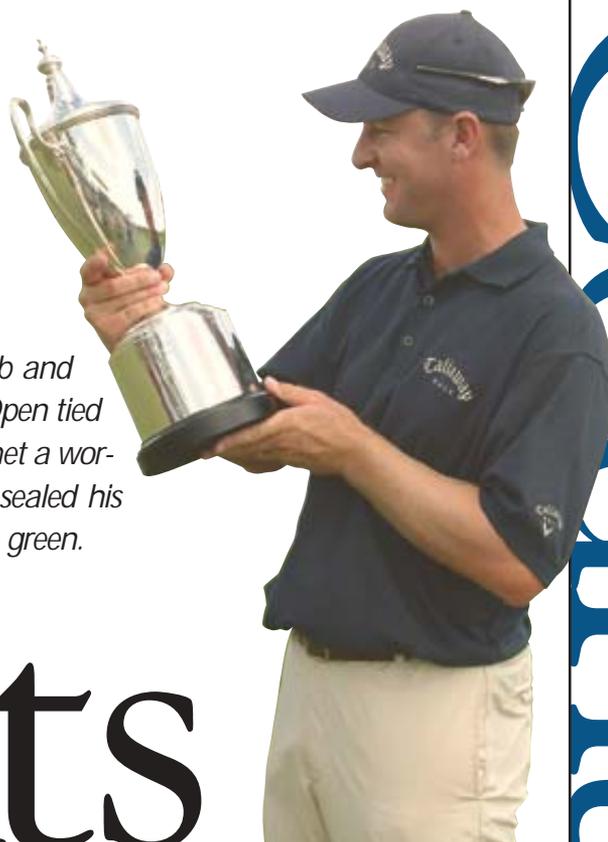




He set a new course record for The Glen Club and entered final-round play at the LaSalle Bank Open tied for the lead. But Pekin, Ill. native D.A. Points met a worthy adversary in Aussie Brendan Jones, who sealed his first-ever Nationwide Tour victory on the 18th green.



Points

BY TIM CRONIN • PHOTOS BY PETER WAGNER

Brendan Jones probably never spotted the trampoline in the backyard to the left of The Glen Club's sixth fairway while playing in the 2004 LaSalle Bank Open.

First, he would never have been caught traipsing so far off the fairway, and second, he didn't need to bounce on the big toy to get where he wanted to go. Like fellow Australian Andre Stolz did last year, Jones used the tournament itself as a springboard into the future.

Even before Jones' moment of victory, accomplished by one stroke thanks to a scrambling par on the home hole, he'd already come far. Glenview is 9,384 miles from his Canberra, Australia home, and countless airline miles more distant after a three-continent odyssey that finally brought him to the Tom Fazio-designed gem. Even before his triumph, it was a journey punctuated by a third career win in Japan plus qualifying for the U.S. Open for the first time.

That, and especially the win at The Glen Club, was achieved by playing "sensibly," to use his word. It also didn't hurt the 29-year-old's cause that, when the occasion calls, Jones is able to hit the ball across time zones.

D.A. Points discovered the above on Sunday, June 13. The Pekin native, a three-time Illinois Amateur champion, began as the co-leader with transplanted Wisconsinite

Mark Wilson, originally of Menomonee Falls, but more recently a resident of Chicago's River North neighborhood.

Points' winning would have put a personal exclamation point on a week that had already seen him establish a new course record from the back tees. Friday's 9-under-par 62 on the 7,219-yard par-71 course was two strokes better than the record 64 he fired from the tips in 2003, when the layout was a slightly longer par-72 test. A victory also would have made up for his tie for third a year ago, when he led entering the final round but finished with a 73.

Instead, he found in Jones a formidable adversary, someone able to make birdies in blustery conditions, then grind out pars when necessary. In Points, Jones found someone who would not surrender.

Consider the start and finish of the final round's back nine. Thanks to five birdies splashed on the front, Jones made the turn at 16-under-par, three strokes ahead of Points and Wilson. The latter would fade, but Illinois grad Points, wearing his traditional Sunday garb, an orange hat and blue shirt, would gut it out, despite being unsure of his swing because of the strong southerly wind. Teaching pro Rick Sellers had implemented a change for Points early Wednesday morning in Bloomington, but Points, pleased with the

Counterspooints



*2004 LaSalle Bank Open champion,
Brendan Jones, launches it off the tee.*

modification early in the week, was wary of it in the wind. While he hit only nine fairways in the final round, he'd hit but 10 while scoring 62.

