

Trio Shares Medalist Honors at 2019 U.S. Senior Amateur

By David Shefter, USGA

What Happened

For the first time in 52 years, three players will share medalist honors in the U.S. Senior Amateur Championship.

Dean Channell, 59, of Cary, N.C., Doug Hanzel, 62, of Savannah, Ga., and Michael McCoy, 56, of Norwalk, Iowa, all posted 2-under 142 during the 36-hole stroke-play portion of the competition, which concluded on Sunday at Old Chatham Golf Club. They finished one stroke ahead of two players.

It's only the third time in championship history that there's been three or more medalists in stroke play. Besides 1967 at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southampton, N.Y., it also occurred five years earlier at Evanston Golf Club in Skokie, Ill.

McCoy, the 2013 U.S. Mid-Amateur champion and a semifinalist last year at Eugene (Ore.) Country Club, had a chance to break out of the logjam, but he lipped out a 4-foot birdie putt on the par-4 ninth hole, his last of the day. He finished with a 2-under 70 after posting an even-par 72 in Round 1 on Saturday.

"I just kind of misread it," said McCoy. "I saw Duke [Delcher's putt] go right and I was going to play it right in the middle of the hole. It did go a little right so that was disappointing."

The conditions were much better for the 156 competitors on Sunday, following Saturday's rain-soaked round that saw the course absorb nearly a half-inch of precipitation.

"We had a rough day yesterday," said Hanzel, the 2013 champion who carded a second consecutive 1-under 71 on Sunday. "Surprisingly my good nine [during Saturday's heaviest rains] was my back nine, which is the front nine [at Old Chatham]. I shot four under. And it really should have been a [6-under] 30. I had two corner lip-outs. That was as good of ball-striking nine holes as I've played, maybe ever. But I'm just happy to play well [in the second round] and make it to match play."

Hanzel and McCoy are no strangers to USGA competitions, having combined to play in 97. Channell, who lives 8 miles from the golf course, is making his eighth USGA appearance this week. But it's the first time he's qualified for match play since the 2001 U.S. Mid-Amateur at San Joaquin Country Club in Fresno, Calif., where he survived a 15-for-9 playoff for the final spots and lost to eventual champion Tim Jackson, 1 down, in the Round of 64.

Channell, the 18-hole leader, followed Saturday's 4-under 68 with a 74. He briefly got to 5 under for the championship with birdies on Nos. 8 and 9, but he came home in 3-over 39. Nevertheless, a brilliant par-save from a greenside bunker on No. 18, statistically the hardest hole in stroke play, kept him at 2 under.

"It got windy on the back side but that's no excuse," said Channell, a former tennis player at Virginia Tech. "I just hit a few bad shots and missed a few putts here and there."

"I would have loved to have finished more positively. It was pretty nice to get up and down on 18 from the bunker. I hit a pretty good drive and still had 207 (yards). That wind is straight in there. I knew I was in [match play], so there wasn't much pressure."

Hanzel, competing in his eighth Senior Amateur, has never missed qualifying for match play and owns an impressive 19-6 record. Perhaps he'll enjoy the same vibes he had six years ago in the Tar Heel State when he claimed victory at Wade Hampton Golf Club in Cashiers.

On Sunday, he hit all 18 greens and made two bogeys, both the result of three-putts, including the par-4 18th when he misread his 5-foot comebacker.

"I hit the putt right where I wanted it," said Hanzel, a retired pulmonologist. "I played it right edge and it didn't move an inch.

"I've hit it pretty good [this week]. I am putting it better. I hit a lot of good putts that didn't go in. I left a 6-footer on [17] just dead in short. I fell in love with the line and didn't hit it. The golf course is very good. The greens are very good. So there's no reason not to make putts."

McCoy and his U.S. Amateur Four-Ball partner, fellow Iowan Gene Elliott, were the only two competitors to register bogey-free rounds on Sunday. McCoy's solid performance the past two days came just 12 days after he missed the cut down the road at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club in what likely was his final appearance in the U.S. Amateur Championship.

His two birdies came late in the round on Nos. 3 and 6 on putts of 9 and 7 feet, respectively.

"My game has not been so good and I have worked awfully hard at it," said McCoy, who is playing in his 61st USGA championship and also shared medalist honors in the 2009 U.S. Mid-Amateur. "It means a lot more now than it has in the past. It was good to play two good rounds of golf on a difficult golf course. It showed me that I am not finished yet.

