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Storck back in the BCGA groove His bad back healed, Chris Storck claims Match Play title

By Julie Pelchar Cohen
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Chris Storck couldn't finish 18 holes without worrying. He often couldn't get through the day without wincing. A bum back left him nervous about even plucking his golf ball from the hole. Spasms sometimes prevented him from simply lacing his shoes. "It got to the point," Storck said, "where I didn't want to play golf anymore."

He played, but he started each season cautiously. That meant skipping the county's match play championship five straight years. No way that back could carry him through five rounds in three days, if need be. But this week he gambled and his rehabilitated back led to a payout.

Storck survived a grueling weekend to capture his first Berks County Golf Association Match Play Championship. The county's hottest golfer clinched the title with a 3-and-1 victory over Bill Schultz in Sunday afternoon's 18-hole final at Berkleigh Golf Club. "I always thought this was the toughest tournament to win," Storck said. "I always wanted to win, but never could do it." His back wouldn't let him prior to this year.



Six degenerative discs and three bulging ones left Storck battling pain and spasms for a decade. In search of relief, he started weekly massage treatments two years ago. "It's given me my life back," Storck said. And his golf game.

Storck attributes his titles at the 2007 Hawley Quier Memorial and last year's Berks Amateur to a better back. The Memorial win was his first in a county individual major and Sunday's victory gave him the local grand slam. While he completed the trifecta in less than two years, the last three days might have felt longer. "Very grueling," Storck said of his matches.

Of Sunday's semifinalists, which also included medalist Rod James and Brian Golembiewski, Storck had played the most holes. Saturday's first-round match against Matt Dolinsky lasted 22 holes. Storck won his afternoon contest against Jason Arnold 2-and-1. He started Sunday with a 4-and-2 win over James. For seven holes, the championship match was just as tight. Storck took the final's first lead with a par at the par-4 fifth. His nifty up-and-down beat Schultz's three-putt. The long-hitting Schultz quickly evened the match with a two-putt birdie at the par-5 seventh. But a sudden and brief rainstorm put a cloud over Schultz for the rest of the day. Swirling winds kicked up as Schultz stood on the eighth tee. The drive is hard enough with a creek cutting across the fairway and pines lining either side. Schultz, who beat Golembiewski 2-and-1 in the semis, admittedly rushed his shot, which whacked a tree 40 yards from the tee and was never found. "That was a major mental breakdown," said Schultz, the 2003 Match Play champ. Storck won the hole and followed with a birdie on the par-5 ninth to go 2-up at the turn. Schultz had a chance to regain the momentum, but missed a 10-foot birdie on 10. Storck, who never scrambled in the final, made up-and-down pars on 12 and 13 to go 4-up. Storck's lead dropped to 2-up after he lost 14 and 16, but Schultz found the trees for the seventh time in 10 holes on the par-4 17th, where he conceded the match.



He just played really steady," Schultz said. "He deserved to win." Storck's victory - and back - never felt so good.

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