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Craig Bowden-Brett Melton (28-under) Win PGA Senior-Junior Team Championship

By Craig Dolch
Special to PGA of America

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PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (Jan. 31, 2019) - Craig Bowden made a putt he needed to and partner Brett Melton holed a chip he didn't expect to make.

Those late birdies were the difference as Bowden and Melton shot a 7-under 65 Thursday to win the PGA Senior-Junior Team Championship by two shots at 28-under at PGA Golf Club.

They were tied for the lead at 26-under with two teams when Melton had a 25-foot downhill putt on the par-5 16th hole on the Wanamaker Course. Bowden had also reached the green in 2, but rolled his eagle putt 12 feet past. Bowden chose to hit his birdie putt first.

"I was grinding on it because I knew Brett's putt was fast and it could get away from him," Bowden said. "We both were glad to see it go in."

They were ecstatic when Melton holed a 30-yard chip from behind the par-3 7th green. Melton did his Rich Beem impersonation with a victory dance as they celebrated the clinching shot. It was the first PGA Winter Championship for Bowden of Bloomington, Ind., and Melton of Coatesville, Pa.

"I was just trying to get it within a foot," Melton said. "It went right in the middle like it had eyes. We were joking two holes ago that we hadn't chipped in all week."

The final round got off to an unexpected start when the team of Gary Robison-Greg Boyette, who led by two after 54 holes, was disqualified late Wednesday night because of a scoring error. In the third round, Robison was credited with a birdie on the 12th hole when Boyette made it.

Even though their score of 11-under 61 was correct, they were disqualified under Rule 23.2b(1) that states "each side on the scoreboard must be clearly identified as the score of the individual partner who made it; if this is not done, the side is disqualified." The rule is for handicap reasons. Robison called PGA of America officials Wednesday night to inform them of the error.

"That was horrible," Melton said. "We had no idea until we got to the first tee and we didn't see anyone there." (They played with a marker).

Melton is a PGA Professional at Radley Run and Bowden plays out of Bloomington Country Club. They split \$10,000.

Bob Sowards of Dublin, Ohio and Doug Wade of South Lebanon, Ohio shot a 62 and tied for second place at 26-under with Mike Martin of New Haven, Ct., and Peter Ballo of Stamford, Ct.

"We held it together early. We hit a lot of good shots on the back nine, but burned a lot of edges coming in," Ballo said.

Said Martin: "This team was put together at the last moment. It worked out great."

Frank Esposito of Old Bridge, N.J., and Brett Jones of Basking Ridge, N.J., shot 62 to finish fourth at 263.

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

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