**Strafaci to Face Osborne in 36-Hole Final at Bandon Dunes**

By David Shefter, USGA

**What Happened**

Tyler Strafaci certainly has shown a flair for the dramatic this week in the 120th U.S. Amateur Championship at Bandon Dunes. For the third consecutive day, the Georgia Tech fifth-year senior went the distance to pull out a match-play victory.

On Saturday, Strafaci, 22, of Davie, Fla., saw a 4-up lead through 12 holes completely wiped away before he eventually pulled out a 1-up semifinal win over fifth-seeded Aman Gupta, 20, of Concord, N.C. A day earlier, Strafaci needed to make a 3½-foot par putt to oust 2016 U.S. Mid-Amateur champion Stewart Hagestad by the same margin, and in Thursday afternoon’s Round of 16, a Rules breach by Segundo Oliva Pinto’s caddie on No. 18 gave Strafaci a 1-up triumph after the two were deadlocked going to Bandon Dunes’ par-5 closing hole.

Saturday’s win was arguably the biggest of his career as it earned Strafaci a spot in next year’s U.S. Open at Torrey Pines as well as a chance to become the second consecutive player from Georgia Tech – and fourth overall – to hoist the Havemeyer Trophy. The grandson of 1935 U.S. Amateur Public Links champion Frank Strafaci Sr. will face Southern Methodist University rising junior Charles Osborne, 20, of Reno, Nev., in Sunday’s 36-hole championship match. Osborne, who also earned a berth in the 2021 U.S. Open, eliminated 58th seed Matthew Sharpstene, 22, of Asheville, N.C., 4 and 2.

“That was an insane finish,” said Strafaci, who can join Bob Jones (five wins), Matt Kuchar (1997) and Andy Ogletree (2019) as Georgia Tech players to win the U.S. Amateur. “Aman made some great shots down the stretch. But at the same time, you're still thinking, ‘Why did I just give up a 4-up lead?’ when you're in complete control. It's tough.

“It's still a very weird feeling. I would say it's almost weirder than the Segundo [Oliva Pinto] match, because the whole time in the Segundo match, I was positive and ready to go and played 18 really good. And this time, I was playing great and then had [seven] holes where I played 5 over. And just the way I snapped out of it on 18, I think that's why I'm pretty tired right now because it took everything I had to just snap out of it and flip my mindset, because I was going south, quick.”

For the first time all week, the players enjoyed idyllic playing conditions on the southwest Oregon coast. Temperatures climbed into the low 70s, and instead of the gusty afternoon winds of the first five days, light winds out of the south greeted the semifinalists.

The day was going perfectly to plan for Strafaci through 10 holes, after back-to-back winning birdies gave him a 4-up lead. Gupta, who got into the field last Friday when world No. 2 Ricky Castillo withdrew, wasn’t about to wave the white flag. A remarkable up-and-down birdie on 13 won the hole, and a brilliant par from the bunker to tie the 14th hole kept him in the match. Gupta won the next three holes to tie the match, helped when Strafaci tripled the par-3 15th and bogeyed No. 17. Gupta also converted a 7-foot birdie putt on No. 16 after a stellar fairway bunker shot.

At the par-5 18th, both players hit wayward drives, with Gupta’s ball ending up in a bunker right of the fairway. After contemplating several clubs, Gupta went with an 8-iron, only to see his ball hit the lip and stay in the bunker. His ensuing shot with a pitching wedge also caught the bunker face. Two shots later, he reached the putting surface, laying 5. Strafaci’s second shot from the left rough landed in a patch of grass just off the green, and he pitched on to 15 feet. When Gupta’s 20-foot bogey putt rolled past the hole, he conceded the hole and match to Strafaci.

“For a golf fan, I would imagine that was pretty fun to watch him [rally],” said Strafaci of Gupta. “I mean, I didn't enjoy at the time what he was doing to me, but it was great [drama].”

Five days ago, it appeared Osborne would fail to qualify for match play for a second consecutive U.S. Amateur after shooting 5-over 77 at Bandon Dunes. But he recovered with a career-best-matching 64 at stroke-play co-host Bandon Trails, and he has continued to feed off the momentum of Tuesday’s round.

Against Sharpstene, Osborne broke open a tight match with a birdie on the par-5 ninth and a winning par at the challenging 474-yard, par-4 11th hole to take a 2-up lead. A Sharpstene birdie on the par-3 12th trimmed the margin to one hole, but Osborne responded with consecutive birdies on 13 (two putts on the par 5) and 14 (6 feet) to go 3 up.

Sharpstene could not take advantage of Osborne’s poor tee shot on the par-3 15th, missing a bogey putt to win the hole. which was halved with 5s. On 16, Sharpstene’s drive sailed way right into the penalty area, ending his hopes of a comeback.