"Most of [my preparation work] has been mental. I just haven't been able to focus for a full round so I have been working on some things to maintain my focus. I didn't three-putt in the two days and that's been a bit of a problem too. That helps when you don't throw strokes away. It felt good to pull it together. I am very pleased. No matter what happens from now on at least I can leave knowing I played some good golf."

What's Next

The cut for match play came at 8-over 152 with a 9-for-3 playoff for the final spots in the match-play draw taking place Monday at 7:15 a.m. EDT off the 10th hole. The Round-of-64 matches are scheduled to begin at 7:50 a.m. off No. 1.

Notable

Defending champion **Jeff Wilson**, of Fairfield, Calif., easily qualified for match play with a 36-hole total of even-par 144.

Two-time champion and local favorite **Paul Simson**, 68, of Raleigh, has now qualified for match play in all 13 of his Senior Amateur starts.

Besides the three medalists, 2015 champion **Chip Lutz**, of Reading, Pa., and 2018 co-medalist **Greg Condon**, of Monte Vista, Colo., were the only other players to finish under par in stroke play (143). Lutz carded a 68 to go with his first-round 75, while Condon shot 70-71.

Ten players broke par in Sunday's second round, including **Greg Cesario**, of San Marcos, Calif., who rallied from a first-round 80 to shoot 70 and qualify for match play.

The stroke average for the two rounds was 76.97.

Gene Elliott, of West Des Moines, Iowa, matched the lowest round of the week with a 68, joining co-medalist **Dean Channell** and **Lutz**. "If you hit in the rough you are staring bogey right between the eyes. I don't know how I was bogey-free. I didn't drive the ball that great today, but I drove in enough fairways and made a couple of great up and downs out of bunkers. Just kept the round alive."

Two-time USGA champion **Marvin (Vinny) Giles**, of Richmond, Va., is among the nine competitors in the playoff. At 76 years, 7 months and 20 days, Giles would be the oldest competitor to qualify for match play in Senior Amateur history.

Excluding playoff participant **Giles**, six past Senior Amateur champions are safely into the match-play draw, along with 1986 U.S. Amateur champion **Stewart (Buddy) Alexander**, of Auburn, Ala., and 2019 British Seniors Amateur champion **Craig Davis**, of Chula Vista, Calif.

Notables who failed to qualify for match play included 2017 champion **Sean Knapp**, of Oakmont, Pa., 2008 champion **George (Buddy) Marucci**, of Villanova, Pa., and 1997 USA Walker Cup competitor **Duke Delcher**, of Bluffton, S.C.

Doug Hanzel, of Savannah, Ga., the 2013 champion, has enjoyed the outward nine at Old Chatham. During stroke play, he was a cumulative 5 under par on those holes with no bogeys. "I don't know. A couple of times I had good yardages with wedges, which was nice. And I hit it close. I don't mind the back nine. I can shoot three or four under on the back, too."

Rob Campbell, of Newbury Park, Calif., enjoyed the biggest improvement between Rounds 1 and 2, going from an 87 to a 69. Unfortunately, his 12-over score of 156 wasn't good enough to advance.

Quotable

"We're in and that's the key. I was going to be very disappointed if I didn't make it. When I woke up this morning, [my neck] was feeling really good. It's still a little tender, but it's not where I am jerking on every shot. I was able to take it back and see the ball." – **Paul Simson**

"I like match play and I am playing well. I like the golf course. You have to pay attention to the grain on the greens. Once you figure out whether you are going uphill or downhill you are okay." – **Michael McCoy** on his mindset for match play

"It's fun. If you get to go to one of these it's a cool deal. I am not like [fellow Research Triangle resident] Paul Simson with 67 of them, I have played in eight. It might be the last for me so getting to go is cool." – **Dean Channell**, of Cary, N.C., on playing the Senior Amateur in his backyard

"Today I kind of settled down a little bit. I had a nice, easy ball-striking round and a great putting round. I think it was a combination of everything. I was a little calmer and more settled, knowing I had to play well. Just kind of executing and hitting the ball properly and putting it in the right places. Really a better thought process. I was in a better place today." – **Chip Lutz** after shooting a 4-under 68 and improving seven shots from Saturday's first round

“It was tough with the rain. Some of the guys shot some good scores in the rain and I was shocked. I wasn’t that disappointed with 76 [Saturday]. I putted and chipped really well today, and I finally got a few iron shots to go toward the flag. The rain didn’t help me yesterday but anyhow I was glad there was no rain today.” – **Gene Elliott** on shooting 68 after a rough first round

“I am definitely trending in the right direction. I didn’t play bad with the 76 but the conditions were not a lot of fun. Looking forward to match play and in match play anything can happen.” – **Elliott**

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