**Monday Recap: Gupta, Meissner Match 64s in Round 1 at Bandon**

By David Shefter, USGA

**WHAT HAPPENED**

Four days ago, Aman Gupta wasn’t even in the field for the 120th U.S. Amateur Championship at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort. But when a prominent player withdrew on Friday, a spot suddenly opened up, and the 21-year-old from Concord, N.C., performed like he always knew he belonged among the best amateurs in the world.

The Oklahoma State rising junior, who got into the championship when world No. 2 Ricky Castillo withdrew, carded a bogey-free, 7-under-par 64 on Monday at stroke-play co-host Bandon Trails to share the first-round lead with McClure Meissner.

Meissner, 21, of San Antonio, Texas, and a rising senior at Southern Methodist University, posted an 8-under 64 at Bandon Dunes, which will host all of the matches beginning on Wednesday.

“I thought I had a very good chance [of getting into the field], and Friday afternoon when [the USGA’s] Robbie Z[alzneck] called me and told me I was in, that was a huge relief,” said Gupta, who was already on-site at Bandon Dunes and had undergone all the COVID-19 testing protocols. “But I still have a tournament to play, so [the preparation] was just the same as normal.”

Gupta’s score shattered the Bandon Trails competitive course record, held by former USA Walker Cup Team member Chris Williams and Kevin Lim, by two shots. Meissner’s score was one off the Bandon Dunes mark owned by Bob Rannow.

Taking advantage of early-morning tee times when the winds were still relatively benign, Gupta made seven birdies over his first nine holes for a nifty 29. He played even-par golf coming home.

“Anyone with a 7:30 [a.m.], 7 [a.m.] tee time definitely has an advantage this week because we didn't have to deal with hardly any wind until I want to say our 14th hole,” said Gupta, who played his final practice round on Sunday afternoon at Bandon Dunes in winds that gusted 30 to 40 miles per hour. On Monday afternoon, winds were gusting in the 30s. “So it was definitely a big advantage to go in the morning and make some birdies early before the wind started to pick up.”

Meissner, coming off a playoff victory in the Southern Amateur in mid-July when he carded a final-round 66 at Maridoe Golf Club in Carrollton, Texas, started more than an hour later than Gupta, and although the winds gradually increased during the round, the Texas native never felt uncomfortable. A 15-foot birdie at No. 1 and a clutch 6-foot par save at the second hole provided an early boost for Meissner, and he kept the momentum going. He went out in 4-under 31 and then closed with birdies on three of his last four holes, including a 5-footer on the par-5 finisher.

“I got out there early and made some putts,” said Meissner. “I got off to a hot start and then hit it really well all day. I think I only missed one or two greens. I just gave myself good looks all day. We were fortunate that they moved up a couple [tee] boxes on a couple par threes. They could have made it extremely hard on those holes, but they were nice.

“I was talking to some of the guys in my group today, and I was like, ‘Yeah, in the springtime in Dallas it blows 15, 20, 25, so although I don't play this [fescue] grass a lot, it feels like a home game for me just because I'm able to kind of be creative. That's kind of where I excel.”

Another Texan, Travis McInroe, a Baylor University rising senior from McKinney, added a 7-under 65 at Bandon Dunes, while 2020 University of Tennessee graduate Hunter Wolcott, 22, of Dickson, Tenn., joined University of Arkansas rising junior Julian Perico, 20, of Peru, with 67s, the former posting at Bandon Dunes and the latter at Bandon Trails.

**NOTABLE**

* **Aman Gupta**, of Concord, N.C., had the only bogey-free round.
* Illinois State standout **David Perkins**, of East Peoria, Ill., played his first 16 holes on Bandon Trails in 4 under, only to bogey No. 17 for a 68, tying him for the best round of the afternoon wave with 2015 U.S. Junior Amateur champion **Philip Barbaree.**
* **Nick Geyer**, of San Diego, Calif., got more than a practice round in on Sunday at Bandon Dunes. The 32-year-old proposed to his girlfriend, **Lacey Pelham**, on the picturesque 16th hole. She said yes.
* With some of the tee markers moved up to account for the gusty afternoon playing conditions, Bandon Trails (par 71) measured 6,863 yards, with Bandon Dunes (par 72) measuring 6,958 yards. The tee markers and hole locations will remain the same for Round 2.
* Oregon State rising senior **Spencer Tibbits**, of Vancouver, Wash., had the honor of hitting the first ball at Bandon Dunes. He is one of two players with Oregon ties in the field. His OSU teammate, **Carson Barry**, of Eagle, Idaho, played Bandon Trails on Monday.
* How important is a good first round in the U.S. Amateur to reaching match play? Over the last five years, 76 percent of the competitors to open stroke play with a sub-70 round have advanced to the Round of 64.
* Defending champion **Andy Ogletree**, vying to become the first player to win consecutive U.S. Amateur titles since Tiger Woods (1994-96), opened with a 74 at Bandon Trails, while 2019 runner-up **John Augenstein** posted a 2-under 70 at Bandon Dunes.
* Augenstein’s round was the lowest of competitors who played in the 2019 Walker Cup Match at Royal Liverpool. **Cole Hammer**, the 2019 McCormack Medal winner for being No. 1 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking™, shot a 74 at Bandon Trails, one stroke higher than 2016 U.S. Mid-Amateur champion **Stewart Hagestad**. Florida State All-American **John Pak** had a 75 at Bandon Dunes, while Great Britain and Ireland Walker Cup competitors **Alex Fitzpatrick** and **Sandy Scott** shot 74 (Bandon Dunes) and 73 (Bandon Trails), respectively.
* The final four holes at Bandon Trails ranked as four of the five toughest on the course. In order, they ranked 1st (15), 2nd (17), 4th (18) and 5th (16). The par-4 15th played to a stroke average of 4.56.
* The two courses had nearly the identical stroke averages: 75.58 for Bandon Dunes and 75.60 for Bandon Trails.

