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Bensel Wins in Playoff, Coe Avoids Playoff to Claim PGA Stroke Play & PGA Women's Stroke Play Championships

By Craig Dolch

Special to PGA of America

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PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (Feb. 12, 2019) - Frank Bensel made a 15-foot birdie putt on the first playoff hole and then made a par two holes later to win the PGA Stroke Play Championship.

Bensel was facing elimination when David Muttitt rolled in a 25-birdie putt on the first playoff hole Tuesday at PGA Golf Club. But Bensel matched that birdie and went on to claim his fifth PGA Winter Championship.

“It was do-or-die out there,” said Bensel, a Jupiter resident who is a PGA Professional at Century Country Club in Purchase, N.Y. “David made a great putt there. Fortunately, I had the same putt the first go-round and I knew the break.”

Joanna Coe of Baltimore, Md., won the PGA Women's Stroke Play Championship, making clutch par putts on the last two holes to earn a one-shot victory over Brittany Kelly of Indianapolis, Ind.

A day after shooting a tournament-record 64, Coe grinded for a 74 on the Wanamaker Course that left her at 2-under 214. Coe, the individual winner of the 2008 NCAA Division II National Championship, said she didn't “have a clue” where she stood on the final holes.

“I just wanted to make a par on the last hole because I know it's a tough one,” said Coe, a PGA Assistant Professional from Baltimore Country Club. “It was a struggle. Yesterday was my day.

“It's uncomfortable the day after shooting a 64, and I'm well aware of that. I wanted to eliminate the big mistakes and I made a couple of key par saves coming in.”

Kelly shot a 2-under 70 to force Coe to have to par her last seven holes on the Wanamaker Course and earn a spot in this year's KPMG Women's PGA Championship at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn. Kelly bogeyed the par-5 first hole and parred the par-5 16th even though she had only 160 yards in for her second shot.

“That was probably the biggest difference, the par-5s,” said Kelly, a PGA Assistant Professional at Woodland Country Club in Carmel, Ind. “But I put together a good tournament and shot under par, so I’m pretty happy with how I played.”

Bensel shot a 2-under 70 on the Ryder Course after starting the day two shots behind the leaders and force the playoff at 5-under 211. Muttitt, who has qualified for the last three PGA Championships, found a plugged lie in a fairway bunker on the third playoff hole and made bogey.

“I was lucky to get it out (of the bunker),” said Muttitt, who lives in Albuquerque, N.M. “That was a little frustrating. It’s disappointing to lose, but I haven’t played any golf, so it was nice to be in that position.”

Four weeks ago, Bensel had a two-stroke lead in the PGA Senior Stroke Play Championship, but double-bogeyed the 17th hole and lost a playoff to Omar Uresti. This time, Bensel was the one who rallied.

“Of course, it’s nice to win after that,” Bensel said. “You never know when you’re going to play well enough to win.”

Four players missed the playoff by a shot at 4-under: Rob Labritz (68), Danny Lewis (69), Rob Corcoran (73) and Yong Joo (73).

Bensel earned \$5,000 for the win, Coe \$1,800.

The PGA Winter Championships are presented by GolfAdvisor.com and PrimeSport.

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