

Aurora native looking to qualify for US Open



By Jake Courtepatte

Shyamal "Sam" Nagindas is one step closer to realizing his golf dream.

A score of 71 at Beechmont Golf Club in Ohio in early May was enough to send the amateur to the next round of competition in US Open qualifiers, the ultimate prize being a spot in the PGA's prestigious major tournament.

"The course matched my strengths, which is my ball striking and my putting," said Nagindas, who chose the course due to the country club style and fast greens. "I love (US Golf Association) style courses because you have to hit the fairways otherwise you are in rough where you can barely see your ankles."

The only amateur golfer to earn one of seven spots in the sectional tournament, Nagindas has long been in the local spotlight around York Region.

At the age of thirteen he won four straight Canadian Junior Golf Association tournaments, and was in the top 150 of junior golfers in the world by sixteen.

Attending Dr. G.W. Williams High School in Aurora, he helped the varsity golf team to the YRAA team championship as a freshman and a sophomore and to runners-up as a junior and senior.

Nagindas said his passion for the game came back after going to university in the United States.

"I really started studying the game, practicing with a purpose, and believing in myself. And my hard work and dedication has been showing."

After missing the U.S. Amateur tournament by just one stroke last season, he returned determined to progress to the next level.

Arriving at Beechmont a day early to get in a practice round before the US Open qualifier, he found the course closed due to a storm, though he sought advice from the caddie master.

"So I spoke to him and we went over the course hole by hole and he gave me some great course knowledge which I noted down on the scorecard. It paid huge dividends in the end because I made a huge decision prior to my tee time to take out my 8 iron to switch it for a 3 iron specifically for the seventh hole which was 227 yards."

Heading into a playoff hole after a tie through eighteen, the golf gods shone down on Nagindas: the playoff hole chosen by officials was the seventh hole.

Next for the overachieving amateur is the US Open Sectionals, colloquially known as "the longest day in golf": 65 players compete for five spots over 36 grueling holes, something Nagindas has the confidence he feels to achieve.

"I believe I can do it," said Nagindas. "My ball striking has been fantastic and I've been practicing my putting more than anything. I constructed an indoor putting green in my room and I basically have been rolling 500-1000 putts a night. And it has been paying off. If it wasn't for my putter at a tough track like Beechmont I wouldn't have been able to grind it out and earn my way to sectionals."

Sectionals are set to kick off in New Jersey in early June, with the major set for the dates of June 15-18 at Erin Hills in Erin, Wisconsin.

As for the next step, Nagindas said it is the "rush and liveliness" he gets out of golf that keeps him motivated.

?Keeping the heartbeat even keel is tough to do but I feel I have that edge against my competitors. I play better under pressure because I can embrace it. I want to be good enough to put myself in positions like this more often because that feeling is what I play for. I truly love this game and hopefully I can make each dream come true one step at a time.?