**Top Seed, 2 Senior Am Champs Among Final 8 at The Kittansett Club**

By David Shefter, USGA

**What Happened**

The winds picked up on Tuesday at The Kittansett Club in Marion, Mass., and so did the drama at the 67th U.S. Senior Amateur Championship. Of the 24 matches contested in the Rounds of 32 and 16 on a day when gusts were measured in the high-20s, 13 went the distance with six needing extra holes to decide the outcome.

When dusk finally arrived on the shores of picturesque Buzzards Bay, two past U.S. Senior Amateur champions – Bob Royak (2019) and Doug Hanzel (2013) – were among the eight advancing to the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, 2021 quarterfinalist Rusty Strawn, 59, of McDonough, Ga., ended the run of 71-year-old two-time champion Paul Simson, of Raleigh, N.C., in a 19-hole thriller. Simson was bidding to become the oldest quarterfinalist in 35 years.

Canadian-born co-medalist and top seed Miles McConnell, 56, of Tampa, Fla., who was all but eliminated in his opening-round match on Monday before miraculously rallying to beat 2021 runner-up Jerry Gunthorpe, posted two more wins on Tuesday to reach his first USGA quarterfinal since losing to eventual champion Billy Mayfair in the 1987 U.S. Amateur at Jupiter Hills Golf Club in Tequesta, Fla.

Joining McConnell, Strawn and the aforementioned Senior Amateur champions in the final eight are Roger Newsom, 58, of Virginia Beach, Va.; Stephen Jensen, of England; Jeff Frazier, 57, of Mechanicsburg, Pa.; and Jon Brown, 55, of Adel, Iowa, the youngest player in this year’s field.

Brown, who became age-eligible the day before the championship, defeated John Adams, of San Clemente, Calif., in 25 holes, matching the second-longest match in championship history. There have been three other 25-holers, the last 12 years ago at Lake Nona when Rick Woulfe prevailed. It was two holes shy of the longest match, a 27-hole victory by Egon F. Quittner in 1963 at Sea Island Golf Club in St. Simons Island, Ga.

Brown converted a 10-foot birdie putt on the par-5 25th, the seventh at Kittansett, to end the match shortly before dark.

McConnell, a University of South Florida graduate and the 2021 Florida State Golf Association Senior Player of the Year, eliminated former PGA Tour player Lee Porter, of Greensboro, N.C., 2 and 1, in the Round of 16. Porter, the runner-up in this year’s British Senior Amateur, became reinstated in May after an 18-year hiatus from competitive golf.

“I played poorly this morning [against Bryan Waters], but I was able to score decently and win that match,” said McConnell, who owns and operates restaurants. “This afternoon I finally was hitting the ball better. I had my swing coach and best friend, Thad Coontz, here. He flew up this morning, along with my wife (Bea). And it was great to have their support. Thad helped me out between rounds, just a couple pointers. He knows my swing really well.”

Strawn, an insurance executive who won this year’s Trans-Mississippi Senior, rallied from a 2-down deficit to Simson after 12 holes by winning Nos. 14, 15 and 16 to take a 1-up lead. Then both he and Simson, the owner of 44 Carolinas Golf Association titles, shockingly posted matching triple-bogey 7s on the 17th hole; Simson skulled a greenside bunker shot out of bounds after Strawn’s approach flew long and into the road. Simson rebounded and coolly converted an 8-foot birdie putt on the par-5 18th to force extra holes, only to hit a poor drive on No. 19 that led to a bogey. Strawn two-putted from 35 feet to advance.

“Obviously, Paul is a legend in amateur golf and to have the opportunity to play against him is an honor,” said Strawn, who lost to Gunthorpe in the quarterfinals a year ago. “I don’t think either one of us had our best games. To two-putt from 30 to 40 feet under these windy conditions, I think it’s harder than it is to make a putt from 8 or 10 feet.. I was very proud of my lag putting.”

Royak and Newsom will have a rematch of their thrilling 2019 final at Old Chatham Golf Club in Durham, N.C., won by the former, 1 up. Royak advanced to the quarters by winning four consecutive holes from No. 13 to defeat 2016 runner-up Matt Sughrue, of Arlington, Va., 3 and 2. That stretch included three straight birdies and a par on the 16th hole that ended the match.

“My game’s been in really good shape,” said Royak. “I’ve almost put extra pressure on myself because I’ve been playing well coming into here. So, if I keep that level of play, I think I can win each match. If I don’t give any holes away, just play my game, I should be able to survive.”

Newsom, an ophthalmic surgeon, eliminated Mitch Wilson, of Kalamazoo, Mich., by the same 3-and-2 margin.

