

Lloyd Jefferson Go – 2017 Dogwood Champion

Many competitors try to tame the Druid Hills Golf Club by dominating the par 5s. Lloyd Jefferson Go won the 51st Dogwood Invitational by eating up the par 3s on the final day.

Go shot 6-under 66 and finished at 21-under 267 to win the championship. Saturday's final round included birdies on three of the four par 3s, none more important than the bending 15-footer he made at No. 17 to take the lead for good.

"I told my caddie, I've got to make this," Go said. "I had a good stroke and I made it. It was definitely one of the best putts of my life."

Go's birdie at No. 17 came moments after Luke Schniederjans made bogey there and it put the Seton Hall graduate in the position of only needing a par to win the Dogwood title and add his name to the great list of past winners.

Go played 18 like a champion. Good drive. Solid fairway wood. A pitch below the hole about 20 feet away and two easy putts.

"The Dogwood is a great tournament, they always invite good players and it's nice to know that I'm at the same level as them," he said. "It's awesome."

Schniederjans, a sophomore at Georgia Tech, finished solo second at 20-under after a final-round 66. A highlight was at No. 8, where his tee shot nearly landed in the hole on the par 3 and left him with a two-footer that put him into a tie for the lead.

Schniederjans had a one-shot lead when he came to 17. He may have been over-pumped and hit the ball slightly over the green. He chipped to within 15 feet, but his par putt lipped out. He was unable to make the necessary birdie on the 18th hole and could only watch as Go played the final hole in mistake-free fashion.

"If you'd told me I'd shoot 6-under to start the round, I'd have been really happy," he said. "I just came up a little short."

Tied for third at 16-under 272 were 2015 champion Dawson Armstrong, Georgia Southern's Steven Fisk and Austin Fulton, who will be a freshman this fall at Mississippi State.

"Sometimes it's just not your day," said Armstrong, who closed with a 71. Fisk and Fulton both finished with 67s.

Tied for sixth were N.C. State's Benjamin Shipp, Clemson's Bryson Nimmer and Campbell graduate Gaston Berinotti.

Defending champion Charles Huntzinger shot 69 to finish 14-under and tied for ninth with Jacob Solomon, Andy Ogletree and Chandler Eaton.

Go appeared to be a non-factor early in the day. He made bogeys on two of his first five holes and it wasn't until he closed the front side with three straight birdies that he began to make a move. He climbed into contention by holing out from the 11th fairway for an eagle.

"I came off a rough start, but I turned it around and came alive," Go said. "And I had a hole-out on No. 11 that really lifted my spirits. That was huge. I hit that shot and all of a sudden I'm 3 under."

He had back-to-back birdies at No. 14 and 15 and took the lead for good with the birdie at No. 17.

"I just played my game," he said. "If I happen to win, good. If play good and don't win, fine. Just play my best. Just try to play the same the first three days."

That turned out to be the winning recipe.

After the round, the players offered universal praise and thanks for the generosity and hospitality of the Druid Hills members and staff. The conditions were championship quality, an incredible statement given the heavy amount of rain the course has accepted over the last month.