

Andrew Yun sets his sights on Walker Cup appearance

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With one more tournament win under his belt, Tacoma native and recent Stanford University graduate Andrew Yun approaches the upcoming months with one goal in mind — qualifying for the U.S. Walker Cup squad.

Yun beat the top amateurs in the country last week at the 20th Sahalee Players Championship at Sahalee Country Club in Sammamish. With 66 players in the field, Yun was the only golfer to finish under par.

Returning to his home state and having his father caddying couldn't have made the win any sweeter.

"This is one of my biggest wins, not only because it's such a prestigious tournament, but also because I had my whole family in front of me cheering me on," Yun said.

Yun spent his first 14 years in Tacoma — including his ninth-grade season at Bellarmine Prep — before moving to Chandler, Ariz., with his family to play and practice golf year-round.

After a successful junior golf career, Yun chose to attend Stanford University, where he continued to excel on and off the course.

"Andrew was the epitome of student-athlete. He was a hard worker, and when he set his mind to something, he usually accomplished it," said Conrad Ray, Stanford's director of men's golf.

Yun was the 2012 Pacific-12 Conference men's champion, and his Cardinal career was marked by two other collegiate titles. His nickname, "Ice Man," demonstrated his consistent composure and focus on the course.

He was named to the 2013 All-Pac-12 first team and was one of five finalists for the Byron Nelson Award, which recognizes a nominee's collegiate academic and golf career as well as his character and integrity.

"His options are vast," Ray said. "With a great degree under his belt and a golf game that is at a very high level, he will be able to pursue whatever road presents itself."

And that road is looking even brighter after last week's win.

The Walker Cup is one of the highest-regarded competitions for amateurs. The match-play event is held every two years between the United States and Great Britain/Ireland — in a format almost identical to the Ryder Cup.

Jim Holtgrieve was the captain of the U.S. Walker Cup team in 2011, and remains in that position for the upcoming event Sept. 6-9 at the National Golf Links of America in Southampton, N.Y.

“We’re not only looking for talent, but young men who can represent the United States,” Holtgrieve said. “It’s all about how they compete and manage their game. The big upcoming tournaments like the U.S. Amateur will be critical in determining who makes it.”

Holtgrieve has newfound perspective on assembling the U.S. squad from his 2011 experience.

“During my first captaincy, I was very impressed with all the guys. They were all very knowledgeable, smart and respectful, but some had different agendas,” Holtgrieve said. “I don’t want the Walker Cup to just be a step to and for their professional lengths. If you have a chance to play for your country, then you need to do that. That’s very important to me.”

Tiger Woods, Bobby Jones, Phil Mickelson, Puyallup’s Ryan Moore and Gig Harbor’s Kyle Stanley are just some of the many Walker Cup alums who have gone on to successful PGA Tour careers.

However, unlike the Ryder Cup, there is no points list to determine the team. It is selected by a United States Golf Association committee, which takes into account character and camaraderie, as well as players’ results from big amateur tournaments.

That means Yun won’t know where he stands until the team is announced in late August.

“I played in two Palmer Cups,” Yun said of the international collegiate event between the United States and Europe. “To represent your country and play with the red, white and blue on your chest is an unbelievable feeling. The Walker Cup is the biggest one of them all and definitely a goal of mine.

“It’s the main reason I’ve stayed amateur. It would be a huge honor and blessing to make the team.”

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