

ILLINOIS GOLFER

SPECIAL 65TH ILLINOIS OPEN EDITION

JULY 24, 2014



It's Hopfinger! Lake Forest pro captures state title at The Glen Club

Hopfinger's experience pays off in Illinois Open victory

BY TIM CRONIN

REPORTING FROM GLENVIEW

Brad Hopfinger had been in this position before. Contending for a title in the last round, feeling the pressure, needing to get the job done to lift the trophy.

In Mexico in April, Hopfinger held the lead with a round to play in a PGA Tour Latinoamerica tournament, but stumbled and finished four strokes behind.

Wednesday, he started the final round of the 65th Illinois Open at the windblown Glen Club two strokes behind leader Brian Bullington. But Bullington faded early and the race for the trophy came down to Hopfinger, who birdied three of the first five holes, and Travis Johns, who started the day a stroke back.

"Every time you're in position, you always learn something," Hopfinger said. "I learned there (in Mexico) along with the other times I've been on the leader board."

He learned well. Even with a bogey at the last, Hopfinger scrambled to a 1-under-par 71 and scored a one-stroke victory with a 54-hole aggregate of 6-under-par 210, a stroke better than Johns, who also bogeyed the par-5 18th.

That was one of the holes where the tournament turned, but the drama began at the first. That's where Hopfinger, a 25-year-old from Lake Forest in his third full year chasing birdies for dollars following a college career that started at Kansas and finished at Iowa, opened with a two-putt birdie after reaching the green of the downwind par 5 in two with a 5-iron. It's also where Bullington scored bogey, the first of too many crooked numbers on a card that

would eventually total 83. The Iowa senior finished tied for 16th.

Hopfinger, who earned \$13,500 from the purse of \$66,590, would birdie three of the first five holes to reach 8-under and led Johns by one and Michael Daven of Hoopeston, Kyle English of Bloomington and Max Scodro of Chicago by two at that point. But there was much golf yet to be played, and much wind to play it in. Down the street at Chicago Executive Airport, it was steady from the north-northeast at 16 to 20 mph, and gusted to 28. On certain points of The Glen Club, it was stronger. In the wind tunnel that is the 17th tee, for instance, might have gotten to 35 mph.

"It's hard from a timing standpoint," Hopfinger said. "And putting in the wind is as hard as it gets."

Twice, Hopfinger backed off a par putt on the eighth green because of the gusty conditions, and then sank it. He led Johns by two strokes at the turn, then bogeyed the par-3 11th. When Johns birdied the par-4 12th, the game was afoot. But Hopfinger knew nothing of his status.

"I actually never looked," he said. "Not until 15, when I asked my caddie where I stood and shouldn't have, because I made five."

That bogey moved him back to 7-under. Johns, the teaching pro at Medinah Country Club, had played the 12th through 15th in 1-under and also stood 7-under in the group behind. But Hopfinger made only more more mistake down the stretch, bogeying the 18th thanks to a plugged lie in a green-side bunker with his third shot. Johns made a pair of mistakes.

"I was hitting it everywhere on the back nine," Johns said. "Exciting, fun to watch."

The par-3 17th was into the teeth of the gale.



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

STARCHED Travis Johns looks at his chip shot on the windy par-3 17th in disbelief. The bogey and another at the last were costly.



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

MOMENT OF CELEBRATION Brad Hopfinger and caddie Jim Beall share the satisfaction of victory.

Johns wanted to be below the hole, and was, but also off the green and facing a difficult chip. He got to the proper level of the green, but tried to adjust his par putt to account for the wind, and missed it.

Johns was bogeying the 17th and dropping to 6-under the same time Hopfinger was bogeying the 18th to get to 6-under.

"I knew I had a shot," Johns said. "I'd heard he was 7-under. I was not going to do anything but try and birdie. I'm not going to bank on him bogeying. And I'm fairly aggressive."

Johns took a mighty blow and hooked his shot into the right fescue, a swing so hard his hat blew off.

His next tee ball found the middle of the fairway. An approach got him to wedge range, and he took dead aim.

"It must have come pretty close," Johns said of the shot that finished about four feet behind the cup.

He made that, knowing it was for bogey. Hopfinger, watching with his family, also knew.

"My little brother was scouting for me," he said of Mitch. "I knew that four-footer was for a 6. But I didn't want to celebrate until it was official."

It will soon be back to the Latinoamerica Tour for Hopfinger, where a good finish will get him exempted to the second stage of Q school and a poten-

tial shot at the web.com Tour in 2015.

"There are lots of scenarios," Hopfinger said.

Most all of them good. Hopfinger, who captured the Illinois Amateur in 2011, is the seventh player to win both state titles. The others: Roy Biancalana, Gary Hallberg, Mark Hensby, Bill Hoffer, David Ogrin and Gary Pinns.

