

JIM WIECHERS IS SYMBOL OF JUNIORS' POWER DRIVING

By
P. J. BOATWRIGHT, JR.
USGA Assistant
Director

“Boy can these kids hit!” That was the most frequent comment by galleryites during the playing of the 15th USGA Junior Amateur Championship at Lochmoor Club, Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich., early this month. It took only a few minutes at the first tee watching some of the youngsters to realize that this was no exaggeration. On several occasions drives from this tee came to rest only a short chip shot from the green—and the hole is 352 yards long!! There were other such demonstrations. For example, several times players were seen playing second shots from about 50 yards from the seventeenth, which is 371 yards long; also the 509 yard fifth hole was reached on several occasions with iron second shots.

Among the longest hitters was Jim Wiechers, 17, of Los Altos, Calif. Wiechers, combining big drives with a fine short game, played 113 holes in three over par over the 6,724 yard Lochmoor course and became the 15th USGA Junior Champion.

Pitches For Eagle

In the final match, Wiechers defeated Jim Sullivan, also 17, Sacramento, Calif., 4-3. Sullivan and Wiechers were teammates on the golf team at Bellarmine High School, San Jose, Calif. Wiechers jumped to a commanding lead early in the match. He won the first hole when Sullivan's drive was stymied by trees; he won the second with a 25 foot birdie putt; and he won the third with a spectacular pitch shot over a bunker which went into the hole for an eagle three. Sullivan won the fourth hole, a 187 yard par 3, when Wiechers pulled his tee shot to the left of the green, overshot

with his second and wound up with a 5, but he went three down again when he was bunkered on the short eighth hole and failed to get his par.

It looked as though Sullivan had cut Wiechers' lead to two holes again when he holed a 25 foot putt for a birdie at the ninth, but the new Champion sunk a 20 footer on top of him for a halve. Following that only one more hole was halved—the tenth, with par fours. Wiechers won the eleventh with his third long birdie putt of the day; the thirteenth with another fine birdie and the fifteenth and final hole with a par when Sullivan pushed his second shot near a boundary fence. Sullivan won the 12th and 14th holes, with a birdie and a par.

Enroute to the finals Wiechers defeated: Michael Pixley, Rochester, N. Y.; Loy Martin, Jr., Tulsa, Okla.; Terry Hurst, Oahu, Hawaii; Stephen J. Robbins, Portsmouth, N. H.; Bob Jewett, Fort Myers, Fla.; and Charles McDowell, Virginia Beach, Va.; the defending champion. In reaching the semi-finals, McDowell became the second Champion to come that close to repeating. Tommy Jacobs went to the semi-finals in 1952 after winning the Championship the previous year.

Wiechers Has Scare

Wiechers came closest to defeat in the quarter-final match against Jewett. He was one down at eighteen, a 538 yard par 5, and his third shot was in a bunker guarding the green; Jewett was on the green in three. Wiechers got down in two from the bunker and Jewett three-putted, sending the match into extra holes. Wiechers won it with a thirty foot putt at the nineteenth. Wiechers played his worst golf in this



The semi-final round of the 15th USGA Junior Amateur Championship was played by three Californians and the 1961 Champion Charles McDowell, right, of Virginia Beach, Va. The Californians are, from left, Bob Carson, Long Beach; James Sullivan, runner-up from Sacramento, and 1962 Champion James L. Wiechers, Los Altos.

Photo by Pieronek Studios

match. He was three over par for the nineteen holes played.

The youngest player in the field was 13 year old Edwin W. Cheek, Pittsburgh, Pa., who incidentally was also the only left-handed contestant. Young Mr. Cheek displayed fine form in winning his first round match; he lost in the second round.

Unlike the 1961 Championship which was rained out the first day, the 1962 event was blessed with perfect weather, except during the final match, which was suspended three times during the play of the first nine because of heavy rain and lightning. The storm passed in about 45 minutes and the match was completed with plenty of daylight to spare.

