

Sports & Leisure

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Lapointe makes history, wins U.S. Mid-Am

Georgetown golfer becomes first non-American to win U.S. championship

Having already set records at home, Mary Ann Lapointe headed south of the border to write a little history.

The Georgetown golfer defeated Kerry Postillion of Burr Ridge, Illinois in Thursday's final of the United States Women's Mid-Amateur at the Shadow Hawk Golf Club in Richmond, Texas. Her 1-up victory made her the first non-American winner of the Mid-Amateur (for golfers 25 and older) and just the sixth Canadian to win a U.S. Golf Association championship.

"It's pretty big but I think my first Canadian (amateur) is still bigger," Lapointe said on a conference call Thursday afternoon when asked how the victory ranked among her many titles, "but this is one title I've had my eye on for a number years."

And Lapointe did it in impressive fashion. In six matches, she trailed for only two of the 96 holes she played.

That's not to say her victory was easy. After building a 3-up lead through 14 holes, Lapointe had to hold off a late charge by Postillion. Postillion birdied the 15th hole and a bogey by Lapointe on the 16th closed the gap to one. Although her stranglehold seemed to be loosening, Lapointe didn't let it rattle her.

"I just thought to myself, there's a lot of people who would want to be in your shoes, 1-up with two (holes) to go."

They halved the par-3 17th hole and Lapointe could finally breathe a little easier when Postillion drove into a fairway bunker on the 437-yard par-5 18th. Lapointe countered with "my best drive of the tournament" down the centre of the fairway, leaving her 165 yards to the green. With a bad lie, Postillion was forced to hit the ball back into the fairway and missed the green with her third shot.

With water in front of the green and knowing she just needed par, Lapointe laid up and then hit her third shot within 20 feet of the pin.

Postillion chipped to 15 feet but when Lapointe's birdie putt came up just six inches short, her opponent offered a congratulatory handshake.

A 12-time Ontario mid-amateur win-

ner, Lapointe qualified sixth through the two rounds of stroke play with rounds of 72 and 75. Postillion led the field with a 72-70.

The 45-year-old Lapointe cruised through the first three matches. She won the first two holes of Monday's opening round match with Laura Waits of Tyler, Texas and never looked back, winning 4-and-3.

Tuesday Lapointe reeled off birdies on 12, 14 and 15 to put away Karen Markle of Eagle, Idaho 4-and-2. Against Kelly Schaub of Greeley, Colorado in Tuesday's second match, Lapointe built a commanding 3-up lead on the front nine and then finished the match with birdies on 13 and 14 to win 6-and-4.

Wednesday's quarterfinal marked the first time Lapointe trailed a match when Thuhashini Selvaratnam of Sri Lanka birdied the first hole. That lead only lasted two holes before Lapointe evened things up with a birdie on the third hole. The match remained square until Lapointe fired three consecutive birdies starting at the ninth hole. Her fifth birdie of the match on the 15th hole gave Lapointe a 4-and-3 win.

After losing just four of 60 holes in four matches, Lapointe had her first serious challenge in Wednesday's semifinal against Robin Burke. Not only did she have to battle the fatigue of playing her fourth round in two days, Lapointe had to contend with a gallery that was clearly pulling for Burke.

"She's from Houston so she's the local girl so it was a little bit silent when I hit a good shot," Lapointe said.

Lapointe birdied the sixth hole to take a 2-up lead but Burke won the seventh to pull back within one. The two were never



Mary Ann Lapointe blasts out of a bunker on the 12th hole during the quarterfinals at the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship in Richmond, Texas on Wednesday. Lapointe went on to win the tournament, defeating Kerry Postillion 1-up in Thursday's final.