**QUOTABLE**

“I played well at the Southern [Amateur] and then [at the] Western [Amateur two weeks ago], I just struggled with my putting. I made a little tweak last week before [I left for Bandon] and it felt great out there. Yeah, just keep the bus rolling, I guess.” – **McClure Meissner** on his current form

“I got a new putter on Friday, and it worked out pretty well. I think I had 11 putts on the front nine, so made it pretty easy on myself.” – **Aman Gupta** on his success on the greens

“It was very challenging. It was about a three- to four-club wind. Probably four. But yeah, it made it challenging. It's fun, and knowing if you played well, you were going to gain a lot of ground.” – **David Perkins** after shooting a 3-under 68 at Bandon Trails in gusty afternoon conditions

“I struck my irons unbelievable today. I hit 17 greens. … I don’t even know how many birdies I had (seven). I think four of them were inside 10 feet, so I was hitting the ball really good.” – **Julian Perico**, of Peru, after his 67 at Bandon Trails

“I'm from Dallas, and play [college golf] in Waco [at] Baylor, so I kind of know how wind is, but being here, right on the coast, it's a little bit different. It's a little more heavy. So it was good to get a lot of reps before the tournament rounds and see how the ball is affected by the conditions.” – **Travis McInroe** on preparing for the breezy conditions

“It was really cool. I’ve gotten to play here quite a bit over the years. It was a neat experience.” – Oregon State rising senior **Spencer Tibbits**, of Vancouver, Wash.,on having the honor of hitting the first ball of the 120th U.S. Amateur

“Bogeyed three out of my last four coming in, so I played okay until then, just got to finish it off a little better. Obviously playing [Bandon] Dunes [on Tuesday] in the afternoon, so it's going to be windy. But I've got to figure it out and just go post a good score and see what happens.” – Defending champion **Andy Ogletree** following his 74 at Bandon Trails

“It was just kind of like unconscious stuff. I wasn't even trying to do it, it just kind of happened.” – **Jack Trent** on making two 30-foot birdie putts en route to a 3-under 69 at Bandon Dunes

“I've known Karl [Vilips] for at least 10 years now. We've been close ever since, and he knows my game basically as well as I do. Knowing how good of a player he is and what he's done and what he's capable of, just when he gives me advice, I know I can trust his advice and just trust him on the bag.” – **Michael Thorbjornsen** (3-under 68 at Bandon Trails) on having world No. 10 and future Stanford teammate Karl Vilips serving as his caddie (Vilips currently is injured)

“The wind really started picking up when we got off of 14 green. Me and my caddie knew what we were up against, and when the wind picks up, all you're trying to do is hit greens, just get the putter in your hands as fast as you can. We just picked out good targets, good conservative targets and were aggressive towards those. Just hit a lot of quality shots coming in.” – **Ben Shipp** (3-under 68) on playing the challenging four-hole finish at Bandon Trails in even par

“Really the last four, five holes were just dead into the wind. My low shots [were] great all day, really all week. I don't really have a problem hitting it low, so that kind of benefits me a little bit. Just happened to hit some great shots at the right times. Hit a 4-iron on 17 to about 25 feet and made it, and then on the last hole, hit an 8-iron in there from about 100 yards to about four feet. [The putt] was straight downwind, balls were moving, and I just had to barely tap it, and I don't know if it didn't go in, I don't know if it would have stopped, but it did go in thankfully.” – 2015 U.S. Junior Amateur champion **Philip Barbaree** on his two closing birdies at Bandon Trails to shoot 68

*David Shefter is a senior staff writer for the USGA. Email him at* [*dshefter@usga.org*](mailto:dshefter@usga.org)*.*