Michael Davan had the best round of the day, a 2-under-par 70 highlighted by an eagle 2 on the par-4 15th, which was drivable thanks to the use of a forward tee. That vaulted Davan into third place at 4-under 212. Bloomington's Kyle English, fourth at 2-under 214, was the only other player to finish under par.

The low amateurs were Brian Payne of Flossmoor and Daniel Stringfellow of Roselle, among those tying for fifth at even-par 216.

With the wind, the field of 57 averaged 77.46, higher than the first two rounds, when the full field of 156 competed in relatively docile conditions. Among the 15 players shooting 80 or more: four-time champion Mike Small, whose 77-66-80 reading for 7-over 223 and a tie for 23rd was the most topsy-turvy of the championship.

Defending champion Joe Kinney tied for 16th at 4-over 220.

Bullington roared for a time

Bullington had come to The Glen Club with a plan.

"Every day I've set a number for myself," the Frankfort resident, a senior at Iowa in the fall, explained after his second-round 67.

He hit his number on the first two days, which propelled him into the lead entering the final round.

Bullington's 2-under-par 70 on Monday placed him four strokes behind first round leader Michael Davan. After his 5-under 67, Bullington's aggregate of 7-under-par 137 through Tuesday's play earned him a one-stroke advantage on Johns and two on



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

IRON MAN Brad Hopfinger used an iron off several holes, including the par-4 15th, where one of two electronic leader boards kept players and spectators informed.

English, Hopfinger, and Stringfellow.

Bullington didn't have the look of a leader on his front nine. He was 1-over after eight holes, but birdied the 10th and 11th – the latter from 35 feet.

"That kind of lit things up," Bullington said.

Three more birdies followed mid-round, and he finished things off with an 8-foot downhill slider for a bird at the par-5 18th to score 6-under 30 on the back nine. And never mind that it got windier with each completed hole. Bullington rode it like a Hawkeye.

"It was a favoring wind," Bullington decided. "For the tough holes coming in, they're not really birdie holes."

Bullington's had success elsewhere, but had been in the middle of the pack in his first two Illinois Open appearances. This third entry came in a year when a fellow Hawkeye also made noise.

"Ray (Kroll) qualified for the John Deere Classic and won the state amateur," Bullington said, hoping to write his own headlines.

Kroll, from Naperville, was among those lurk-

ing after 36 holes. He was in an elite group at 1-under 143, six back of his teammate.

Johns closed with an eagle for 6-under 66 by dropping a downhill 20-footer at the last, while English's crafty 4-under 68 included a 35-foot eagle putt on the par-5 14th.

"Right at the end I holed a bunch of putts," said Johns. "Right before, I'd missed several 6-footers for birdies. But I believe it all evens out in the wash."

English, the 25-year-old head pro at Crestwicke,

which his parents own, was happy to be the first leader to finish, given how the wind was freshening at the time. It laid down a bit later, but English forged on through the breeze.

“It didn’t change my game plan,” English said. “I was lucky to play this morning.”

His location in Bloomington makes him one of the more distant competitors, but he’s not a stranger to his fellow competitors.

“It’s a bit of a haul every time, but I play in every (Monday) stroke play,” said English, holder of the Illinois PGA’s best season scoring average (71.22).

Three of the four knotted with Knoll in ninth place were former Illinois Open winners: Small, defender Kinney, and Eric Meierdierks. Small made the big move of the day with his 6-under 66, climbing from a tie for 88th into the deadlock for 10th. (Johns, in moving into second, only jumped 20 places.)

Others in contention were Libertyville’s Michael Schachner (4-under 140), and a duo at 2-under 142: 2012 champion Max Scodro of Chicago (who aced the 169-yard fourth hole with a pitching wedge in the final round), and Hoopeston’s Michael Davan. The overnight leader skidded to a 76 on Tuesday.

Proof that golf’s a family affair was reinforced with the performance of the Bauman clan. Daddy Doug, the 57-year-old pro at Biltmore, scored 2-under 70 to total 2-over 146, while sons Riley and Greg carded 73 for 147 and 76 for 148, respectively, all three making the cut to the low 50 players and ties. It’s believed three players from the same family had never played in the same Illinois Open, much less advanced to the final round.

The cut fell at 5-over 149 and included 57 players, with five former winners among the top 14 and ties.

Twenty-five of those 57, beginning with Bullington, were amateurs. That is also believed to be a record.

Davan gained a measure of revenge

A year ago, Davan left The Glen Club with his head spinning.

A double-bogey on the final hole, when all he needed was a par-5, cost him the Illinois Open title. He didn’t even make the three-way playoff, which was captured by Kinney.

Monday, Davan left the course with his head held high. His 6-under-par 66 gave him the lead after 18 holes.