Points didn't flinch after Jones came within one foot of driving the green on the 333-yard into-the-wind par-4 10th hole. He didn't flinch after his second shot landed at the front of the television tower behind the green.

"Geez, this could be the ball game if I don't get it up and down," he said he thought at the time.

He did better than that. At least 45 feet distant, with everything sloping away from him, Points opened his wedge's clubface, slid it under the ball, plopped the ball precisely where it had to be plopped, and watched it turn and roll and ever so softly fall into the cup.

There were one, two, three fist pumps from Points as the crowd, including mom, Mary Jo, girlfriend, Lori, and Bob Neal, his golf coach a decade ago at Pekin High, roared. But Jones had heard that noise before on the ninth green, when everybody birdied. To him, there were no worries, mate.

"That didn't bother me in the slightest," Jones said. "You're rooting for your countrymen."

Besides, his wife, Adele, was cheering for him, the most prominent of a few supporters. But they could only applaud politely after he merely parred the 10th following the big drive.

"I still thought that if I played sensibly, I'd hang on," Jones said. "Conditions were not easy. I thought, 'Just don't do anything really silly.'"

Fighting an upset stomach, Points hit a scintillating 5-iron to three-and-a-half feet on the par-4 16th to grab another birdie and close the gap to a stroke, Jones having regained a stroke lost on the 11th with a birdie on the par-4 15th.

It would come down to the 18th, a risk-reward par-5 of 589 downhill wind-aided yards with a pond guarding the green. Points assumed the risk and cleared the green, but was not rewarded. He couldn't get down in two from the rough an inch off the green.

Jones, even after punting his tee shot into the right rough, a tree forcing him to hack back to the fairway, was rewarded. His 200-yard 7-iron just cleared the bunker between the pond and the green. A two-putt par from 25 feet sealed his 5-



Ricky Barnes.



D.A. Points.

The Final Leaderboard at The 2004 LaSalle Bank Open

Brendan Jones	1	67-70-64-67	268	\$117,000
D.A. Points	2	70-62-68-69	269	\$70,200
Mike Springer	3	67-65-69-72	273	\$44,200
Fran Quinn	T4	67-67-68-72	274	\$28,600
Doug LaBelle II	T4	67-67-70-70	274	\$28,600

under-par 67 and total of 16-under 268. Points, stuck with par when a birdie was a must, finished a stroke behind.

"This is an amazing last three months," said Jones, headed to the PGA Tour in 2005 largely due to the \$117,000 payday. "I can see myself improving. It's just been phenomenal."

"I didn't lose it today," said Points, \$70,200 richer. "He won it. I'm disappointed I didn't make birdie at the end, but I didn't fold."

Thus ended in sunshine, and for the benefit of the CDGA's Sunshine Through Golf Foundation, a four-day tournament that began with a three-hour rain delay. So many showers drenched the course through Saturday morning that the lift, clean and place conditions imposed by tour officials were never lifted. If that helped scoring in the early going—even Points thought it aided his 62—the high winds of the final round brought the scores back to earth by the grand finale.

Even before then, there was plenty of excitement. Galleries were improved over the 2003 Glen Club debut, and way up over the 2002 edition at Kemper Lakes. Big-hitter Victor Schwamkrug opened with a 6-under-par 65 to share the first-round lead before finishing tied for 23rd.

A bigger one went to PGA Tour veteran Mike Springer, whose 7-under-par 28 on Friday's back nine, coming on the heels of Points' 62, had observers thinking there was a tournament going on at some easier Glen Club in an alternate universe. Word filtered back that Springer, with two eagles, was playing the same course as everyone else, only more efficiently.

"It's about time the (stuff) goes my way," Springer laughed. He remained in the chase almost to the wire and finished third.

Three birdies in Sunday's first five holes finally made Jones the leader, Points the challenger, and, once Wilson fell back, everyone else pretenders. Ranked 82nd in the world coming in, Jones was the best player on form, with the most accomplishments, and would have been the favorite had odds been posted. Now, his life will change. While he'll be on the Japan tour most of the rest of the year, next year will be different.

"If you've got an opportunity to play the PGA Tour, you've got to take it," Jones said. 🏌️

Editor's Note: The weekend after the LaSalle Bank Open, D.A. Points won the Northeast Pennsylvania Classic and jumped to no. 7 on the Nationwide Tour money list.