Will Zalatoris’ Hot Summer

Modesto’s Burda Survives to Win Trans-Miss Senior

Zalatoris Wins Weather-Shortened Trans-Miss Championship

New Web.com Exemption
ZALATORIS WINS WEATHER-SHORTENED TRANS-MISS CHAMPIONSHIP

ULSA, Okla. -- Will Zalatoris has won golf tournaments a lot of different ways, but never like this.

The 17-year-old from Plano, Texas, in early July won the 111th Trans-Mississippi Championship presented by TaylorMade-Adidas without swinging a club on the final day. Severe thunderstorms wiped out the last two rounds of the prestigious annual event after tournament organizers made multiple attempts to get the 68 players who made the cut back on the golf course at Southern Hills Country Club. Zalatoris won with a two-day total of 5-under-par 135.

"It's mixed emotions, because I much rather would have played golf today," said Zalatoris, who in June also won the revered Texas Amateur Championship at Brook Hollow Golf Club in Dallas. "I wanted to play for two reasons. One, I'm 17 and I wanted the experience of playing under pressure. One day I hope to play professional golf and this is part of that process. And two, I absolutely love this golf course. I'm biased, but Southern Hills is seriously one of the best courses I've ever played. Everything is right in front of you; nothing is tricky. I love it."

"Southern Hills is seriously one of the best courses I've ever played." — Alex Franklin, a senior at Oregon State, finished in second place at 1-under 139.

"On the scorecard it may have looked like I cruised in, but I definitely didn't," he said. "I only hit three greens on my final eight holes. I had to make some seriously difficult pars. I'm really proud of the way I played this week."

Throughout the storied 111-year history of the Trans-Miss Championship, only a handful of players have successfully defended their titles. One of those was 18-time major championship winner Jack Nicklaus, who won the Trans-Miss in 1959 and '60. Zalatoris has a chance to do the same next July at Flint Hills National Golf Club in Andover, Kan.

"I'll definitely be back for this next year," Zalatoris said. "This is a very well-run championship with a great reputation. I'm proud to have won it."

Matt Gilchrest from Southlake, Texas, took third place at 2-under 138 with a pair of 1-under 69s. Jonathan Sanders from Chatsworth, Calif., Kyle Weldon from Des Peres, Mo., and Brian Campbell from Irvine, Calif., rounded out the top-five. They all tied for fourth place at 1-under 139.

The day began with a five-and-half-hour delay after early morning thunderstorms brought dangerous lightning strikes near the golf course. After Tournament Director Dave Prinz canceled the fourth round and attempted to shorten the Trans-Miss to 54 holes, play re-started at 1 p.m.

It didn't last long, however.

Twenty-eight minutes later more serious weather blew in, bringing more lightning. By 3 p.m. Prinz again tried to re-start play, but another round of lightning forced his hand.

"Today was a little bit of a challenge," said Prinz, also the Director of Operations for the Trans-Miss Golf Association. "We knew there would be thunderstorms today, but we tried to give it a shot. Ultimately Mother Nature won out."

So did Zalatoris. Headed to Wake Forest this fall on the Arnold Palmer Scholarship, it wasn't lost on Zalatoris that fellow Texan Kelly Kraft in 2011 won the Texas Amateur and Trans-Miss Championship before going on to win the U.S. Amateur. With the victory at Southern Hills, Zalatoris has two legs of the major amateur trifecta under his belt.

"I would love to follow in those footsteps, obviously," he said. "I have my U.S. Amateur Qualifier coming up, so I'm hopeful that it can happen."

Regardless of his U.S. Amateur outcome, Zalatoris qualified for another big tournament with his Trans-Miss Championship. He'll receive a sponsor's exemption into the 2015 Air Capital Classic on the Web.com Tour. The TMGA on Wednesday announced the new agreement with the PGA Tour's developmental circuit, and Zalatoris said he can’t wait to tee it up in Wichita, Kan., next spring for the Air Capital Classic.

Though they weren't playing in the same group during the second round, Zalatoris and Franklin were tied for the lead a handful of times. Zalatoris took the lead for good with a birdie on his 10th hole, and then willed in eight straight pars to post his 2-under 68.

"It’s bittersweet for me," Franklin said. "I'm very happy with how I played. There are a ton of positives to take away."

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PLANO TEEN WINS U.S. JUNIOR AMATEUR

It’s the Summer of Zalatoris and we’re all just along for the ride.

Fresh off his Trans-Mississippi Championship at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, the 17-year-old from Plano, Texas, continued his torrid two-month stretch with a national championship in late July. Zalatoris piled his ever-growing competitive résumé with the 2014 U.S. Junior Amateur title held July 21-26 on the Nicklaus Course at The Club at Carlton Woods in The Woodlands.

In the 36-hole championship final, Zalatoris defeated Davis Riley of Hatfieldburg, Miss., 5 and 3.

Zalatoris, who plays at Bent Tree CC in Dallas, holed out from 115 yards for eagle on the 32nd hole — the par-4 in Dallas, before he won the weather-shortened Trans-Miss Championship with a 36-hole score of 5-under-par 135.

A recipient of the prestigious Arnold Palmer Scholarship, Zalatoris begins his college career at Wake Forest University in the fall. He joins an impressive list of Texans that have come to dominate the U.S. Junior over the past decade and include such familiar names as Scottie Scheffler (2013), Jordan Spieth (2009, ’11), Cory Whitsett (2007) and Hunter Mahan (1999).

