



ILLINOIS STATE  
A M A T E U R



# A CALL TO ACTION

After watching his lead dwindle, Zach Barlow sprang back to life and went on to capture the Illinois State Amateur crown

By Jim Owczarski

The actual time might have been late in the afternoon, but it was an early wake-up call that allowed University of Illinois

junior Zach Barlow to seal a dream victory at the 78th Illinois State Amateur Championship at Cantigny Golf in Wheaton.

A member of the Illini golf team, Barlow was the second-round leader at 5 under par going into the event's 36-hole final, but it was near the end of the third round when Winnetka's Michael Slovitt made three consecutive birdies on his back nine and briefly (for one hole) captured the lead.

"It was kind of a wake-up call, like, 'Hey, get it going,'" Barlow said as he reflected on his three-stroke margin of victory over Wilmette's Philip Arouca. "I might have been



PHOTOS BY BUZZ ORR/CDGA

Philip Arouca bounced back after his first-round 80 to cut into Zach Barlow's lead.

# ILLINOIS STATE AMATEUR

CANTIGNY GOLF, WHEATON • AUG. 12-14 • PAR 72 • 7,031 YARDS

POS.	PLAYER	HOMETOWN	1	2	3	4	TOTAL
1	Zach Barlow	Percy	72	67	71	71	281
2	Philip Arouca	Wilmette	80	67	71	66	284
3	Tim Lynch	Lake Forest	72	72	70	71	285
	Michael Slovitt	Winnetka	71	71	71	72	285
5	Tommy Bliefnick	Decatur	72	69	74	73	288
6	John Ehrgott	Peoria	76	73	72	68	289
7	Brad Benjamin	Rockford	75	72	71	75	293
8	Carlos Sainz	Elgin	74	72	76	72	294
	Brad Hopfinger	Lake Forest	72	70	75	77	294
	Jason Woll	Pekin	70	71	75	78	294
11	Scott Pralle	LaGrange	71	71	79	75	296
12	Blake Johnson	Winnetka	76	72	76	73	297
13	Erik Ciotti	Addison	70	77	78	73	298
14	Dan Stringfellow	Roselle	77	72	75	75	299
	Chad Koschmann	Lake Forest	76	70	75	78	299
	Paul Hindsley	Northfield	75	71	77	76	299
17	Ryan Dorner	Glenview	73	75	73	79	300
18	Jonathon Schram	Buffalo Grove	75	74	73	79	301
19	Tim Hamm	Chicago	71	76	78	77	302
	Matt Denison	Northbrook	73	74	76	79	302
	Matt Triplett	St. Charles	71	75	80	76	302
	Danny Brown	Buffalo Grove	71	75	77	79	302
	Clayton Parkhill	Champaign	74	74	80	74	302
24	Ravi Patel	Naperville	72	72	79	80	303
	Mason Jacobs	Metropolis	77	71	71	84	303
26	Joe Emerich	Palatine	77	71	79	77	304
27	Bob Moran	Kildeer	76	73	74	82	305
	Mark Palmer	Winthrop Harbor	76	73	73	83	305
29	Matt Bova	Bloomington	72	72	81	81	306
30	Dustin Wickenhauser	Bloomington	72	77	81	80	310

NOTE: Top 15 finishers and ties earn exemptions into the 2009 State Amateur

off in mentality a little bit at the beginning and just trying to scrape it around the first couple holes, and I found out quick that wasn't going to happen."

The Percy native rebounded with three birdies of his own over his final five holes in the third round, setting the stage for a pair of 1-under-par 71s on the last day and a 72-hole total of 7-under-par 281.

"As for biggest victories, this is the one," he said. "You always know you can do it in local tournaments, but it's

**"As for biggest victories, this is the one," Barlow said. "You always know you can do it in local tournaments, but it's different when you get on the big stage."**

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"Those were key," Barlow said of his third-round flurry of birdies. "I

really didn't have that great a round. I started off horrible and I was up and down the whole front nine. That was key coming down the stretch that

## A PREP FOR PINEHURST

It's unusual when a tournament as prestigious as the Illinois State Amateur Championship is called a "warm up," but that's exactly what it proved to be for three players.

