

Denlinger wins Match Play title

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BY DIANA PUGLIESE

Once the sun came out, Dave Denlinger was on top of his game in Saturday's two matches.

The first two rounds of the Lanco Brent L. Miller Match Play championship saw a lot of starting and stopping.



Vinny Tennis / Staff photos **Left, David Denlinger putts on the 14th hole of the Lancaster County Match Play championship at the Lancaster Country Club in Lancaster on Saturday. Right, Mike Turner hits toward the 14th green. Denlinger defeated Turner during the final round of play.**

After two lightning delays that resulted in more than an hour of inactivity in the middle of the quarterfinals Friday, many golfers had trouble getting into a rhythm.

By Saturday, however, the sun had risen over Lancaster Country Club and there was no throwing David Denlinger off his game.

After topping last year's runner-up Chris Fieger, 3 and 2, in the morning semifinals, Denlinger powered his way to a 5 and 4 victory over Mike Turner to win the Lanco Match Play championship.

The win marks the second title in this tournament for the recent college graduate, who also took home the prize in 2010.

"It feels good, I mean, obviously there are a lot of good players up there," said Denlinger, who was quick to shift praise to his caddie, Lanco Open champion Connor Lefever, for helping him read the greens.

"I think the big thing was I won the first four holes and put myself in a really good spot. I made a couple of mistakes here and there but I played solid coming in and it was nice to finish it off and get the win."

After falling behind early, Turner trimmed Denlinger's lead to three after the fifth hole, but Denlinger was back to 4 up after the front nine.

From there, Denlinger took complete control of the match.

The reigning Lanco Amateur champion, who qualified for the U.S. Amateur at the Atlanta Athletic Club later this month, birdied the 10th before he almost holed out on 11.

Hitting from the rough, Denlinger's second shot bounced off the cup and rolled just above the hole. He sunk his putt for birdie while Turner's shot stopped just short, putting Denlinger 6 up with seven holes left to play.

Both golfers then shot even-par on the 12th.

"I struggled, I struggled that last match," said Turner. "I played really well this morning but I got off to a really bad start there against David. I just never really got it going and then when I actually did make a couple good pars starting the back nine, David dunked birdies on top of me."

Denlinger ran into his first real bout of trouble after losing his ball on the 13th fairway. The crowd of spectators who had gathered to watch the match could not find his rogue tee shot, forcing Denlinger to tee off again.

Turner capitalized to win the hole and pull within five. He followed with an up-and-down to save par on the 14th, but Denlinger responded with a par of his own, sealing the match.

It was an uncharacteristically rough afternoon for Turner, who had a decisive 6 and 5 victory over Andy Zook in the semifinals after beating Marc Oliveri Jr. on a playoff hole and Connor Sheehan, 3 and 2, to open play Friday. Turner had trouble making par on the front nine, while the back nine saw him run into issues coming off the tee box - often resulting in a little more greenery around his ball.



"I was in the trees in the afternoon," joked Turner when comparing his semifinal and final rounds. "I lost a bit of confidence and nerves got to me a little bit, but other than that, I don't know, that's golf I guess. Sometimes you got it and sometimes you don't. Half the day I did and half the day I didn't."

Zook ousts Gast in Lanco Match Play

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BY DIANA PUGLIESE

Andy Zook, who eliminated Corey Gast on Friday, moves into today's semifinals at Lancaster Country Club along with Mike Turner, Chris Fieger and David Denlinger.

The Lanco Brent L. Miller Jewelers and Goldsmiths Match Play championship may not have a long and storied history, but the tournament — which was founded in 2009 — always seems to have a familiar face atop the leaderboard.

Corey Gast has won the tournament three of the four times in which he has competed, but his quest for a fourth title was blocked Friday afternoon by Andy Zook.

Zook claimed the match and his spot in the tournament's final day of play with a 1-up victory Friday at Lancaster Country Club.

Also moving into today's semifinals back at LCC are Mike Turner, Chris Fieger and David Denlinger.

Zook will take on Turner, while Fieger faces Denlinger at 8 a.m. The winners of those matches advance to the final, which should tee off around 1 p.m.

"I'm definitely disappointed," Gast said. "I mean, to be the defending champion and not make it past the first day is definitely disappointing, but Andy outplayed me. Andy played really solid. He didn't make a lot of mistakes, and it just came down to he hit a couple of clutch shots at the end that I wasn't able to hit."

Picking up on the fifth green after two lightning delays, Zook and Gast traded the lead all the way to the 18th hole. Zook went 1 up on the seventh before Gast squared it on the eighth. Then Gast sunk a birdie putt to go 2 up on 11 before teeing off into the water on the 12th.

By the 17th, the match was tied again, but Gast pulled the ball into the rough left of the par-3 hole and three putted. Zook made a three footer to save par and go 1 up again.

"Then on 18, I hit a perfect hybrid out of the rough and, it was what it was," joked Zook, who failed to make it out of the first round in his first appearance in the tournament last year.

"We both hit the ball decent today, but we kind of took advantage of each other's mistakes."

Two other members of last year's final foursome did not advance to the second day of play.