“This tournament’s been on my calendar the whole year,” said the 25-year-old. “It affected me more afterwards than I thought it would. It’s been fuel for me.”

Davan ignited with a 5-under 31 on the back nine, his first nine holes, and added a 1-over 35 on his inward nine.

That earned him a one-stroke lead over Bloomington amateur Alex Burge, a senior at Illinois who described his 67 as “as boring as I would like. It’s what Coach (Mike Small) says. One shot at a time. You want to make it boring.”

A casual observer would have thought otherwise. Burge rolled in a 30-footer for birdie on the par-5 first, a 20-footer for a birdie on the par-4 third, a 10-footer for a deuce on the par-3 fourth, and two-putted for birdie on the fifth after reaching the par-5 in two.

Ho hum.

“It was solid,” Burge said. “I managed my game well, dropped a couple of putts.”

Birdies on the 14th and 15th rounded out his round. Meanwhile, Davan was exorcising the demon of last year. He started to do so on Sunday, when, during a practice round, he dropped a ball on the same spot on the 18th and again took dead aim with the 3-wood that cost him so dearly a year ago.

“Smoked it on the green,” Davan said. “It was good to hit that shot.”

And better to finish his first nine with a birdie on the hole in the first round.

“I have a better game plan going into this year,” Davan added.

It paid off in January with a win in a one-round mini-tour tournament in Sarasota, Fla., with the Illinois Open always in the back of his mind. Monday, he hit 14 greens and played the par-5s in 3-under.

Scott Baines of Chicago, an assistant at Bryn Mawr Country Club, had a roller-coaster round en route to his 4-under 68 and a tie for second with Hopfinger, Schachner and Dustin Korte.

Baines opened with two birdies, added two bogeys, then scored a couple more birdies to finish his front nine, then was sideswiped by double-bogey on the par-3 11th. Finally, he collected four birdies in the last six holes, including a chip-in bird on the 13th.

“It was a very interesting round of golf today,” said Baines, the anti-Burge.

It came after a sub-par performance, and not in a scoreboard way, at the PGA’s national club pro soiree. Baines missed the cut, which put a burr in his saddle.

“I feel I had to redeem myself a little bit,” Baines said.

Pro Bryce Emory (Aurora) and amateurs Thomas O’Bryan (Aurora) and Michael Abrahamson (Chicago) were locked at 3-under 69, while seniors Billy Rosinia and Jim Sobbo, along with Bullington, were among a large group at 2-under 70.

Kinney was among those at 1-under 71.

“I wasn’t hitting the ball as solid as I liked but kept it in play and didn’t have any penalties,” Kinney said.

Country Club of Decatur head pro Steve Orrick had the shot of the day, an ace on the 191-yard 17th hole. He wielded a 7-iron.

While Hans Larson of Mount Prospect played the entire round but was listed as withdrawn after