California which dominated the Championship with eight finalists from 1948 to 1956, had failed to produce as much as a semi-finalist since then. The long dry spell ended however, with Wiechers and Sullivan reaching the final and still another Californian, 15 year old Bob Carson, of Long Beach, reaching the semi-final.

Carson was in a commanding position in his semi-final match with Sullivan, being two up with four to play. On the last four holes, however, he pushed his tee shots and lost all of them to pars by Sullivan.

From Same State

This was the second Junior Championship in which both finalists were from the same state. In 1954 Foster

Bradley, Jr., Los Angeles, defeated Allen Geiberger, Santa Barbara Calif., in the final match. Thus California has still another record of which to be proud.

The new Champion has won the California Junior Championship and the San Francisco Junior title. He beat Sullivan in the final match of the latter event.

Both Sullivan and Wiechers qualified at San Francisco which was allotted three places. Sullivan carded a 67, low for the country, and Wiechers finished close behind with 68. The third San Francisco spot was won by Ron Cerrudo, of Castro Valley, Calif., who shot a 70. Cerrudo was heralded by some as the pre-tournament favorite off his showing in the recent California State Amateur Championship. He went to the finals defeating Walker Cupper Gene Andrews by 6-5 along the way. Cerrudo won his first match by a comfortable margin but was eliminated in the second round by Morrison Bethea, Reidsville, N. C.

Richard E. Meissner, Silver Spring, Md. tied a record when he defeated John Diesing, Jr., Omaha, Neb. by 9 and 8. Only Don Bisplinghoff in 1952 and Ronald L. Wright in 1959 had previously won matches by such a lop-sided score.

Terry Hurst, of Hawaii, made the third hole-in-one in the history of the Championship. He holed out with a four iron on the 187 yard fourth hole in the third round in a losing effort against the new Champion.

The 64 youngsters beaten in the first round were eligible to compete the next day in an 18 hole stroke play consolation event at the Country Club of Detroit, where the 1954 Amateur Championship was held. Only two boys failed to take advantage of this opportunity. Medals were given the three lowest scorers. First place medal was won by Don Baranco, Caldwell Idaho, with a 75. Second place medal was won by Don Brooks, Ferndale, Mich.;

Brooks also scored 75 but lost a play-off to Baranco. Third place medal was won by Lee McDowell, Baytown, Tex. with a 76.

At the Players' Dinner held the night before the Championship began the boys were treated to talks by Horton Smith, Walter Burkemo and Chick Rutan, the host professional. This trio gave the contestants some good advice on such matters as sportsmanship, best approach to match play and an analysis of the Lochmoor course.

The Junior Championship continued to grow at a tremendous rate. This year there were 2,093 battling at 52 sectional qualifying sites for the 127 available spots; the defending champion was exempt from sectional qualifying. The 2,093 entrants surpassed last year's record of 1,885.

17 members of the USGA Junior Championship Committee were on hand to assist Chairman Robert K. Howse, of Wichita, Kans.

They were: Ralph W. Miller, Los Angeles, Calif., Frank Emmet, Washington, D. C., George Sherrill, Atlanta, Ga., Gerald J. Kathol, Wichita, Kans., Robert H. Swindell, Baltimore, Md., Frank E. Kenney, Detroit, Dan A. MacDougall, Kansas City, Mo., William Y. Dear, Morristown, N. J., Charles P. Stevenson, Buffalo, Lester H. Reed, Rochester, N. Y., Earl A. Ross, Rye, N. Y., William C. Jaeger, Columbus, Ohio, Roy Allen, Oklahoma City, Robert M. Siegfried, Tulsa, Robert F. Dwyer, Portland, Ore., William W. Roper, Jr., Philadelphia, Grant Bennett, Florence, S.C. And, of course, Col. Lee S. Reed, Louisville, Ky., the Honorary Starter for this event, was also at his usual spot on the first tee.

John M. Winters, Jr., USGA President, was also on hand for the Players' Dinner and for two days of the Championship.

A vote of thanks is due Fred Bens, General Chairman and his Committees for the excellent work they did in preparing for the event.