

## English Men's Amateur Championship

The final of the 2019 English Men's Amateur Championship took place at Hankley Common Golf Club on August 4th and was contested between Conor Gough of Stoke Park and Callum Farr of Northamptonshire County.

Having successfully qualified from the 36-hole stroke play portion of the tournament, both players had won five 18-hole match play games to reach the final. Callum, a semi-finalist in the 2018 championship, and runner-up in the Spanish Amateur earlier this year, saw off fellow NCGC member Fergus Robinson in round two, and went on to play some fantastic golf in further rounds. This included remaining bogey free at the quarter final and semi-final stages. An exceptional effort on the challenging heathland course.



The final began with Conor taking the early lead. Having reduced the 422 yard par 4 first to a driver and a pitch shot, Conor, putting first, was able to convert his birdie chance while Callum's just slipped by. Further wins at the par four third and fifth would see Conor three up early in the match.

A win on nine for Callum saw him two down as both players stepped onto the twelfth tee. Callum, hitting first was hugely unlucky with his drive that caught the lip of the fairway bunker down the left side of the hole. Six inches longer or to the right would have seen him in perfect position. He could only play out back to the fairway and would lose the hole to a par. Holes were exchanged between then and the sixteenth, but a bogey for Callum on 17 would see Conor's lead grow to four.

Both players missed the fairway to the right on the tight eighteenth. Conor's second shot from the heather finished along way short of the green leaving Callum with a chance to win the hole and take some momentum into the second half of the day. Using all of his strength from a heavy lie, Callum's short iron approach pitched on the back portion of the green and released onto the fringe. A delicate chip and putt would see him 3 down at the break.

A brilliant start to the second round saw the game begin to swing in Callum's favour. A superb birdie won the first while he took the second with a solid par three. A half in fours and the par four third saw Conor's lead reduced from 4 up to 1 up in the space of four holes.

The drivable par four fourth would prove to be crucial in deciding the championship. After going for the green with drivers off the tee, both were faced with challenging bunker shots. Conor played first but could only splash out to 60 feet leaving the door open for Callum. Unfortunately, he was unable to take advantage of this situation. Playing from the back right bunker to a back right pin, a slight miss hit off a difficult lie caused his ball to come out too low, missing the green and leaving himself a difficult chip which he could not get up and down. Conor two putted to win the hole with a four. With the match looking like it was going to be even, Conor was now once again two up. He went on the win the next with a par and regained a three up lead with 13 holes of the final still to play.

Remarkably, the next 11 holes were halved with some outstanding golf from both players. Callum made fantastic up and downs on six and seven for a birdie and par respectively, while Conor chipped and putted for a birdie four on the par five eighth. On the ninth hole Conor's wedge shot from the semi-rough was almost perfect. Landing just short of the pin, his ball released out to five feet. The pressure was now on Callum. His reply was superb. A crisply struck wedge shot finishing within three feet of the hole. Another half in birdies.

A wayward drive on the tenth for Conor gave Callum a glimmer of hope after he connected with a long straight tee shot which finished on the centre line of the fairway. Faced with over 200 yards to the green, in a copse of trees, and coming out of the rough, Conor looked like he would be struggling to make a par. A purely struck, low, cutting three iron saw Conor's ball move from left to right around the trunk of a lone fir and end up on the back right portion of the long green. He would go on to two putt and maintain his three up lead

after Callum had made a regulation par.

Callum continued to apply pressure on the next four holes but Conor was able to answer. Another opportunity presented itself on the short par four fifteenth. Having hit his tee shot into the fairway bunker on the right, Conor was only able to hit his approach to 30 feet. After the perfect long iron off the tee, Callum was faced with a tricky pitch shot onto a small contouring green. Three down with four to play, a win here would be vital. In the air his pitch looked perfect for line and distance. An unlucky kick forward on the first bounce took some of the spin off the shot though and the ball released out 10 feet further than desired. Conor left his putt short which gave Callum a chance to win the hole. His putt narrowly missed, however, leaving the match perched at three up with three to play.

On the 162 yard uphill par three sixteenth Conor would hit his tee shot to 12 feet short of the flag. Needing to give himself a birdie to have a chance of winning the hole and prolonging the match Callum replied with a marvellous shot of his own to 10 feet. Conor, putting first to win the championship, raced his putt 4 feet by leaving Callum with his to keep the match going. Callum's putt was agonizingly close but missed and Conor held off any nerves to hole out and win the title.

The high standard of golf played by both players was fitting for any final. With little to separate the two a few breaks here and there swung it in Conor's favour. Callum, however, should be pleased with another good performance and leave knowing he has what it takes to not only compete but win at this level.