**2021 U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship**

**Saturday, Sept. 25, First Round, Sankaty Head Golf Club and Miacomet Golf Course**

**Yaroslav Merkulov, Rochester, N.Y. – (66, 4-under, Miacomet Golf Course)**

(on his play today)

I really couldn’t find anything with the driver but I was hitting a lot of good iron shots. You have to become creative with some shots and stay committed, and I felt I did a really good job of that on the front [nine]. I just didn’t really carry that over to the back.

(on his eagle on the par-5 5th)

I hit my tee shot right. I saw where the pin was and I knew that the way the green was shaped I didn’t want to come in from the right side. I purposely hit one left into the bunker. I had 24 paces to the pin and landed it pretty much on the number. I hit a hundred bunker shots this week and had not holed one out so the timing of it couldn’t have been more than impeccable.

(on other moments in the round as he reached 7-under thru 11 holes)

I made a 30-footer (for birdie) on [No.] 6. I made a 7-footer on 7 (for birdie), a 6-footer on 8 for par and then on 9 I stuffed to a foot and had the easiest 29 putt I have ever had. I started off the back just fine and then slowly leaked oil and then really leaked oil coming down the stretch.

The last four holes happened so fast. We were sitting on the 15th tee for a good bit due to the fog delay. The first swing I made I chunked into the bunker. It really wasn’t even that bad of a swing but I missed my mark by 5 yards. I three-putted 16 and 17 I hit it left into the fescue and had a 7-footer for par and didn’t make it. So a lot of missed putts down the stretch. Eighteen really bothered me. That was the best drive I hit all day and I had a 9-iron in my hand. I landed maybe a yard shot of where I needed to and put myself in a spot.

(on putting pressure on himself)

I may be putting a little too much pressure on myself. I kind of have to take a step back. Everyone says play like a champion but for me it’s been more think and act like a champion. I swayed from that on the last four holes so I really got to regroup and get back to that mindset.