Hanzel, 65, of Savannah, Ga., continued his Houdini act in this championship. On Monday, the retired physician who is a Type 1 diabetic, rallied from a 4-down deficit with eight to play to advance past Rupert Kellock. In the Round of 16, he trailed 2017 champion Sean Knapp, of Oakmont, Pa., by two holes with four to play, then won Nos. 15, 17 and 18 to pull out a 1-up win. Hanzel, the only golfer in USGA history to make match play in the U.S. Amateur, U.S. Mid-Amateur and U.S. Senior Amateur in the same year (2012), birdied the par-5 15th and 18th holes.

This was Hanzel and Knapp’s third meeting in the U.S. Senior Amateur; Knapp won in 2017 (Round of 16) and 2018 (quarterfinals), when Knapp went on to lose the title match to Jeff Wilson.

Jensen, looking to become the first Englishman to win this title, eliminated 2013 U.S. Mid-Amateur champion and 2023 USA Walker Cup captain Michael McCoy. The 56-year-old won Nos. 11-13 to take a 2-up lead and closed out the 2022 British Senior Amateur champion with winning pars on 16 and 17.

Frazier has a chance to become the championship’s first left-handed champion thanks to a 22-hole win over Wayne Fredrick in the Round of 32 and a 2-and-1 victory over Peter Detemple, of Canada, in the Round of 16. He broke open a tight match with a winning par on No. 16 and a winning bogey on the 17th.

**What’s Next**

The quarterfinal and semifinal matches will take place on Wednesday, beginning at 7:30 a.m. EDT. The semifinal matches are scheduled for 1:15 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. Thursday’s 18-hole championship match will start at 8:30 a.m. Spectators are welcome to attend, and admission is free.

**Notable**

The quarterfinalists are exempt into the 2023 U.S. Senior Amateur at Martis Camp in Truckee, Calif., Aug. 26-31.

**Rusty Strawn** is the second consecutive Georgia Southern golfer to make a deep run in a USGA championship. Current Georgia Southern player **Ben Carr** fell in the U.S. Amateur final on Aug. 21.

**Paul Simson** now owns 36 match-play victories in the U.S. Senior Amateur, two shy of the all-time mark held by three-time champion **Lewis Oehmig**, who made the quarterfinals in 1987 at 71, and won a match at 72 in 1988. Simson, 71, is a two-time champion (2010 and 2012).

**Stephen Jensen** (England) and Canadian-born **Miles McConnell** each have a chance to become the first foreign-born champion of the U.S. Senior Amateur, which debuted in 1955 and has been won by an American every year.

Two Round-of-32 matchups pitted a U.S. Mid-Amateur champion against a U.S. Senior Amateur champion, and both went to extra holes: **Bob Royak** (2019 Senior Am) edged 1997 U.S. Mid-Am champ **Kenneth Bakst** in 21 holes, while **Mike McCoy** (2013 U.S. Mid-Am) defeated 2018 U.S. Senior Am champ and co-medalist **Jeff Wilson** in 20 holes.

Of the competitors who advanced to the Round of 16, 12 were exempt into the championship and four qualified (**Mitch Wilson**, **John Adams, Jeff Frazier** and **Peter Detemple**).

**Quotable**

“It feels fantastic. I absolutely love this venue. I love the wind. I couldn’t be happier. Just extend it another day, that’s the goal, right?” – co-medalist and top seed **Miles McConnell**

“I’ve played six or seven rounds [at Kittansett] now, so I’ve got a really good feel for the lines. I’m very comfortable with the lines off the tee, how the greens are holding or not holding, and I don’t think this wind is going to let up tomorrow or Thursday, so it’s a test. The holes out here that are exposed are really, really good.” – **Bob Royak**

“I try to keep myself in shape, try to keep my game in shape, and it’s fun competing. Age is a number; I think I’ve aged fairly well in that I’m still competitive. I hit the ball far enough and I just enjoy these events; USGA events are the best – best courses, best fields. The competition is everything.” – 2013 champ **Doug Hanzel**

“We had a pretty good game going this week; probably should have gone a little bit further. It’s just a tough loss… I’ve got one more year of being exempt [for my 2012 title]. That’s one of the reasons I wanted to win because … [if I had reached the semis] … then I can play at The Honors Course [in 2024], which is one of my favorite places in all the world. I can still maintain my [WAGR] ranking in the top 25 [of age-eligible players], which would get me there. There are lots of ways to get there.” – **Paul Simson**

“Are you kidding? The weather’s perfect. This place is perfect. There’s no griping. You just have to play good golf to keep playing. And we didn’t really do that enough, but it was great. I had a ball. I’m glad I could hang on to stay another two days.” – Massachusetts amateur legend **Frank Vana** after his 1-down loss to **Simson** in the Round of 32

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