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Schultz's Amateur win well worth the wait. Determining a champion takes five days, 6 extra holes

By Julie Pelchar Cohen

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Bill Schultz has waited eight long years to win another county championship. So it was fitting that he finally captured that second title during the longest tournament in Berks Amateur history.

After five days and 60 holes, Schultz emerged as this year's Berks County Golf Association Amateur Championship winner, defeating Pete Steffy in an unusual, and unprecedented, Tuesday night playoff at Berkshire Country Club.



Pete Steffy (Left-Yellow shirt) congratulates Bill Schultz (Right-Red shirt)

"It just seemed odd," Schultz said. "I didn't know how I was going to feel." Schultz and Steffy waited two days to complete a playoff that started immediately after Sunday's final round, but was suspended after two holes due to darkness. With the course closed Monday, they returned Tuesday, when they needed four more holes.

With a gallery of nearly 40 people watching, Schultz, 41, played for his first Berks Amateur title since winning at Moselem Springs Golf Club in 2001. Steffy, 24, tried for his biggest win and first victory since junior golf. The long-hitting lefty had a nice career at Millersville, where he earned all-conference honors twice and was an academic All-American.

The Cinderella story was almost his on Tuesday's second and third holes. After both players settled nerves with opening pars, Schultz skimmed the hole with his long birdie attempt on No. 2. Steffy answered with a confident stroke and a birdie attempt that lipped out. He nearly made another birdie on the third, which would have given him a win over arguably the most consistent Berks Amateur contender the past decade.

Schultz made a third straight tester to get up-and-down on 3 and survive. But Steffy was undone by a bad break at the par-5 fourth. After his drive caromed left off a tree and onto the third hole, Steffy had a clear look at the green. But he drew his approach too sharply and it landed squarely behind a tree. While he was just 15 yards from the front of the green, he had little chance to hit it.

His shot ricocheted off the pine's trunk and left him with a long pitch. Meanwhile, Schultz had hit the green in two from the fairway. Steffy missed a long par attempt, and Schultz merely needed a three-putt par to win. He did just that to end the six-hole playoff, the longest since the Berks Amateur switched to stroke play 37 years ago.

The tournament stretched to five extra holes in 1991, when Chip Lutz edged Herman Fry at Heidelberg Country Club. The longest championship final in 40 years of match play went five extra holes in 1950. For Steffy, a Wilson grad who plays at Foxchase and works for an ad agency in Denver, the near-win was the culmination of "a lot of work."



After graduating from college in 2007, Steffy took a break from competition until this summer, which he's spent on the driving range. "It was a matter of getting back into the right mind frame to play golf," Steffy said. "I feel I can play competitively again."

For Schultz, the long-awaited victory was a surprise. "I definitely have come into other tournaments feeling like I was playing better," he said. Earlier this year, a foot injury forced Schultz to switch from a draw to a cut, which helped him tame an occasionally erratic driver. He was more consistent at the BCGA Match-Play Championship in May, when he reached the final and nearly added a second title to his 2003 win.

Schultz was straight off the tee this past weekend, too, in shooting 73-69-71-213 and making six pars in the playoff. "I've never been able to put three rounds together at this tournament," said Schultz, even though he's never finished outside the top 10 in 10 straight Berks Amateurs. "I think the difference this week," he said, "was that I was able to get my driver in play." And withstand the wait.

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