

Inside Golf

## Teen phenom Beau Hossler enjoying new fame

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Beau Hossler had some difficulty qualifying for match play, but won his opener at the US Junior Amateur.

STRATHAM, N.H. — It's not often — likely never before — that you get a leader of the US Open playing in the US Junior Amateur.

But Beau Hossler hasn't been big-timing anybody this week at the Golf Club of New England. If anything, he's been quietly, steadily grinding, which appears to be his nature. He needed to shoot an under-par round on Tuesday just to qualify for match play (a first-day 77 left some work to do), then overcame an early deficit on Wednesday against Sean Smothers of Tamarac, Fla., before winning his opening match, 4 and 2.

Hossler, you may recall, became one of the biggest stories at the US Open last month in San Francisco. The 17-year-old from Mission Viejo, Calif., held the outright lead midway through the second round. With the spotlight starting to heat up, he calmly shot a third-round 70, and was tied for eighth, just four shots back, with 18 holes to play.

A final-round 76 dropped Hossler into a tie for 29th and cost him a chance at being low amateur. But a star was born that week at the Olympic Club.

Hossler received a sponsor's exemption from Tiger Woods and played at the AT&T National two weeks after his run at Olympic, returning to Congressional Country Club a year after competing in his first US Open, when he missed the cut as a 16-year-old. He made the cut at the AT&T, leaving him 2 for 2 this year on the PGA Tour.

It's been quite a five-week stretch for Hossler: Contending at the US Open, having LPGA Tour star Paula Creamer offer, via Twitter, to escort him to his next prom — he'll be a senior at Santa Margarita Catholic High

School — the AT&T, getting his braces removed, being recognized by strangers. All before he's old enough to vote.

"I've been really exhausted, to be honest with you. I've only had a couple days off," Hossler said Wednesday, not long after beating Smothers and setting up a second-round match against Andrej Bevins of Elk Grove, Calif. "That first round [Monday] I was really tired, just having trouble focusing a little bit. It's been hectic the last few weeks, for sure."

After playing with — and beating — a number of PGA Tour pros in two big events, some might think it would be hard for Hossler to drop down in class and get motivated for a junior tournament.

"No, not at all. It gives me confidence that I can come out here and compete," Hossler said. "Obviously, if I can compete with guys on the big tour, then I should be able to do it here. You can't take anything for granted, these guys are the best junior golfers in the world."

He's firmly among that group, shooting the equivalent of 3 under par in his 16 holes against Smothers to move into the second round. Hossler won three matches a year ago at the US Junior Amateur, when he was the stroke-play medalist before losing in the quarterfinals. In his final year of competing in this event — Hossler has committed to play at Texas after he graduates high school — he'd like to make a deeper run.

His success the past month has opened the eyes of many. Has it opened his?

"I've always felt like it was there, but you don't really prove it to yourself until you're out there and you do well," Hossler said. "Fortunately it's been a confidence boost for me, but I got to get back to reality and come out here, play in the US Junior Amateur, and hopefully win, that's the goal."

"I can't get ahead of myself, but I think I'm seeing where my game could possibly be in the future, and I'm comfortable with that."

Andy Zhang, a 14-year-old from China who made history at the Olympic Club as the youngest competitor in US Open history, couldn't match Hossler with a first-round win. He dropped his opening match to Sam Horsfield of Davenport, Fla., 5 and 4.

Jake Shuman of Needham, Mass., advanced with a 19-hole victory over Justin Suh of San Jose, Calif. Shuman was 2 up after he won the seventh hole, was 1 up at the turn, but fell 1 down when Suh won the 13th and 14th holes. Still 1 down with three holes to play, Shuman squared the match with a birdie on No. 16, then won it on the first extra hole when he birdied No. 1. Shuman gets a date on Thursday morning with Nicolas Echavarria of Colombia, one of three stroke-play co-medalists at 141. Echavarria, the No. 2 seed, advanced with a 2 up victory over Jacob Ross of Brookhaven, Miss.

The only other New Englander to qualify for match play was Connor Greenleaf of Windham. Greenleaf lost his first-round match to Victor Wiggins of Gastonia, N.C., 2 and 1.

Second- and third-round matches will be held Thursday, with the 36-hole championship match scheduled for Saturday.

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/sports/2012/07/18/hossler-enjoying-new-found-fame/LLSCGO1ndcvSbHriP5aJGN/story.html>