



PGA WINTER CHAMPIONSHIPS | JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2023 | PGA GOLF CLUB | PORT ST. LUCIE, FL

Bob Sowards, Gary Robison Win PGA Senior Stroke Play Championship

By **CRAIG DOLCH**

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PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (Jan. 17, 2023) - Bob Sowards' 50-foot birdie putt at the 15th green Tuesday slowly made its way up a ridge, with a severe left-to-right break, trickling the last 8 feet toward the hole.

And into the hole.

"Are you serious?" exclaimed playing partner Gus Ulrich.

Sowards just smiled and raised both arms in the air in celebration.

Seriously, this is starting to get repetitive.

Sowards' unlikely birdie capped a 3-under-69 on the Wanamaker Course that gave him a six-shot victory at 10-under-205 in the PGA Senior Stroke Play Championship. It was his third consecutive victory at PGA Golf Club, a place where he has won more than two dozen career titles.

"I told these guys I have had every putt on this golf course, but I never had that one before," said Sowards, the reigning Senior PGA Professional Player of the Year. "I probably played 12 feet of break. I was just trying to get it close enough to get a two-putt. Sometimes, they go in."

A lot of putts have been going in lately for Sowards, the PGA Director of Instruction at Kinsale Golf and Fitness Club in Powell, Ohio. He won last week's Quarter Century Championship in a playoff over Chad Proehl and earned the title in Event No. 6 of the PGA Tournament Series in late-December.

Sowards started the final round with a one-shot lead and never lost it. He played the front nine in 2-under to stretch his lead and the long birdie putt at 15 clinched another win for Sowards at the PGA Winter Championships.

"I knew if I played a good, solid round, someone would have to do something special to beat me because it was playing pretty difficult," Sowards said. "It was just a matter of playing against myself."

“To be perfectly honest, I was hitting balls on the range after the second round of (PGA Tour Champions) q-school and something clicked. I can’t really explain it, but it’s a feeling with the transition I’ve been trying to get for more than a year. I’m hitting the ball great, and I’ve always puttred these greens well.”

Gary Robison of Port St. Lucie dominated the 60-and-older division, winning by 11 shots at 21-under-193. The 68-year-old Robison bettered his age in each round by a combined 11 shots, finishing with a 7-under-64 Tuesday on the Ryder Course.

“I guess it’s good and bad,” Robison said with a laugh. “I’d rather shoot my age at 60.”

Robison has played his last 72 holes at PGA Golf Club in 27-under, shooting a 6-under-66 in last week’s final round of the Quarter Century Championship before losing a playoff to Robert Thompson. There was no chance of a playoff Tuesday after Robison started with an eight-shot lead and shot the 64.

“It was a little nerve wracking because I’ve never had that kind of lead before and a lot of things go through your head,” Robison said. “When I made my first birdie, it settled me down and I started playing really well.

“In (last week’s) playoff, I made a mistake hitting putts and not hitting any balls. I just made a bad swing. It hurt, but at my age it doesn’t hurt for long.”

Kirk Hanefeld of Reading, Mass., (67) was second at 10-under-204. Ed Kirby (67) of Wakefield, R.I., was third at 205, a shot ahead of Jerry Tucker (67) of Stuart, Fla., Bill Harvey (66) Albuquerque, N.M. and Mitch Camp (69) of Aurora, Ohio, who all finished at 206.

The four players who tied for second behind Sowards - Rick Morton (69) of Jacksonville, N.C., Shaun Powers (70) of Greenwich, Conn., Proehl (70) of Urbandale, Iowa, and Nick Frontero (74) of Oviedo, Fla., - went to a playoff to earn two spots in the Senior PGA Professional Championship Oct. 24-29 at PGA Golf Club. Proehl and Frontero advanced.

The PGA Winter Championships are presented by GolfPass, On Location. The Championships take 10 days off for the PGA Merchandise Show Jan. 24-27, resuming Jan. 30 with the Senior-Junior Team Championship.

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