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Bensel (62), Mason (64) Lead PGA Senior Stroke Play Championship

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Special to PGA of America

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PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (Jan. 14 , 2019) - Frank Bensel made so many birdies Monday, he couldn't remember them all.

That's what happens when you shoot a 10-under 62 - a career best in competition - to give the Jupiter resident a two-shot lead over Omar Uresti in the 50-59 division of the PGA Senior Stroke Play Championship at PGA Golf Club.

Bensel didn't make a 5 or a bogey, starting with four birdies. He had another string of three birdies in a row.

"I've shot a 61 or a 62 before, but never in competition," Bensel said. "You can't think about what you're doing. When you're playing well and making birdies, you just got to keep going and don't worry about the consequences."

James Mason of Dillard, Ga., kept it going with a second consecutive 64 on the Wanamaker Course to lead the 60-and-older division by three shots. Mason, the defending champion, bettered his age by four shots. He's been doing that since he was 62.

Mason is trying to defend his title, though every round seems like a walk in the park for the former winner on the PGA Tour Champions.

"I'm driving it in play and knocking it in the hole," Mason said. "I birdied five straight holes on the back side and obviously to do that you've got to be making some putts."

Mitch Camp of Aurora, Ohio backed up a 63 with a 68 to remain within eyesight of Mason. Camp hasn't won a PGA Winter Championship yet, but he'll have a chance Tuesday.

"It would mean a lot," said Camp, the PGA Director of Golf at Club Walden. "I've come close before. It would be nice to win one."

Kirk Hanefeld is alone in third at 131 after a 69, two shots ahead of one of last week's Quarter Century Championship winner, Gary Robison (65).

In the 50-59 division, Uresti shot his 65 in the final group when it appeared Bensel might have a sizable lead. Bensel, who just turned 50, remained low-key about his position.

“I haven’t been playing well lately, so no matter what happens, I’m glad I’ve got my game back,” Bensel said. “That’s what we’re here for, to win. But it’s never easy to close out a three-round tournament.”

Mark Mielke (67) and Bob Sowards (69) are tied for third place, six shots back.

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

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