“It's kind of unbelievable. I can't believe that I'm here,” said Osborne, who Monday-qualified for last year’s Barracuda Championship on the PGA Tour, which was played at his home club, Montreux Golf & Country Club. “It's just really cool how this week has gone for me, and I'm excited to be in [the championship match].”

**What’s Next**

The morning 18 of the 36-hole championship match is scheduled to begin at 9:30 PDT, with the afternoon round scheduled for 3 o’clock. Golf Channel will begin broadcasting live at 7 p.m. EDT.

**Notable**

* The two finalists are both exempt into the 2021 U.S. Open at Torrey Pines in San Diego, Calif., and will likely earn invitations to the Masters Tournament next April. The champion also earns an exemption into the 2021 Open Championship at Royal St. George’s in England, provided he is still an amateur. The R&A will also exempt 2019 U.S. Amateur champion **Andy Ogletree** because this year’s Open Championship was canceled due to COVID-19. Ogletree must remain an amateur as well.
* The runner-up is exempt into the next three U.S. Amateurs, while the champion is exempt for the next 10.
* The 2021 U.S. Open will be Strafaci’s second start in the championship. He missed the cut in 2018 at Shinnecock Hills.
* **Doc Redman**, the 2017 champion at The Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif., is in the hunt at the PGA Tour’s Wyndham Championship in Greensboro. He is tied for second, two behind 54-hole leader Si Woo Kim. The top two players, not already exempt, earn spots into next month’s U.S. Open. Redman is not currently in the field at Winged Foot Golf Club.
* Because of the change in wind, USGA officials were able to play a couple of par 3s (Nos. 6 and 15) at longer distances, while the par-3 12th was shortened to 137 yards with a challenging front hole location.
* On Friday, it was the par-4 11th that took the starch out of the quarterfinalists. On Saturday, the combined scores of the four players on the par-3 15th was 9 over par: three double bogeys and a triple.
* **Tyler Strafaci** and hisfamily are longtime members at Grande Oaks Golf Club in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., where the popular 1980 movie “Caddyshack,” was filmed. The club has since been renovated and bears little resemblance to the facility seen in the film.
* **Charles Osborne** is trying to become the fifth player from Southern Methodist University to win the U.S. Amateur, joining **Hank Kuehne** (1998), **Colt Knost** (2007), **Kelly Kraft** (2011) and current PGA Tour star **Bryson DeChambeau** (2015).
* Strafaci’s late grandfather, **Frank Strafaci Sr.,** competed in 16 U.S. Amateurs, reaching the quarterfinals twice, in 1947 and 1949. He also lost a tough opening-round match to **Arnold Palmer**, 1 up, in 1954 at the Country Club of Detroit. Palmer, who won the event, said it was his toughest match of the week. Strafaci Sr. also tied for ninth in the 1937 U.S. Open. Tyler’s father, **Frank Jr.,** who is caddieing for him this week,qualified for three U.S. Amateurs.
* With a win on Sunday, Strafaci can become the third golfer to win the North & South Amateur at Pinehurst and the U.S. Amateur in the same year, joining **Jack Nicklaus** (1959) and **Hal Sutton** (1980).

**Quotable**

“I actually talked to [2019 U.S. Amateur champion and Georgia Tech teammate] Andy Ogletree this morning, and I said, ‘Bro, I'm not going to lie, I'm pretty nervous. I've never been in this spot before.’ He told me, ‘You just have to understand, the other guy is as nervous if not more nervous than you are.’ And that kind of got me in a better mindset.” – **Tyler Strafaci**,on his emotions prior to the semifinals

“It's crazy to think that I have this opportunity.” – **Charles Osborne**,on getting into the 2021 U.S. Open and likely earning an invitation to next year’s Masters

“I've always considered myself a good player. I know my ranking doesn't show it, but it's just a number at the end of the day. I know the game I have and know what I can do, so I try to just do me and kind of let everybody else think what they think.” – **Osborne** on going from anonymity to a known player in a matter of a few days

“I knew going in Ty was going to be a tough competitor. Doesn't make a lot of mistakes. I mean, he rolls it well, so I knew it was going to be a good day. I didn't quite hit it as well as I wanted to all day, but I put up as good of a fight as I could on the back nine.” – **Aman Gupta** on his rally from 4 down to tie his match with **Tyler Strafaci** before losing on 18

“Just a lot of confidence. I've known and my coach has known for a while that I was good enough to do this. I'm just going to take a lot of confidence and know that I'm one of the best players in the world and it's time to start playing like it.” – **Gupta** on his confidence going forward

“It stings, but it’s golf. Stuff happens. I’m proud of myself. I played well this week. I hung in there and I’m going to move forward with a lot of positivity.” – **Matthew Sharpstene** on what he’ll take from his week at Bandon Dunes

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