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FEATURED

Yates earns comfortable win at Kenridge Invitational

BY JERRY RATCLIFFE 9 hrs ago



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Logan Yates putts on the 13th green during the Kenridge Invitational golf tournament Sunday at Farmington Country Club. Logan Yates won the tournament. Photo/Andrew Shurtleff/The Daily Progress

Growing up on the rolling terrain of Greene Hills Club, Logan Yates had plenty of golfing legends to admire.

They still talk about the ball-striking ability of David Bell, and the meteoric rise of Mikey Moyers, not to mention his old man, Mike, the longtime pro at the country club.

At twilight on Sunday evening, Yates stepped into their realm by winning the 81st Kenridge Invitational at Farmington Country Club. His four-shot victory over Kenridge first-timers Kyle Bailey of Roanoke Country Club, and 17-year-old David Morgan of Naples, Fla., made Yates only the fourth Central Virginia player to win the event over the last half century (Jim Kite 1970, Tim Pemberton 2003, Nick Little 2008).

Yates, who will be a junior on Virginia Tech's golf team this fall, entered the final round trailing Morgan by three shots. The Florida teenager, a University of Virginia commit, just finished his junior year of high school a couple of weeks ago, but was setting a torrid pace for his pursuers over the opening two rounds.

All that came crashing down during a bizarre, four-hole stretch on Farmington's front nine in the final round. Morgan suffered three double-bogeys during that span, interrupted by an eagle on the par-4, 5th hole, when he holed out from 163 yards.

The future Cavalier went from a four shot lead over Yates to a two shot deficit on holes three through six. Yates increased his lead to three on the par-5, 7th, when he reached in two and birdied, while Morgan also reached but three-putted.

"When you have three doubles on the front, it's over from there," said Morgan, who posted a final round 76 and tied Bailey at 1-over, 211 over the 54-hole championship. "I just tried to limp my way into the clubhouse and tried to finish strong."

Morgan said he was hopeful that an opportunity would come for him to regain the lead, but that didn't happen.

Yates' only real hiccup came at the nasty, long, par-3 10th, where his tee shot sailed over the cart path right, eventually costing him a two-putt bogey. Morgan parred to narrow the lead to two strokes, but Yates carded back-to-back birdies on 12 and 13 to stretch the lead back to three, where it remained until the final hole when Morgan bogeyed.

"Logan played great," Morgan said. "He's a great putter and made everything inside 15 feet, and that pushed him away from the rest of us."

During all of Morgan's woes, Yates said he had blinders on, just kept focusing on his game, and not what was transpiring around him.

"When [Morgan] made double-double, and then makes it from the fairway, I didn't want to let that effect me," Yates said. "That's something I learned from experience."

As the round wore on, Yates remained focused. Even when it came to the final two holes, a wicked downhill, par-3 with a dramatically sloped green, and a treacherous par-4 finishing hole with a glass-like green, Yates remained poised.

It was at that point in last year's Kenridge when things unraveled for him. He was trailing eventual winner William Walker III with two holes to play and went bogey-bogey.

Not this time around.

"I wasn't thinking about that at all," Yates said. "Me and dad (Dwayne, who caddied for him the entire tournament) were trying to pick small targets. I was picking out where I wanted to hit it, and that helped me focus. I was really in a zone coming down the stretch."

Knowing he had a three-shot advantage, Yates didn't want to take any unnecessary risks. Just take this baby home.

He made a nice par-saving putt on 17, then chipped to within a couple of feet and sank his Kenridge-winning par putt on 18 for the crystal trophy.

After a congratulatory embrace with his father, Yates walked off the green a winner of the biggest individual tournament he has played.

"It was kind of surreal," he said afterward. "I knew I had it in me, but golf's one of those things where it's so hard because you have to control your emotions at all times. It's hard to finish off tournaments, but that gave me confidence going into the rest of my summer, that I know I can do it."

A lot of family, friends, and Greene Hills members were there to cheer him on, and that meant a great deal to him.

"This was huge because everybody's watching, everybody knows who I am around these parts," Yates said. "I guess it's added pressure but at the same time I wanted to perform for the people that don't get to see me play in college."

Even though he started the day three down, Yates still believed he could be in the winner's circle by day's end.

"I've been in the lead before, in position with a three-shot lead, and it's tough," Yates said. "I told my dad that I was going to stick to my game plan and see if the pressure hits [Morgan] him. I know when I was that age, the pressure hit me. I expected him to be pretty nervous. I was nervous, too."

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