

LOCAL NEWS

GOLF

Sheboygan's Bach defends turf to win title



PHOTO COURTESY OF WISCONSIN PGA

Whistling Straits lead assistant professional David Bach of Sheboygan holds the Wisconsin PGA Match Play Championship trophy he won Thursday.

David Bach's prodigious length off the tee and his familiarity with the Kohler Co. courses gave him a pair of advantages going into the Wisconsin PGA Match Play Championship.

That does not mean it was going to be easy. Match play never is.

Bach, 29, the lead assistant PGA professional at Whistling Straits, survived a birdie barrage by Andy Hansen and held on for a hard-fought 1-up victory in the championship match Thursday, one year after Bach finished runner-up to Brian Brodell.

Bach, seeded No. 1, won four of the first six

holes and was still 4-up with 10 holes to go. But Hansen, of The University Club of Milwaukee, got hot, rolling in birdie putts on 9, 10, 11 and 12 to square the match.

"It was quite the stretch," Bach said. "Andy was hitting them close and making the putts."

Bach went back in front when he won the 13th hole with a par. Then the golfers turned into the wind starting on No. 14.

"That's where the Straits really bares its teeth," Bach said.

The two halved every hole down the stretch with pars except for No. 15 and 17, which they halved with bogeys, and

Bach escaped with the 1-up victory.

"It means a lot, especially after coming so close last year and finishing just short," he said. "Obviously, that one stung a little bit, but I'm happy to get redemption this year, especially being on all Kohler courses. I was happy to kind of defend the home field."

Bach reached the final by beating Michael Crowley of Morningstar Golfers Club, 1-up, in the semifinals. Crowley birdied Nos. 14, 16 and 17 after Bach had built a 4-up lead.

"I knew that would be a good match," Bach said. "Same story. I was up four with (five) to play and then he went on a good birdie barrage and came back. I was still 1-up going into 18 like I was with Andy and then thankfully sealed the deal."

Hansen reached the final by beating Jon Zellmer of Lake Ripley Country Club, 5 & 3, in the semis, which were held on the River Course at Blackwolf Run.

First-round matches were held on the Irish Course and second- and third-round matches were held on the Meadow Valleys. This is Bach's eighth year at Kohler Co.

"I don't think it's a big advantage," he said of playing matches on the Kohler Co. courses. "I think a lot of guys know where to go. It's

pretty straightforward. They're resort courses. But I can't say that there's not a certain level of comfort that I may have that the other guys don't."

Bach does enjoy an advantage because of his length. At 6-foot-6, he generates ball speeds of 185 mph with the driver and carries the ball more than 300 yards, so he is almost always the second player to hit approach shots on par-4s and par-5s.

"I think it helps because you get to almost be in the driver's seat a little bit," he said. "I try to, to the best of my ability, play my own golf as if it was a stroke play event. But obviously in match play there are certain scenarios where you change your level of aggressiveness based on what your opponent is doing. Hitting second on the par-4s and par-5s obviously is a huge help."

Bach has an excellent record in the match play format. In addition to reaching the final last year, he made it to the quarterfinals in 2022, the first time he played in the tournament. He also won the Assistant Match Play title last year.

"I think match play caters to my style of game," he said. "Overall, I have a pretty aggressive style of play. I make a lot of birdies but on the flip side of that, unfortunately, I can make some bigger numbers, which I'm working on for stroke play. But the good thing about match play, instead of losing two to the field (with a double-bogey), you just lose one hole."

Bach earned \$3,500 for the victory. Hansen earned \$2,200 while Crowley and Zellmer each earned \$1,400.

(Event recap Courtesy of Gary D'Amato and Wisconsin.Golf)

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The Sheboygan Sun
606 Fremont Street,
Kiel, WI 53042
920-803-9945
E-mail: thesun@wisconsinmediagroup.com
Website: www.sheboygansun.com

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