

## Behr Claims Medalist Honors at 38th U.S. Mid-Amateur

By David Shefter, USGA

### WHAT HAPPENED

Last weekend, a tropical storm named Florence wreaked havoc on the Carolinas, leaving behind a path of destruction that many residents, especially on the coast, are still trying to recover from.

This weekend, a golfer from Florence unleashed a different kind of assault on the region. Stephen Behr, a South Carolina native and former Clemson University All-American, was the only competitor among the 264 in the field at the 38th U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship to produce a pair of sub-70 rounds at Charlotte Country Club and stroke-play co-host Carolina Golf Club, an achievement that earned him medalist honors and the top seed for match play, which begins on Monday at Charlotte C.C.

On Sunday, Behr, who became eligible for this championship when he turned 25 in April, carded a 3-under 68 at Carolina Golf Club for a 36-hole total of 5-under. He was two strokes clear of 2017 medalist Bradford Tilley, 35, of Easton, Conn., 2008 U.S. Mid-Amateur runner-up Todd Mitchell, 40, of Bloomington, Ill., and Rob Laird, 31, of Tulsa, Okla., who closed with a pair of birdies at Carolina Golf Club.

"I think I'm the third youngest [in the field] ... so obviously a really great start to my mid-amateur career," said Behr. "At the same time, I know that I would rather finish 64th and win than medal and lose in the first round. I know anyone that makes match play is good enough to win a match against me. So I just need to focus on playing solid tomorrow and get ready mentally for a tough match."

The son of Florence (S.C.) Country Club head professional Steve Behr – he is serving as his caddie this week – opened his second and final round of stroke play with a bogey-6 when he bladed a wedge approach over the green. He settled down from there, playing 4-under golf over his last 17 holes. His 68 was the lowest score posted at Carolina Golf Club, which played a half-stroke higher than fellow Donald Ross layout Charlotte Country Club.

"Pretty nervous start," said Behr, who now resides in Atlanta, where he works as a risk consultant for Ernst & Young. "It was almost a good thing because it made me settle my nerves a little bit. From there, I tried to pick good targets. Overall, I think Charlotte is probably a harder golf course, but on this one (Carolina Golf Club) you can get out of position real easily. My dad and I did a really good job of picking shots and clubs that would avoid getting out of position. I did that and played smart all day."

First-round leaders Tilley and 2016 champion Stewart Hagestad, 27, of Newport Beach, Calif., both struggled at Carolina Golf Club. Tilley, who saw his bogey-free streak end at 22 holes with a 5 on the par-4 14th hole (he started on No. 10), carded a 1-over 72, while Hagestad, who reached the Round of 16 in last month's U.S. Amateur and has qualified for the past two U.S. Opens, posted a 74 for a 36-hole total of 141.

"I wasn't worried about making match play, but c'mon, I was trying to go out and shoot a good number," said Hagestad. "And if nothing else, get some good momentum going into tomorrow. It's tough because the greens are getting really firm. There were a few tricky, tough pins. We were close, we just didn't do anything spectacular."

## WHAT'S NEXT

The 16-for-12 playoff for the final match-play spots will take place at 7:30 a.m. EDT at Charlotte Country Club's 10th hole. If necessary, the playoff will continue on Nos. 16, 17 and 18. The Round of 64 begins at 9 a.m, from the first tee. Match play continues through Thursday's 36-hole championship match.

FS1 will broadcast the semifinals and afternoon 18 of the championship match on Wednesday and Thursday from 4-6 p.m.

Admission is free.

## NOTABLE

- The cut for match play came at 5-over 147.
- Defending champion **Matt Parziale**, of Brockton, Mass., recovered from his first-round 76 at Carolina Golf Club with a 3-under 68 at Charlotte C.C. to qualify for match play. He is one of three USGA champions to qualify, joining reigning U.S. Senior Amateur champion **Jeff Wilson**, of Fairfield, Calif., and **Stewart Hagestad**.
- **Benjamin Day**, of New Haven, Conn., carded a 74 at Charlotte Country Club on Sunday, the same course where his father, Edward, competed in the U.S. Amateur 46 years ago. Edward missed the 36-hole cut in the final year the championship was conducted at 72 holes of stroke play. Day also failed to qualify by one stroke.
- **Danny Evelyn**, of Charlotte, N.C., matched the low round of the championship with a 4-under 67 at Charlotte C.C. to easily qualify for match play at 1-under 141 His brother, **Matt**, however, failed to advance with a 36-hole total of 154. The Evelyn brothers both attended Cardinal Newman High in West Palm Beach, Fla., the same school that produced two-time U.S. Open champion **Brooks Koepka**. Danny played junior golf against Brooks in south Florida.
- **Steve Wilson**, competing in the final year of his 10-year exemption for winning the 2008 title, was disqualified ([Rule 6-3a](#)) for failing to show up for his 8:47 a.m. starting time at Carolina Golf Club. He opened with an 82 at Charlotte C.C.
- Four-time champion **Nathan Smith** headlined the group of past USGA champions to miss the cut. He joined **Scott Harvey**, **Michael McCoy**, **Sammy Schmitz**, **Dave Ryan**, **Randal Lewis** and **Sean Knapp** to miss the cut.
- Last year's runner-up **Josh Nichols**, of Apex, N.C., also failed to qualify along with 2014 runner-up **Brad Nurski**.