65TH ILLINOIS OPEN FINAL SCORING

THE GLEN CLUB · GLENVIEW · JULY 21-23, 2014 · PAR 72 · 7,252 YARDS

1 Brad Hopfinger , Lake Forest 68-71-71-210 -6 \$13,500	T20 Connie DeMattia , Golf 72-75-74-221 +5 \$500	T32 a-Ryan Frederick , Lockpt. 77-72-77-226 +10	Scoring Averages
2 Travis Johns , Oswego 72-66-73-211 -5 \$8,500	T20 a-Charlie Netzel , W. Spgs. 75-68-78-221 +5 \$370	T40 Doug Bauman , N. Barr'ton 76-70-81-227 +11 \$355	
3 Michael Davan , Hoopeston 66-76-70-212 -4 \$7,000	T20 a-Daniel Hudson , W. Spgs. 75-73-73-221 +5 \$370	T40 Tim Streng , Arlington Hts. 75-73-79-227 +11 \$355	
4 Kyle English , Bloomington 71-68-75-214 -2 \$5,500	T23 Billy Rosinia , Ind. Hd. Pk. 70-76-77-223 +7 \$443	T40 a-Greg Bauman , Arlin'ton Hts. 72-76-79-227 +11 \$270	Hole-By-Hole
T5 Michael Smith , Chicago 73-72-71-216 E \$3,500	T23 a-Kyle Nathan , Glenview 72-73-78-223 +7	T43 a-Bennett Lavin , Deerfield 70-77-81-228 +12	
T5 a-Brian Payne , Flossmoor 75-69-72-216 E	T23 Brad Marek , Arlington Hts. 70-75-78-223 +7 \$443	T43 Scott Baines , Chicago 68-79-81-228 +12 \$332.50	
T5 Eric Meierdierks , Wilmette 72-71-73-216 E \$3,500	T23 John Shaw III , Gurnee 74-74-75-223 +7 \$443	T43 a-Matt Weber , St. Charles 75-73-80-228 +12	1 5 559 5.07
T5 a-Daniel Stringfellow , Roselle 70-69-77-216 E	T23 Jonathon Krick , Peoria Hts. 71-73-79-223 +7 \$443	T43 a-Blake Johnson , Winnetka 71-77-80-228 +12	2 4 408 4.12
T5 Michael Schachner , Lib'ville 68-72-76-216 E \$3,500	T23 Mike Small , Champaign 77-66-80-223 +7 \$443	T43 a-John Wright , Aurora 76-73-79-228 +12	3 4 469 4.46
10 a-Thomas O'Bryan , Aurora 69-75-73-217 +1	29 Matt Slowinski , Glen Ellyn 72-74-78-224 +8 \$410	T43 Jim Sobb , Mundelein 70-79-79-228 +12 \$332.50	4 3 156 3.29
T11 Casey Pyne , Bloomington 72-75-72-219 +3 \$1,375	T30 Guy Sciortino , Downers Gve. 79-68-78-225 +9 \$395	T43 Jerry Vidovic , Blue Island 76-73-79-228 +12 \$332.50	5 5 599 5.09
T11 a-Riley Bauman , Crystal Lk. 74-73-72-219 +3	T30 Steve Orrick , Mt. Zion 75-73-77-225 +9 \$395	T43 a-Michael Abrahamson , Chi. 69-80-79-228 +12	6 4 477 4.65
T11 a-Kyle Gunther , Dunlap 74-72-73-219 +3	T32 a-Matthew Lavery , Peoria 74-72-80-226 +10	T43 Brandon Holtz , Bloomington 72-77-79-228 +12 \$332.50	7 4 475 4.42
T11 a-Alex Burge , Bloomington 67-78-74-219 +3	T32 Andrew Godfrey , H'wood 75-73-78-226 +10 \$375	T52 a-Michael Bubenicek , D. Grv. 74-72-83-229 +13	8 4 415 4.47
T11 Max Scodro , Chicago 72-70-77-219 +3 \$1,375	T32 a-Eric Winters , Elgin 73-75-78-226 +10	T52 Dan Scardina , Bartlett 74-74-81-229 +13 \$325	9 3 217 3.40
T16 Britt Pavelonis , Harrisburg 73-75-72-220 +4 \$783.33	T32 a-Michael Fastert , Des Pl'hes 73-75-78-226 +10	T54 Bryce Emory , Aurora 69-77-85-231 +15 \$325	10 4 333 4.09
T16 Dustin Korte , Metropolis 68-76-76-220 +4 \$783.33	T32 a-Varun Chopra , Champiagn 74-74-78-226 +10	T54 a-Talon Supak , Wash'tn. 73-76-82-231 +15	11 3 218 3.49
T16 Joseph Kinney , Antioch 71-72-77-220 +4 \$783.33	T32 Josh Esler , Wauconda 77-72-77-226 +10 \$375	56 a-Dylan Daxon , Milan 77-72-86-235 +19	12 4 421 4.24
T16 a-Brian Bullington , Frankfort 70-67-83-220 +4	T32 a-Ray Knoll , Naperville 74-69-83-226 +10	57 Chris Ioriatti , Romeoville 76-73-87-236 +20 \$325	13 4 369 4.18
			14 5 534 4.84
			15 4 358 4.00
			16 4 451 4.49
			17 3 204 3.29
			18 5 589 5.22

Most Birdies

15 – a-Thomas O'Bryan
13 – Michael Davan
13 – Michael Schachner
13 – a-Daniel Stringfellow

Statistics compiled by
Illinois PGA

Cover photograph by
Tim Cronin

four holes, and amateur Trevor Jay of Westmont was disqualified for an incomplete scorecard – he was 18-over through 16 holes, as well – the odd-est occurrence of the day was Tim “Tee-K” Kelly’s withdrawal due to a medical emergency.

All turned out well, but there were a few scary moments before doctors having diagnosed him with severe dehydration. Kelly believed it was because of what he ate and drank on Sunday. He returned to the course at about 7:30 p.m., after an emergency trip to Glenbrook Hospital, having withdrawn after nine holes. He returned to watch the final round.

Kelly said he began feeling heart palpitations in the morning, but decided to play and became more agitated as his front nine went on in the early afternoon. He fanned on a shot at one point, and asked for paramedics to be called on the 18th hole, his ninth. (The winner of last year’s Illinois Amateur, Kelly had uncharacteristically been 8-over through seven holes.)

Kelly, a sophomore at Ohio State, finished the hole with a marvelous chip to inches from the hole, then walked to an ambulance. Three hours later, he was back at the course, feeling and looking much better.

By Wednesday night, Hopfinger felt better than anyone.

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JULY 24, 2014 / SPECIAL EDITION 1

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