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Hossler, Zhang playing in US Jr. Am

By WAYNE MILLS
Putting Around

The biggest competitive golf event in the history of New Hampshire just got a lot bigger.

The United States Golf Association announced the list of exempt players into the U.S. Junior Amateur Championship scheduled for July 16-21 at the Golf Club of New England in Stratham. This is the first national championship ever held on Granite State soil.

Not only will Keene's Chelso Barrett, who lost in the finals to Jordan Spieth last year, be in attendance, he will be joined by 16-year-old Connor Greeleaf of Windham, who won a local qualifier, as the only New Hampshire natives in the competition.

But the big buzz comes from the entry of 17-year-old Californian Beau Hossler, who made news at the recent U.S. Open at Olympic Club and actually led at one point on Friday while in the hunt for awhile on Sunday.

He is competing this week on a sponsor's exemption at the PGA Tour's AT&T National at Congressional Country Club in Washington, D.C.

Also competing at the U.S. Junior Am is 14-year-old Andy Zhang, the youngest ever to compete in the national championship. Both Hossler and Zhang got major television exposure on the NBC broadcasts of the U.S. Open.

"The world stood up and cheered for Beau Hossler last weekend when he amazingly led the U.S. Open for a short time Friday and played a terrific round Saturday to stay in contention for the final round," said Craig Benson, honorary chairman of the 2012 U.S. Junior Amateur. "Golf Club of New England is very excited about the chance to have Beau in New Hampshire for the Junior Amateur Championship.

"With two players from New Hampshire, and 2010 Junior Amateur Champion Jim Liu in the field, golf fans from all over New England have a tremendous chance to come see the stars of tomorrow play our challenging Arnold Palmer course."

Situated on 450 acres of farmland, the club's founders brought in Arnold Palmer's architectural firm to design The Golf Club of New England, which opened for play in 2003

“We were able to work with the native topography and some exciting natural elements to create a pure golf experience,” said Erik Larsen, one of the architects who worked on the Golf Club of New England’s design. “The Golf Club of New England is simply about golf. Our design offers multiple playing strategies, providing players a unique golf experience at every hole.”

Barrett, whose family owns the 36-hole Bretwood Golf Club in Keene, tuned up recently by winning the New Hampshire Junior Am at Campbells Scottish Highlands in Salem. He won matches against James McKee, Matt Paradis and Ryan Toombs before beating Mathew Killam of Newport Country Club in the final. Killam defeated Conner Greenleaf earlier in the quarter finals.

Barrett won the first three holes before halving the next three in the final. A win at the seventh had Barrett four-up at the turn and after winning the 10th and 11th and halving the 13th, he had Killam dormie with six holes to play.

Killam fought off elimination by going birdie, par, birdie to win holes 13-16, but Barrett closed him out with a par at the 16th to win three and two.

Notable participants in previous Junior Amateur Championships include Tiger Woods, Ben Crenshaw, David Duval, Jim Furyk, Lee Janzen, Anthony Kim, Justin Leonard, Davis Love and Billy Mayfair.

“Our mission is to show the world’s best young golfers that New Hampshire is proud to have them for a week of competition,” Benson said. “With free admission, and players like Hossler, Barrett, Greenleaf, Zhang and Liu coming to GCNE, we expect many fans to come see these young stars first-hand. The course will not be roped off, and spectators can walk with the players from hole to hole.”

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