The fifth time was the charm for Zalatoris, who played in his final U.S. Junior Amateur. He is one of just seven golfers to compete in five U.S. Junior Amateurs and this time, he dominated the field.

The victory is just the latest milestone in what has been a sizzling summer for Zalatoris, who in a short window also won the Texas Amateur in June at Brook Hollow Golf Club in Dallas for Zalatoris, who played in his final U.S. Junior Amateur, but the first to win on Texas soil.

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MODESTO’S BURDA SURVIVES TO WIN TRANS-MISS SENIOR

A QUINTA, Calif.—There’s finishing up strong, there’s hanging on to win and then there’s what Jeff Burda did at the 15th playing of the Trans-Miss Senior Championship in late May. Holding a five-shot lead on the final hole, Burda’s plan was to play it safe with a 3-wood on La Quinta Country Club’s par-4 18th hole. Safe turned into sloppy after he narrowly missed the water hazard with his drive. He hit his second shot into a bunker and his third shot found the dreaded water hazard.

A triple bogey later, the 61-year-old Burda was a relieved champion. “This means a lot, especially with the history of this association,” said Burda, a three-time California State Senior Champion from Modesto. “To be a champion in the Trans-Miss Association is quite an honor.”

He finished at even-par 216, two shots clear of Dave Mooty from Eden Prairie, Minn. “I’ve been between a +1 and a 1. But I really enjoyed this golf course. It’s so wonderful. You have to hit it right to left and left to right. The greens are so pure. This place is amazing,” said Mooty, who shot rounds of 73-71-72. “I must be the only player in the history of golf to triple 18 twice to win.”

Mooty came out after the re-start and birdied Nos. 9, 12 and 13. A bogey on the 14th did halt his momentum, but he turned in his day’s best score, a 4-under 68 to finish second. “I’ve never been near the lead in one of these,” Mooty said. “It was a 10 handicap when I was 40. For the past 10 years, I’ve been between a +1 and a 1. But I really enjoyed this golf course. It’s so wonderful. You have to hit it right to left and left to right. The greens are so pure. This place is amazing.”

Founded in 1959, the club’s past and present members read like a “Who’s Who List” and includes Clint Eastwood, Andy Williams, Frank Capra, former President Gerald Ford, former California Governor Edmund Brown, George Blanda and Chuck Knox.

Tucked against a scenic backdrop of the rugged Santa Rosa-San Jancito Mountains in the Coachella Valley, La Quinta Country Club annually plays host to the PGA Tour’s Humana Challenge, formerly known as the Bob Hope Classic. Tour pros such as Phil Mickelson, Hunter Mahan and Tommy Armour III have said that the greens at La Quinta CC are among the best the PGA Tour sees each year.

Competitors in this year’s Trans-Miss echoed those sentiments. Every player asked spoke in profuse compliments about La Quinta CC.

Sixty-nine-year-old Gary Shemano from Kentfield, Calif., was another who heard all the wonderful things about the historic club and the Trans-Miss Senior. He said he’d wanted to play in the event for several years.

All he did was win the Super Senior Division his first time out. “This is absolutely phenomenal,” he said. “It shows that I can still play.”

After his third straight 3-over 75, Shemano tied Sam Boyd from Kemah, Texas, at 9-over 225. They went to a sudden death playoff, where Boyd found the trees up the left side of the first hole. Boyd deposited his second shot into a greenside bunker and ended up making a bogey.

Shemano, meanwhile, drove it down the middle of the fairway and hit the green on his next shot. Two putts later, Shemano’s stress-free par won the championship. “This is such a well-run event with a great reputation. It means so much to win,” said Shemano, who last July won the gold medal in golf at the Macabi Games in Israel. “I brought my friend Alan Schneider, who has pancreatic cancer, to play with me this week. He played great, too, and he really inspired me.”

A member of the Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, Shemano was born and raised in San Francisco. While in high school he caddied for World Golf Hall of Famer Ken Venturi and once beat Johnny Miller, another Hall of Fame member, in an amateur tournament.

Gary Kirwan from McKinney, Texas, provided extra fireworks on the final day with a hole-in-one on the 163-yard par-3 15th hole. The 65-year-old Super Senior hit a smooth 6-iron that covered the flagstick the whole way.

“The pin was down in a valley, so we didn’t see it go in,” said Kirwan, who plays out of the Stonebridge-Dye Course that is known as one of the toughest in Texas. “I thought it went over the back of the green. But when we got up there, it was in the hole.”

Kirwan said it was his eighth ace, but he couldn’t remember when he made the last one. “It had to be seven or eight years ago,” he said.

Mac McGee from Midland also made a final round ace. He made a one on the 178-yard third hole with a 5-iron. McGee finished tied for third place at 5-over 221 with Bill Brammer from Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., and Gary Hardin from Fort Worth, Texas.

For full results, please click here. The 2015 Trans-Miss Senior travels to Dallas and will be played at historic Brook Hollow Golf Club. For more information on the Trans-Miss Golf Association, please visit www.trans-miss.org.
TRANS-MISSISSIPPI

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2014

Trans-Miss Four-Ball Championship
September 7-10
Club at Las Campanas Santa Fe, NM
Entries Open: June 16
Entries Close: August 25