

# Delio Delivers

Nick Delio captures 97th California State Amateur title | By Scott Seward

*You had to feel for Austin Roberts' caddie.*

You watched all week as the caddie huffed and puffed and tried to keep up with his 15-year-old boss as he stalked the fairways of Lakeside Golf Club in mid-June in pursuit of a championship that had never been won by someone so young. But you also observed that Roberts' opponent, Valencia's **Nick Delio**, drove the ball prodigious distances, and

that with his strength, the rough didn't mitigate a deft short game. You saw a 15-year-old playing against an 18-year-old, both in their first State Amateurs ever, and you saw why those extra three years matter when it comes to physical maturity.

Delio defeated Roberts 7 & 5 to win the 97th California State Amateur on the strength of the 16-22nd holes in

the match where he would go 7-under en route to winning six holes. One hole in particular illustrated the champion's advantage. The par-five 4th hole measures 584 yards. Delio's tee shot of 341 yards left him with a downhill hanging lie. His 3-iron second shot travelled 243 yards and left him with a 6-footer for eagle. Case closed.

"I just felt like that if I could keep it in the fairway, I would have the advantage because of my length," the Cal State Northridge Matador said.

The morning 18 saw the customary swings in momentum that typify match play. Delio got on a roll first by sticking his tee shot on the difficult 240-yard par 3 ninth hole. After going two-up through the 13th hole, Delio three-putted from six feet on the 14th and then drove into a bunker on 15 to square the match. But the 18-year-old recovered with two late birdies to finish the first 18 holes 2-up.

"I just told myself, 'Stay patient and good things will happen.' There was a lot of golf left and I felt like if I could get the lead I could keep it," the Big West Conference Freshman of the Year said.

Delio wasn't even supposed to play the State Amateur having failed to qualify in May at Sterling Hills. But as first alternate, he got the call that a spot was open. A week later he found himself winning the championship. Earning the #6 seed, he defeated **Erik Jarvey** of Palmdale, NCGA Senior Champion **Jeff Burda** of Modesto, NCGA Amateur champion **Ryan Hallisey** of Granite Bay and three-time SCGA Amateur champion Scott McGihon to get to the finals.

Roberts path to the finals was equally arduous. The Carmichael resident took out **Taylor Travis** of Fremont (coming back from a 4-down deficit), **Kevin**

Nick Delio won the State Amateur in his first attempt.





**Fryer** of San Ramon, James Erkenbeck of San Diego and co-medalist and #1 seed Matt Hoffenberg of Simi Valley—all the more impressive given that he just completed his freshman year in high school a few weeks ago. Roberts is competing in his first NCGA events this summer. He won the 14-15 age division of the NCGA Junior Tour—Central Valley at Stevinson Ranch in March and was medalist at a qualifier for the NCGA Public Links; but a runner-up finish in the State Amateur in his first try sets the bar quite high for a very talented young man whose ability to hit fairways and greens proved the difference in his first four matches.



Austin Roberts was seeking to become the youngest winner in the event's history.



CHAMPION NORTH TEAM: captain Vaughn Kezirian, Jeff Burda, Martin Trainer, Taylor Travis, Randy Haag, Scott Hardy and Ryan Hallisey

## North Team Wins Challenge Cup

The North Team grabbed the Roger Lapham Challenge Cup, the annual team match featuring six players from the north competing against six players from the south. After racing to an eight-stroke lead after the first round of stroke-play qualifying, the North Team withstood a furious South comeback to hold on and win by one stroke, 721-722. Four of the six NCGA team members qualified for match play including Hallisey, Travis, San Francisco City champion **Martin Trainer** and **Jeff Burda** who at age 55 was one of the oldest match play qualifiers in recent memory. **Scott Hardy** and **Randy Haag** rounded out the team. The win by the North Team was the first since 2005.

Mac Hunter remains the youngest to win the title in 1972 as a 16-year-old.

"I couldn't make a putt," the Sacramento Waldorf HS rising sophomore said regarding the final match. "My iron play was good all week. And I feel like I played well today, but he just played better." Indeed the runner-up was one-over par for his second 18, but Delio's hot stretch closed the door on any comeback. "I got a lot further than I thought I would so I'm proud of that."

Lakeside Golf Club proved to be a brilliant venue for match play in the

first State Amateur to be played in Southern California. With temperatures hovering well above 90 most of the week, it was also undoubtedly the hottest State Amateur ever. The event moves to Lake Merced GC in Daly City in 2009 before returning to Southern California in 2010.

Delio's win is the third straight by a player from Southern California (and the third by a Cal State Northridge student in the last 14 years). "I join an elite group," the champion said regarding the win. "And I'm just thankful I got to play." 🏆