

Notes from the U.S. Amateur

BY CARR McCALLA

LGA Executive Director Carr McCalla served as a rules official at the recent U.S. Amateur Championship at the Olympic Club in San Francisco. This is his account of the third-round match he officiated at the Championship.

My match this afternoon pits Sihwan Kim, the 2004 U.S. Junior Amateur Champion (held at Olympic) from the Los Angeles area, and a local player from Santa Cruz, Eddie Olson. Olson will be a sophomore at UNLV this year and Kim will be a freshman at Stanford. They had won matches earlier in the morning...and this is certainly not the first time they've squared off. I have an observer for my match today. Pepe de la Puerta from the Mexican Golf Association is here helping this week and he'll be my observer. The observer's function is to stay ahead of the group and let the referee know of any rules issues the players may face once they arrive at their tee shots and/or approach shots. We usually don't have enough officials to have observers but it's a big help when we do. Pepe's a very friendly guy and always gives you a big hug as a greeting. I got my obligatory hug and then introduced myself and Pepe to the players and their caddies. Our match turned out to be the most exciting match of the round of 16, eventually going 19 holes.

We had a decent crowd from the start, but the longer the match went on and the tighter it got, the more the crowd grew. The fact that both players were from California I'm sure didn't hurt. There are leaderboards around the course and once the other matches ended (most ended by the 16th hole) we picked up spectators from the other matches that became aware of our tight match.

Kim went two up rather quickly...he's a big guy who reminds me somewhat of Ernie Els, a nice easy swing and hits it a long way. Olson is a small, but wiry guy...a battler that never gave in even though he got down early. I had my first real involvement in the match on the par-4 fifth hole. Both players hit it into the rough off the tee and had to lay up. Their third shots found the green, Olson just inside Kim but on the same line. After he marked his ball, he moved his coin one clubhead to the side to get it off Kim's line of putt. Whenever I have a player do that I make it a point to pay close attention when the player replaces his ball to be sure he moves the coin back to its correct position. As long as I've been officiating at this level, I've never had someone forget to move their coin back...until today. After Kim two-putted for his bogey Olson replaced his ball behind the coin without moving the coin back to its correct position. I was able to get his attention and reminded him that he had not moved the coin back. He immediately recognized the mistake and thanked me profusely for reminding him, lifted the ball, moved the coin back to its correct position and replaced his ball. He then proceeded to drain the 20-footer for par to win the hole, effectively cutting his two hole deficit in half.

Kim won the short par-3 eighth to go back to two up and they halved the ninth hole with pars. On the 10th, Olson hit a huge

drive and a great second to make birdie there and again cut the deficit to one. As we reached the drive zone on No. 11, I noticed that Roger Maltbie had joined our gallery. The Golf Channel had just gone on the air live and apparently our match had become the marquee match left undecided. Maltbie was with us the rest of the way. Olson squared the match a couple of holes later and when he hit another great second shot into the par four 14th to about 2^{1/2}

feet, Kim conceded the hole and all of sudden Olson was actually one up and leading the match.

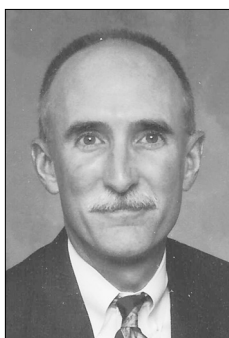
The USGA had moved the tee on the 603-yard 16th hole up a bit on Thursday to tempt the players into going for the green in two. Part of the reason the USGA likes to conduct the Amateur Championship at venues like Olympic that are also scheduled to host the U.S. Open in future years is to help them prepare the course set-up for the future Open Championship. This was one of those tests...don't be surprised to see the tee up on this hole on occasion when the Open is contested here in 2012.

The 16th is a dogleg left. You have to turn it right-to-left off the tee to get into position to take a crack at the green. Both players hit good drives around the corner. Kim was out and he hit a three wood into the left greenside bunker. Olson's ball was in the middle of the fairway but he felt that his stance might be interfered with by a sprinkler head. I had him take his stance with the club he was going to hit (a three wood) and the sprinkler head was, in fact, interfering with his stance. We determined his nearest point of relief and he dropped within one clublength, no nearer the hole.

He had about 255 to the middle of the green and hit a three wood that seemed to hang in the air forever, eventually coming to rest in the bunker fronting the green. Neither player was able to get up-and-down and we headed to the 17th with Olson still one-up. The 17th is a 491-yard par four that doglegs left. The fairway is canted from left-to-right making finding the short grass that much more difficult. One of the things that makes Olympic unique is the fact that most of the dogleg holes have fairways that slope the opposite way from the dogleg.

The 17th is a perfect example...it's uphill...it doglegs from right to left...and unless you're able to land your drive in the left quarter of the fairway, chances are you'll end up in the right rough with over 200 yards left. Olson hit his only bad drive of the day, a quick hook that ended up in the deep rough. He could only advance it about 100 yards with his second, still in the rough. A third shot over the green, a pitch on and two putts meant all Kim needed to do to win the hole was make bogey.

Once Olson missed his bogey putt, he conceded the hole and we headed to the 18th tee all square. The 18th is a gorgeous finishing hole. It's only 347 yards long but the fairway is extremely narrow, even for the irons that most players hit off the tee. People most remember this hole for the infamous back left hole location from the 1998 U.S. Open. The green has been rebuilt since then and while it's still treacherous, it's not unfair as it was that day in 1998. Both players hit good tee balls, Olson finding the fairway left and Kim just



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