After a 3 and 2 morning victory over Marlin Detweiler, Phillips — who fell 8 and 6 to Gast in the semifinals last year —dropped 2 and 1 to Denlinger.

Phillips was 1 up on the eighth hole of his home course, but by the time the rain kicked in again after the 13th hole, Denlinger had gone 2 up.

Mike Turner needed a 19th hole to knock out Marc Oliveri Jr. Squared for most of the day, Turner and Oliveri were even going to the 18th before they both parred the final hole.

By claiming the playoff win, Turner ensured the only repeat performer in today's field is last year's runner-up, Fiegler.



The 2013 Lanco Player of the Year and reigning Lanco Senior champion, Fiegler powered through a first round meeting with Eric Buck 4 and 3 before topping Rob Rowe 6 and 5 in the only match of the afternoon that was decided before the final two holes.

Corey Gast aiming for another title

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BY JASON FULGINITI

Will go for his fourth title at the Lanco Brent L. Miller Jewelers and Goldsmiths Match Play championship on Friday.

The format is totally different. But for Corey Gast, the mentality is exactly the same.



Chris Knight **Corey Gast putts at the recent Lanco Better Ball Championship. Gast is looking to claim this year's Lanco Match Play title as well.**

Two weeks ago, Gast teamed with fellow Meadia Heights Golf Club member K.J. Stutz to win the Lanco Better Ball. The twosome got it done over two days by relying on a simple philosophy.

Stutz uses his consistency to hold down the fort, while long-hitting Gast goes for broke, trying to create fireworks.

"If we don't make par, it's my fault," Stutz said after that tournament. "It's his job to go out and make six birdies."

Gast has no problem with that, which also, obviously, makes him a threat when the game switches to match play.

Since the Lanco Brent L. Miller Jewelers and Goldsmiths Match Play championship was founded in 2009, Gast has won the event three of the four times he's played in it.

He'll go for a fourth title starting Friday morning, when 16 of the county's top amateur players tee off in first-round matches at Lancaster Country Club.

The winners of those matches advance to the quarterfinals Friday afternoon. The semifinals and final will be played Saturday back at LCC.

With history as a guide, it's hard to imagine a better favorite than Gast, who, by nature of being the defending champion, is the top seed in the bracket.

Not that Gast's lofty résumé in this event has given him any sense of entitlement.

"The second I start thinking this (tournament) is mine to lose," he said last year, "it's just that much tougher to win."

Even if Gast didn't make it seem all that difficult a year ago.

Entering the event as the No. 5 seed, Gast rolled to a 3 and 2 first-round victory over Andy Brightbill and a 4 and 3 quarterfinal win over Connor Gilbert, before throttling three-time Lanco Open and three-time Lanco Amateur champion Ken Phillips, 8 and 6, in the semifinals.

He finished things off with a 3 and 1 victory over Chris Fieger in the final. The key to that success? "I'm not scared to make a big number," Gast said after last year's first two rounds. "Even if you make 10 (on a hole) you're only one down. And par is whatever score your (opponent) has.

"It's the only event where you can be the second-worst player on the golf course and win the tournament. You only to have to beat one guy (at a) time."

The dividends of that fearlessness could be seen in Gast's landslide victory over Phillips in the semifinals, during which he birdied seven of his first 12 holes and was 6-under by the time he closed out the match on the 12th hole.

Phillips, an LCC member, is back in the field, along with last year's other semifinalists, Fieger and Marc Oliveri Jr.

Also returning to the event this year is 2010 Lanco Match Play champ David Denlinger, who is coming off a win at the Lanco Amateur in June. Denlinger, the 2011 Lanco Open champ who completed a successful collegiate career at Division I Charleston Southern this spring, recently qualified for the U.S. Amateur in August.

Fieger, though, might be the hottest player coming into the event.

The 2013 Lanco Player of the Year, Fieger is the reigning Lanco Senior champion and has won three of the last four Lanco Mid-Amateurs.

He's fresh off a tie for second at last week's Lanco Open at Crossgates Golf Club, where he fired 7-under 65. He also posted rounds of 67-70 (3-under) last month at Overlook to finish alone in third at the Lanco Amateur.

Following are all of Friday's first-round pairings (club affiliations in parenthesis):

No. 1 seed Corey Gast (Meadia Heights) vs. No. 16 Mark Naimoli (Overlook).

No. 2 seed David Denlinger (Lancaster C.C.) vs. No. 15 Mike Atkins (unattached).

No. 3 seed Chris Fieger (Foxchase) vs. No. 14 Eric Buck (Lancaster C.C.).

No. 4 seed Craig Kliewer (Meadia Heights) vs. No. 13 Marc Oliveri Jr. (Lancaster C.C.).

No. 5 seed Connor Sheehan (Tanglewood) vs. No. 12 Mike Turner (Overlook).

No. 6 seed Rob Rowe (Bent Creek C.C.) vs. No. 11 Mike Sugden (Lancaster C.C.).

No. 7 seed Ken Phillips (Lancaster C.C.) vs. No. 10 Marlin Detweiler (Lancaster C.C.).



No. 8 seed Greg Osborne (Overlook) vs. No. 9 Andy Zook (Crossgates).