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Californian Kenny Pigman's strong start propels him to victory in 42nd National Car Rental Assistant PGA Professional Championship

By Bob Denney
PGA of America

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (Nov. 18, 2018) - Kenny Pigman of Norco, California, is someone who embraces his family surname so much that he has a cartoon logo of a happy porker with the initials "KP" emblazoned on his shirt sleeve and golf bag.

Moments after a rolling home a 30-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole Sunday at PGA Golf Club's Wanamaker Course - with the 42nd National Car Rental Assistant PGA Professional Championship in his pocket - Pigman was in "Hog Heaven."

"That's fine. I get a lot of pig stuff," joked Pigman. "I got the logo going on everything." He earned a first-place prize of \$12,000 from a total purse of \$150,000.

Pigman, 30, closed with a 6-under-par 66 - the day's low round - for a 72-hole total of 15-under-par 273. The PGA Assistant Professional at Goose Creek Golf Club in Mira Loma, California, he became the third Southern California PGA member to capture the national title, joining Loren Roberts (1979) and Jon Fiedler (1985).

Steven Delmar of Rockville, Maryland, who began the day two strokes behind Pigman, birdied the 18th hole for a 68 and finished four strokes back at 277. Joshua Rackley of Brookville, New York, (67) was third at 278, and Dan Olsen of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida (67), and Brian Maurer of Richmond, Indiana (68), shared fourth at 281.

For someone who admits he's befuddled by Bermuda greens, it was a special week Pigman. He collected seven birdies Sunday - with four on the front nine - and had one bogey at No. 14, when his tee shot drifted two feet right into a lateral hazard. He recovered quickly with a 20-foot birdie at No. 15, added a two-putt birdie at the par-5 16th and capped his day with the birdie at 18.

He ended 72 holes with 23 birdies, six bogeys and a double bogey.

"I don't think I had a three-putt all week, which is surprising," said Pigman, a three-time Southern California PGA Assistant Champion. "I started strong and hit it well today. I didn't plan on making that putt on 18, but it helps. My Grandma, Shirley (Pigman, 83), who started me in golf, says, 'Keep making birdies! Keep making birdies!'"

A runner-up in the 2014 Championship, Pigman birdied the par-5 first hole and was off and running. He added birdies at Holes 3, 4 and 7 to build a five-stroke margin over Delmar. The lead stretched to six through 12 holes.

Delmar, a PGA Associate at Columbia Country Club in Chevy Chase, Maryland, had a slight opening to trim Pigman's lead, but couldn't execute. Delmar's 20-foot birdie putt at No. 18 made the final margin four strokes.

"I made a long birdie at 13 and when Kenny hit it into the hazard at 14, I was thinking if I could birdie there, it would be a two-stroke swing," said Delmar, who had missed the cut in two previous Championship trips. "I hit a good shot in there and couldn't make birdie. Then at 15, he rolled in a 20-footer for birdie. I knew then it wasn't going to happen. Getting solo second, I'll take that."

Prior to his arrival at PGA Golf Club, Pigman had already earned a berth in the 2019 PGA Professional Championship through his Section Championship. It will be his third appearance in the showcase event for PGA Professionals, April 28-May 1, at Belfair in Bluffton, South Carolina.

Pigman credited his competition in the Southern California PGA with inspiring his game. He is friends with 2014 PGA Professional Champion Michael Block of Aliso Viejo, California.

"Michael and I play a lot of golf together," said Pigman. "He says I make him better and he makes me better. Michael is one of many great players in the Section. Playing against those guys really makes you better and stronger."

It was a memorable Championship debut for Maurer, a PGA Associated at Forest Hills Country Club in Richmond, Indiana. In fact, he had never seen PGA Golf Club before the Championship. He shared fourth place. "I joined the PGA program less than a year ago, so this is all very new to me. The golf course was in tremendous shape and I couldn't ask more out of myself the first time here."

Three-time Metropolitan PGA Women's Player of the Year Jessica Carafiello of Stamford, Connecticut, the only woman in the 132-player field, posted a 72 and tied for 26th at 291.

The National Car Rental Assistant PGA Professional Championship is supported by Srixon | Cleveland Golf | XXIO, GolfAdvisor.com and John Deere.

Media Contact:

Bob Denney, PGA of America, 561-876-6735, bdenney@pgahq.com