

Filler wins Amateur final over Schremmer; defending champion Haywood ousted by Connelly in Senior Division

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By Gary Curreri

Palm Beach Gardens' Maisie Filler applied heavy pressure early in her championship match and rolled to a 4&3 win over Scarlett Schremmer in winning the 91st annual Ione D. Jones/Doherty Women's Amateur Championship at the Coral Ridge Country Club in Fort Lauderdale.

Filler, 22, a senior at the University of Florida, plans to graduate in May, play in couple of tournaments and then go to Q-School in August to try and turn professional.

Schremmer, who hadn't trailed in any of her match play events until Friday's championship round, grabbed a 1-up lead on the first hole.

The players trades holed with Filler going 2-up after 6 before Schremmer battled back to take a 1-up lead when the 17-year-old from Birmingham, Alabama, drained a 25-footer on the ninth hole. It was her last lead of the match.

"I just played pretty solid on the back," said Filler, who won 10, 11, 13, and 14 said. "I didn't have any bogeys, but I did have a couple of birdies to keep the pressure on. She was making a really great effort to comeback, but I just kept my foot on the gas and knew what I needed to do.

"This is definitely a really big confidence boost to be able to win no matter where you are," Filler said. "I had a lot of fun and I played in a couple of tournaments after Christmas, but before that it was in October, and I really wanted to get back to competition for my team."

Schremmer, 17, a virtual schooler, called Friday's championship a good match and added she gave away a lot of "gifts" on the course, including three bogeys on the front nine.

"Maisie played great golf and I didn't play as well," she continued. "For my first real match play event, it wasn't the worst ever. I did win four matches. I did a lot of good things this week. I putted exceptionally well, and I have kind of struggled with that in the past.

“I did make three birdies in the front and managed to square it up going into 10,” Schremmer said. “I didn’t get up and down a few times on the back and that ultimately cost me the match.”

Filler joins the legendary list of past winners including Patty Berg, JoAnne Carner, Babe Zaharias, and Marlene Stewart Streit, as well as pros such as Natalie Gulbis, Michelle McGann, Vicki Goetze, Charley Hull, and Lexi Thompson.

“I am really proud of myself for grinding it out,” Filler said. “I was probably a little nervous coming in since it had been a while since I had a competitive match. I was really excited to play.

“I love competition,” she continued. “I am proud that I was able to stay consistent throughout the week and having good match play strategy. Match play is so different from stroke play. You just have to have a better stroke and better score than the person you are playing with. I was happy I was able to switch mindsets from the stroke play to match play.”

Defending senior champion Shelly Haywood (Laguna Woods, California) couldn’t get much going in her match against Tara Connelly (Marion, MA). She went down early in the match and trailed for the first time all week. A bad bunker shot on the first hole and a 3-putt on the second led her to go 2-down.

“I didn’t have my ‘A’ Game today,” Haywood said. “My ball striking was off. It wasn’t what it was the first four or five days.”

Probably the turning point in the 38th annual Ione D. Jones/Doherty Senior Women’s Amateur division match came on third hole when Haywood was staring at 6-footer for birdie and Connelly holed an 18-foot bunker shot. Haywood missed the birdie out.

“I was never able to get into a rhythm for some reason,” Haywood said. “Tara played well today. She really didn’t make many mistakes. She played better than me today. To be honest, I had a great week. Second isn’t terrible.

Connelly, who turns 51 next week, made a successful return from rotator cuff surgery that cost her all of 2022. The two-time USGA Mid-Am semifinalist, also jumped out to an early lead before downing Haywood. It was the first time Haywood trailed all week.

“We kind of traded mistakes on the first hole and I made a nice putt to win the hole,” Connelly said. “I made par on the second and on the third I made a birdie

out of the sand. I rolled in a 25-footer for a birdie on the fourth, which put me 4-up through 4.

“With the pins and the wind, you know you are going to lose some,” she added. Haywood shrunk the lead to 2-up by winning 5 and 6. Connelly won 10, and 12, while Haywood won 13 and 14 before Connelly closed it out with a two-putter from 20 out.

In other matches: Adrienne MacLean (Tequesta) won the First Flight 3&2 over LinLin Culver (Palm Coast), while Shirley Vaughn (Pinehurst, NC) captured the Second Flight with a 1-up (20) over Suzanne Ricard (Parkland).

This match play event pays tribute to the late Helen Doherty and Ione D. Jones, wife of CRCC golf architect Robert Trent Jones, who was a large contributor of junior and women's golf in south Florida for many years.

The USGA awards points for the Women's Amateur and Senior Championship Divisions. Only the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship, U.S. Amateur and U.S. Open Championships, have been contested longer.

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