## QUOTABLE

**Todd Mitchell, of Bloomington, Ill. (70-69—139) on Charlotte Country Club as a match-play venue:**

"I really like Charlotte Country Club; it sets up well for me. I like playing match play, so I am looking for a long week."

**Bradford Tilley, of Easton, Conn., (67-72—139) on his mindset for match play:**

"I love the way I'm playing. I played an incredible round [at Charlotte Country Club] yesterday. I was not on top of it as much today, didn't really strike it quite as well. I also played a little bit differently today. The pins were tucked, I knew the scores were higher here. I tried to keep it in front of me. Not take too

many risks. I took one early on my first bogey. From there on, I tried to play steady, leave myself to the fat parts of the greens and make pars. I was happy to get that done.”

**Tilley on the differences between the two stroke-play courses:**

“Let’s start with how they are similar. Both are Donald Ross [layouts] and the greens are very similar in the shapes and the slopes. But the rough is a little bit deeper here (Carolina Golf Club). [The USGA] definitely tucked the pins a lot closer to the edges. I think being a shorter course, they wanted to make sure they gave it some tougher pins, thinking we would have some shorter shots in. The greens are really firming up. You have to play for it to bounce forward. You can always get that bounce forward, but if you land it pin high, you can skip it off the back of the green and then you are kind of buried in the rough. It’s kind of tough to get it close to the holes and tough to make birdies.”

**Defending champion Matt Parziale, of Brockton, Mass. (76-68—144) on recovering from his poor first round:**

“I have played a lot of bad rounds in my life. Yesterday I was disappointed, but I feel like I played okay so I was just looking for a good start. There is a sense of relief. A couple of bad holes and you could be going home tonight. This was definitely the first goal (making match play) and now it is show up every day, starting [on Monday] with a new, fresh start.”

**Rob Laird, of Tulsa, Okla. (68-71—139) on returning to Charlotte Country Club for match play:**

“I feel good about my game. Charlotte Country Club fits my eye better. I am excited to get back there. But it is a different mindset. It’s a little overwhelming when you have 263 guys out there as opposed to just one you are playing against. The rest of the evening will be spent switching gears. The game doesn’t change at all, but the mindset has to adapt. Match play is more fun for me.”

**2016 champion Stewart Hagestad, of Newport Beach, Calif. (67-74—141) on his second-round performance:**

“My goal going into today was to try and win medalist [honors], so in my eyes, I wasn’t good enough. I think there’s some things to go work on and improve upon. Besides the [3-over par] start, I didn’t play that badly.”

**Danny Evelyn, of Charlotte, N.C. (74-67—141) on growing up with two-time U.S. Open champion Brooks Koepka (both attended Cardinal Newman High in West Palm Beach, Fla.):**

“We played junior golf together. I’ve known him since he was probably 9 or 10. No [text messages] this week. I’m sure he’s got bigger things on his mind. He’s playing in the Tour Championship and heading over to the other side of the pond [for next week’s Ryder Cup in France] will be a major thing for him. Maybe if I win, I’ll give him a text.”

**U.S. Navy pilot Benjamin Hayes, of Jacksonville, Fla. (70-71—141) on qualifying for match play:**

“Awesome. That was the goal coming in here. I felt going in to this that I had the game to do it. Obviously, I haven’t competed much in the last few years, but I know if I play my game I can hang with the best of them. It’s a cool feeling.”

**Brett Boner, of Charlotte, N.C. (71-69—140) on playing his final round of stroke play at his home club (Carolina G.C.):**

“Not trying to be dramatic, but probably the hardest round of golf I’ve ever played. Just because it’s my home course and I put a lot of pressure to play well in front of all my friends and family. But once I got out here, I got comfortable. This golf course isn’t set up like I normally see it as a member. A lot of the pins are tucked, and the greens are as firm and fast as they can ever be, so you are not used to that. But it was a blast and I’m very thankful to shoot a good number.”

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