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## Mike Cullity's NH Golf: Hossler set for NH stage

MIKE CULLITY



**Beau Hossler acknowledges the crowd after making a putt on the 16th hole during the third round of the 112th U.S. Open golf tournament at The Olympic Club in San Francisco last month. -KYLE TERADAUS PRESSWIRE**

Last month, a precocious teenager named Beau Hossler made a worldwide name for himself with a standout performance at the U.S. Open.

A 17-year-old California kid with a mouth full of braces, Hossler led the Open briefly during the second

round and was only four shots off the lead after 54 holes at San Francisco's Olympic Club. Despite a final-round 76, he tied for 29th, finishing ahead of his idol, Phil Mickelson, and several other well-known pros.

By hanging with the world's best golfers under major-championship pressure, Hossler established himself as a future star. And after subsequently tussling with the PGA Tour's finest at the AT&T National — where he made the 36-hole cut but was one of seven players eliminated before the final round under a tour rule intended to limit the size of Sunday fields — Hossler has turned his attention to achieving his No. 1 goal: winning the U.S. Junior Amateur Championship.

Hossler's quest has brought him to the Golf Club of New England in Stratham, where the U.S. Junior will tee off starting tomorrow. Featuring 156 of the top junior golfers from the United States and beyond, the U.S. Golf Association national championship is the holy grail for players 17 and under. And this year's edition will be the first USGA championship to be staged in New Hampshire.

After 36 holes of stroke-play qualifying on Monday and Tuesday, the low 64 scorers advance to match play starting Wednesday. The tournament culminates with a 36-hole final on Saturday.

With no admission fee or gallery ropes, the U.S. Junior is a great chance for fans to witness the game's best young players up close. Given that past winners such as Johnny Miller, David Duval and three-time champ Tiger Woods have gone on to PGA Tour stardom, it's likely that a future major champion or two will be strolling the fairways in Stratham.

With his storybook U.S. Open, Hossler certainly demonstrated lofty potential. Fresh off a runner-up finish last week at the Callaway Junior World Golf Championships, a tournament he won last year, he arrives in New Hampshire eager to add the U.S. Junior trophy to his mantle.

► [U.S. Junior Amateur website](#)

"It shows who the best junior golfer is for the year, and obviously that's my goal," he said in a phone interview last week.

Of his star turn at the U.S. Open, Hossler said it was "pretty cool" to see how his game measured up against the world's top players. His performance didn't exceed his expectations, however.

"I expect myself to go out there and compete in every tournament I play in," he said. "Just because of some of the names that were there doesn't mean that I can't go out and shoot a good score."

With his big-leagues-don't-faze-me mindset, Hossler recalls a young Tiger. But like Woods, he knows the importance of beating his peers. At the 2011 U.S. Junior in Bremerton, Wash., Hossler was the qualifying medalist before losing in the quarterfinals. And although his U.S. Open performance makes him a tournament favorite this year, he'll have to produce against the likes of Chelso Barrett, the Keene golfer who will seek to improve upon his runner-up finish at last year's U.S. Junior.

Still, it will be tough for Barrett and others to summon the level of confidence Hossler's U.S. Open experience gives him. But despite everything Beau knows from running with golf's big guns, he is by no means overconfident heading into junior golf's most prestigious event.

"It's almost like going backwards a little bit, but then again, it's still a huge stage," he said.

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