

Gunner Wiebe earns victory at the 44th National Car Rental Assistant PGA Professional Championship

By Pat Kravitz
PGA of America

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PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. - What a difference one year can make.

After starting his 2019 and 2020 National Car Rental Assistant PGA Professional Championships with first-round 70s, Gunner Wiebe's finishing 54 holes underwent a remarkable 21-stroke improvement (2019: 77-75-77, 2020: 67-69-72).

The PGA Assistant Professional at Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles closed out his 2020 campaign with a final-round 72 to finish at 10-under 278 and claim a two-shot victory at PGA Golf Club's Wanamaker Course.

Jin Chung of Lawrenceville, Ga., finished as the runner-up at 8-under 280.

Wiebe is the first champion since Andy Mickelson in 2015 to pull out the win after holding both the 36 and 54-hole leads.

"I'm super relieved. That's the biggest thing I feel. I'm just relieved it's over. I was running out of gas," said the 31-year-old Wiebe. "I couldn't be more excited. It's the biggest tournament I can play in anymore. To be able to win is super special.

"My boss was here - Dave Podas (PGA Director of Golf at Bel-Air). He's one of the rules officials and was behind the 18th green. To be able to celebrate with someone who's on my side was really cool."

Wiebe's final round began steadily through six holes with five pars and a birdie on the par-3 6th, but bogeys at the 8th and 10th tightened matters up.

Playing alongside Wiebe in the final grouping were Chung and Aaron Purvience of Park City, Utah, who added some pressure on the leader. The 54-hole three-stroke advantage was trimmed to two for much of the back nine, as Chung (15 & 16) and Purvience (13 & 16) each carded a pair of birdies.

"As much pressure as I felt is probably the same amount I put on the guys I was playing with," said Wiebe. "It became clear to them that they were going to have to make birdies to beat me. I wasn't going to come back to them. They were going to have to come and get me. It went both ways."

Wiebe's composure proved to be the difference on Sunday, as he finished his round just as it started: one birdie (No. 13) and five pars over the final six holes, including a clutch up-and-down on the par-3 17th to maintain a two-shot cushion heading to the 72nd hole, which he'd ultimately

par.

He compiled five birdies, a pair of eagles and just one bogey on the Wanamaker's 13th through 18th holes over the course of the Championship.

Success on the golf course runs in the family. Wiebe's father, Mark, owns a pair of PGA Tour victories, as well as a signature win at the 2013 Senior Open, when he fended off one of the game's all-time greats, Bernhard Langer, in a five-hole playoff at Royal Birkdale Golf Club.

"I told my dad after yesterday's 69 that I was disappointed and should've shot better," said Wiebe. "The only advice he gave me was to keep doing the same thing. It was nothing groundbreaking. He could tell that I was having fun. It's always more fun when you're in the hunt. Last year I was not, and I didn't have a lot of fun on Saturday and Sunday. He could hear that I was enjoying myself this week and that's what we talked about.

"Golf's supposed to be fun. Even when it's hard, it's supposed to be fun. The more I enjoy myself, the better I shoot. It's a great reminder to enjoy being on the golf course for five hours. It's a wonderful thing."

With the victory, Wiebe earned \$12,000.

At 6-under 282, Purvience finished in a tie for third with Greg Koch of Orlando, Fla. Timothy Wiseman (5-under 283) of Corydon, Ind., finished alone in fifth.

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