Photos courtesy of USGA/John Mummert

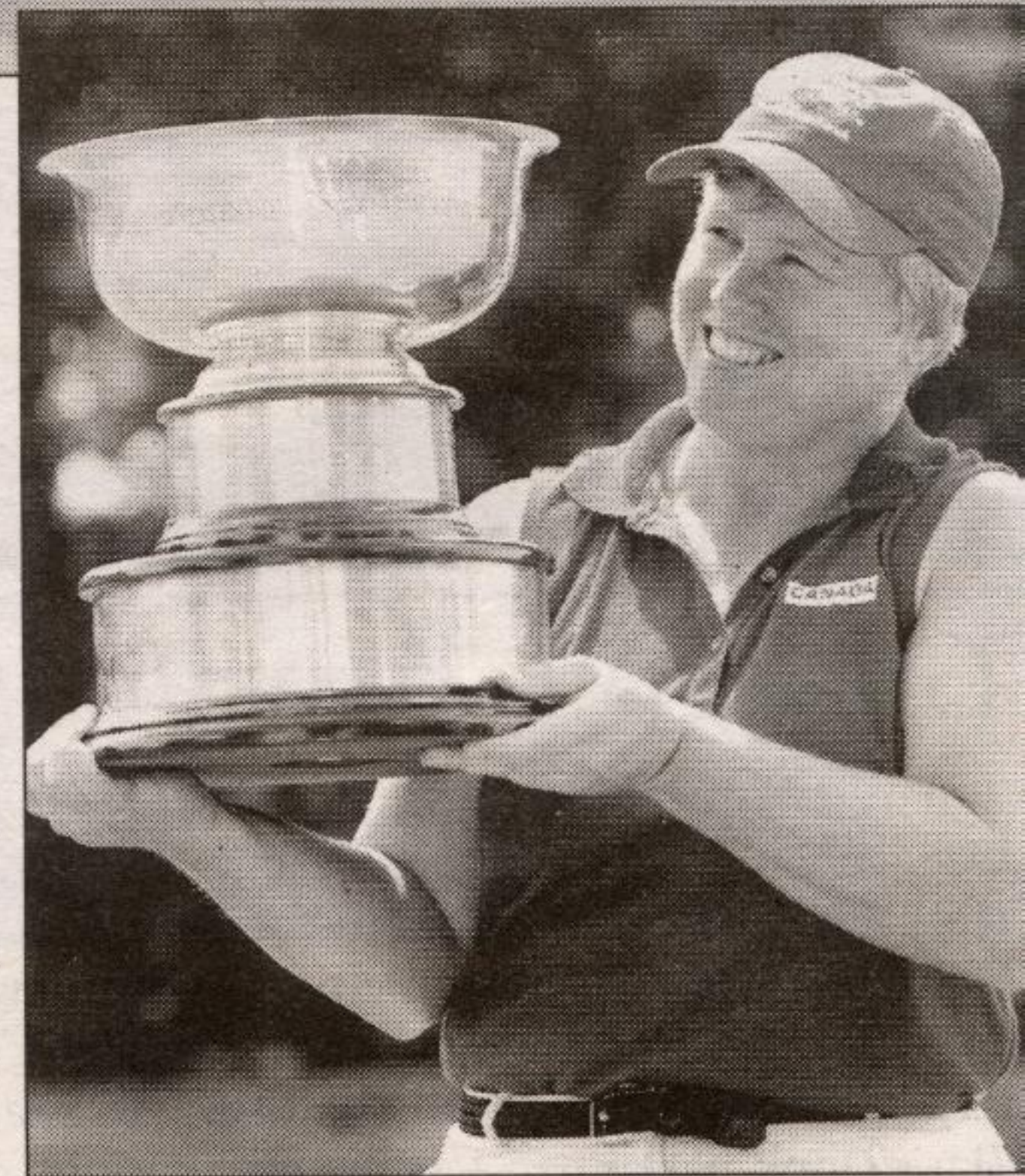
separated by more than one the rest of the way.

Burke birdied the 16th to square the match but Lapointe regained her lead with a par on 17. The two then halved the 18th hole with pars.

But if Lapointe was tired Wednesday, it didn't show Thursday. She opened with a par and a birdie to jump in front 2-up after two holes.

"It was a big boost to get up early on," the four-time Canadian amateur champion said. "Once you get to that point you can swing a little freer. You still have to put those holes to bed and that's the mindset I had today. I knew if I played my own game and made pars and birdies, I'd be fine."

Bogeys by Postillion on 6 and 7 gave Lapointe a commanding 4-up lead. Even when Postillion birdied 11, she was running out of holes when they halved the



next three, leaving her three-down with four holes to play.

That's when Postillion made her move cutting the lead to one with two holes left.

"I just hit two loose drives. I was in a similar situation in the semis and I was able to regroup on 17 and 18," Lapointe said. "I was confident I could get it back together again."

—By Herb Garbutt, staff writer

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