdied the first hole to hold a brief 1 up lead. "I didn't make any bogeys. You have to make birdies to win holes, and I just didn't make enough. I was trying to post a score - 67 is not a bad round out here.

"He just happened to be one better than me today," said Prugh. "I didn't make a couple of birdie putts coming in that I needed, and he made birdie on 16." **MG**