**Two-Time Champion Tennant, Higgins Share Medalist Honors**

By Ron Driscoll, USGA

Two-time defending champion Lara Tennant, of Eugene, Ore., and Gigi Higgins, of Cape Coral, Fla., whose 3-under-par 69 matched the low round of stroke play, shared medalist honors at 1-under 143 on Saturday in the 59th U.S. Senior Women’s Amateur Championship at The Lakewood Club.

Higgins reeled off four birdies in five holes early on her incoming nine to get to 5 under for the day on the 5,745-yard, par-72 Dogwood Course, and she weathered a pair of bogeys to match the 36-hole total of 143 by Tennant, the 2018 and 2019 champion, who had finished about 30 minutes earlier. A pair of chip-ins, one of which saved par on the par-5 16th hole, kept Higgins’ momentum going.

“My goal was just to make the cut, keep moving on,” said Higgins, 58, the 2016 Florida State Golf Association senior player of the year, who will be the No. 2 seed. “I knew I had made a few birdies, but I wasn’t paying attention; I was just playing the ball.”

Tennant, the No. 1 seed, earned medalist honors for the second time after doing so in 2017 at her home course, Waverley Country Club. She lost in the Round of 64 that year, but hasn’t lost since in this championship, winning 12 matches and two titles, defeating Sue Wooster of Australia by an identical 3-and-2 margin in both 2018 and 2019. The championship was canceled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wooster shot rounds of 76-77 to earn the No. 15 seed as she and Tennant both vie to make a third consecutive final, something last done by Carol Semple Thompson, who reached four consecutive finals in 1999-2002, winning all of them. Thompson, 72, returned to the championship this year after a six-year hiatus and missed the cut for match play by two strokes.

“I didn’t have medalist on my mind at any moment,” said Tennant, 54, whose sister, Cappy Mack, 50, also competed in the championship this week, missing the 36-hole cut. “I’m just happy to get to know the course a little bit better. It’s a matter of figuring out the greens and even the wind a little bit, which seemed to change from yesterday.”

Seven-time USGA champion Ellen Port, 59, of St. Louis, Mo., shot 73-72 to earn the No. 3 seed, while Susan Cohn, 58, of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., is the No. 4 seed after rounds of 71-75. First-round leader Kathy Hartwiger, of Birmingham, Ala., the 2002 U.S. Women’s Mid-Amateur champion, followed her 3-under 69 with a 6-over 78 on Saturday for the No. 5 seed, while Amy Ellertson, of Free Union, Va., (70-77) also shot 3-over 147 for the No. 6 seed.

Five players completed 36 holes at 19-over 163 and played off for the final three spots in the match-play bracket. Two players – Angie Whitley Coleman (No. 62 seed) and Jennifer Hoyt (No. 63 seed) – parred the first playoff hole (the par-3 17th) to make it into the bracket, leaving three players for one spot. They will complete the second playoff hole, the par-4 18th, on Sunday at 7:30 a.m.

**What’s Next**

The Round of 64 begins on Sunday at 8:30 a.m. There will be two rounds each on Monday and Tuesday, ending with the 18-hole championship match on Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. CDT. Spectators are welcome to attend, and admission is free.

**Notable**

Championship director **Tracy Parsons** expects to see some drama on the front nine of the Dogwood Course in match play. “Eight of the nine holes have water that players will have to navigate, so if an opponent is away and goes into the penalty area, it will suddenly free the other player up a little bit,” said Parsons, who has run the U.S. Senior Women’s Amateur since 2015. “The par 3s will also be crucial, especially Nos. 3, 8 and 17, because those three are definite scoring opportunities. These greens have tiers, ridges and slopes, and with our hole locations, we will try to bring some of those features into play. It will be important for players to figure out – from the tee or the fairway – how they can use those features to their advantage.”

**Adrienne MacLean** has her husband, John, caddieing for her the first two days at the Lakewood Club. For the MacLeans, it has provided a nice change, giving Adrienne the opportunity to take center stage over her husband, who has won the Stanley Cup as both a player (1995) and an assistant coach (2003) for the New Jersey Devils. “With us moving all the time because of hockey, and both of our boys playing hockey, she has always borne the brunt of it and her golf game has come second,” said John, who was appointed an assistant coach for the San Jose Sharks earlier this week. “She has sacrificed for us, so it’s nice to come out here and see her treated so fabulously with all the rest of the players.” Adrienne earned the No. 21 seed for match play with rounds of 77-78.

The 143 totals by co-medalists **Lara Tennant** and **Gigi Higgins** match the fifth-lowest scores in 36-hole qualifying since the championship adopted the match-play format in 1997 (it was a 54-hole stroke-play event from 1962-1996). Toni Wiesner shot a record 67-68–135 at Golden Horseshoe Golf Club in Williamsburg, Va., in 1998, while Lisa Schlesinger (68-71–139) has the second-best total, in 2011 on The Honors Course in Chattanooga, Tenn. Two players – Carolyn Creekmore (2008) and Joan Higgins (2009) – have shot 142 totals.

Although she missed the cut for match play, **Christine Petit Martin**, of France, had a remarkable turnaround in Round 2. Martin opened with a 92 on Friday, but improved by 18 strokes with a 2-over 74 on Saturday, missing the cut by three strokes. The resident of Fontainebleau, outside of Paris, completed her championship with a final nine of 3-under 33 and three birdies on her last four holes.

**Tama Caldabaugh**, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., made the first eagle of the championship, holing out a 96-yard shot with a 9-iron on the 451-yard, par-5 12th hole, her third hole of the day. “We thought it might be close, because the hole was over a little rise, and then someone said they thought it might have gone in,” said Caldabaugh. “I didn’t have any birdies [on Friday], so that made me more comfortable for the rest of the round.” The eagle propelled Caldabaugh to a 1-over 73, which combined with a 6-over 79 on Friday to put her in a tie for 11th place.

**Quotable**

“The course isn’t super long, but on the back nine, you can get into trouble in those trees. Shot shape, placement and accuracy are a little more important. And of course, the greens keep you honest.” – **Tama Caldabaugh**, whose 73 on Saturday tied the sixth-best score of the day

“I’m very happy to have the good round today, because you want to be in the top half of the draw. I still need to find a way to make some more birdies.” – **Caldabaugh**, who is competing in her sixth Senior Women’s Amateur

“The players I was with were great. It makes a big difference when you’re out there supporting each other, because let’s face it, I’m not playing them, I’m playing the golf course. I think that had a lot to do with keeping my momentum going.” – **Gigi Higgins**, on her 3-under 69 on Saturday

“I was trying to channel (Amy Ellertson, who shot 2-under 70 in her group on Friday), although I’m still trying to figure out the par 5s. I keep making 6s on them. It’s such a pleasure to play with really good players like Laura [Coble] and Amy.” – **Sally Krueger**, who shot even-par 72 on Saturday to earn the No. 8 seed

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