

Lyford's state senior title finishes record-breaking week at Poppy Hills



Ted Lyford set records for individual round and 54-hole total score in winning the 11th CGA Senior Amateur Championship at Poppy Hills.

Ted Lyford had finished third two years in a row at the California Golf Association Senior Amateur Championship. This year he vowed things would be different.

The 58-year-old Redlands resident was true to his word, birdieing the final two holes at Poppy Hills Golf Course to hold off Kemp Richardson of Laguna Niguel and capture the 11th edition of the prestigious event.

Lyford's 54-hole total, 72-67-72 – 211, broke the tournament scoring record of 214 set last year by Stockton's Roly Lamontagne and was two shots better than Richardson, the reigning U.S. and British Senior Amateur champion, who closed with a 5-under-par 67, good for a 213 total.

The win capped a record-breaking week for SCGA seniors; the North-South Senior Team also broke records in its win (see page 37) and Lyford was the leader of the pack.

Jim Saviar of San Diego and Bob Callan of San Francisco finished tied for third at 215. Saviar, a member at Fairbanks Ranch, shot a final-round 1-over-par 73 and Callan, the first-round leader, closed with a 1-under-par 71.

Lyford — the 2000 SCGA Senior Amateur champion — opened with an even-par 72 on the first day, then posted the lowest individual round since the tournament moved to Poppy Hills in 1994 (Richardson would tie that mark in the third round).

In the final round, Lyford appeared to be in cruise control through the first nine holes, which he played in even-par 36. Despite Richardson's sparkling round, which included an eagle 3 on the par-5 ninth hole and birdies on three of the final five holes, Lyford had a four-shot lead after No. 10.

Suddenly, he needed to put the pedal to the metal. First, Callan went on a birdie binge. Next, Lyford drove his tee shot into the trees on the 402-yard, par-four 16th hole. After pitching back into the fairway and putting his approach 20 feet above the hill, Lyford misjudged the speed on his first putt and then missed a five-footer, making double-bogey 6 on the hole.

"I tried to be too conservative on that hole, playing not to make double bogey, which is exactly what I did," Lyford said later. "When I finished, I thought I was a stroke behind, so I got mad. It was no time to play safe."

Actually, at that point, Lyford was tied with Callan, playing a hole in front of him, and Richardson, who had already posted his 213 total. Callan would fall back, making bogies on the last three holes.

Lyford knocked his pitching wedge shot on the 126-yard 17th hole to within 15 feet and slid the slick, breaking putt in the left-side door for birdie 2. Needing only par on No. 18 to win, Lyford pounded a drive down the left side of the fairway and ripped his 3-wood second shot just over the back, but on the same level of the 3-tiered green as the flagstick.

"You just can't get close to that flagstick by laying up and pitching your third shot," explained Lyford later. "I knew I'd rather be long than watching that ball bouncing down one of those tiers; that's what happened to me last year."

With the luxury of needing only par to win, Lyford pitched to within five feet and made the birdie putt to post his record-breaking score.

The victory marked the third time in four years that an SCGA member has won the senior individual title, after capturing only one title in the first seven events (the first two of which were held at Ojai Valley Inn & Spa).

The victory also gives Lyford a 10-year exemption for future CGA Senior Amateur Championships. The top seven finishers (217 or better) earned exemptions into next year's tournament.

Lyford's win continues an impressive California Amateur resumé. In addition to being state amateur runner-up in 1977 (to Lee Mikles) and medalist in 1969, Lyford qualified for the match play as a teenager and in his 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s.