Carlos Sainz, Matt Denison and 2007 champion Ravi Patel headed to Pinehurst, N.C. shortly after the tournament to compete in the U.S. Amateur. But, their experience at Cantigny, which featured tall, thick rough and speedy greens, should have served as a good precursor.

Sainz, who finished in a tie for eighth place at 6 over par after rounds of 74-72-76-72—294, played at Pinehurst in the North and South Amateur in July.

"The rough was up around the greens and the greens will be a little different out there, but the speed of the greens was fast out here," said Sainz, the 2008 CDGA Amateur champion. "You can't really find many

places rolling like this to practice."

Patel, who is in the midst of a swing change and tweak in putting technique, finished tied for 24th at 15 over par. He closed with final rounds of 79 and 80 after beginning strong with two even-par rounds.

"The thing about here is the rough. It's really good preparation," Patel said of Cantigny's set-up. "But it definitely helped prepare me . . ."

• Todd Mitchell, a two-time Illinois State Amateur champion who won the Illinois State Mid-Amateur in May, withdrew from the tournament after qualifying for both the U.S. Amateur and U.S. Mid-Amateur.

• Illinois State University golfer Joe Emerich failed in his bid to become the first player since David Ogrin in 1980 to win both the Illinois Open and Illinois State Amateur in the same year. He finished tied for 26th.

"It's just fun to compete," Emerich

said. "I'm just glad to get out here and use this as preparation for the college season."

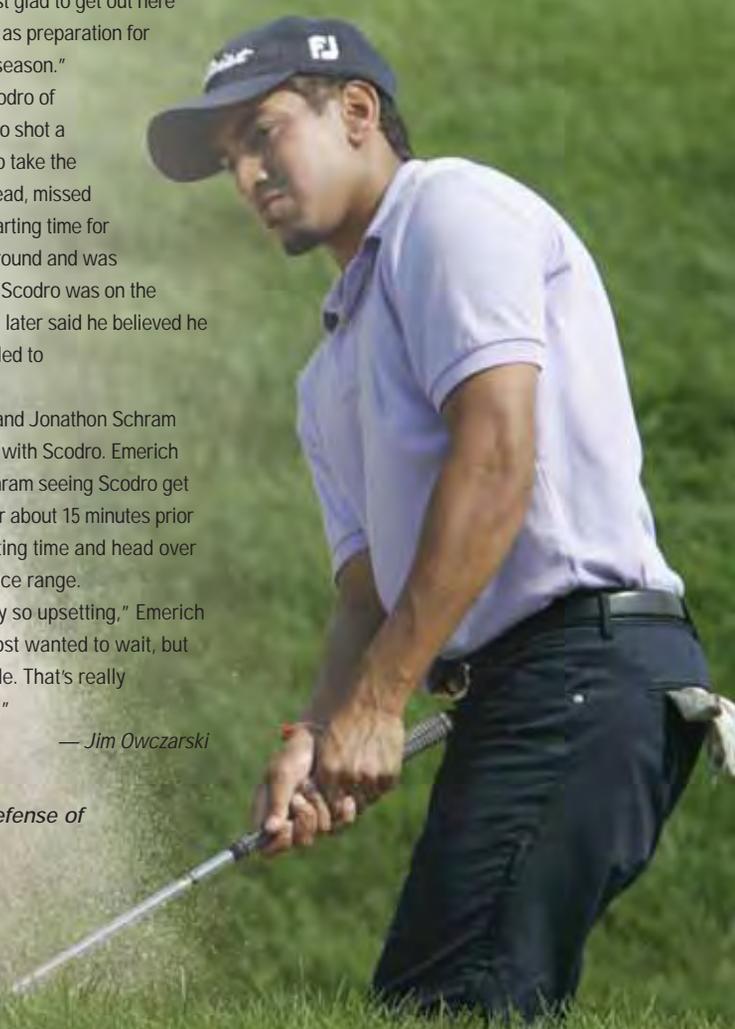
• Max Scodro of Chicago, who shot a 3-under 69 to take the first-round lead, missed his 8 a.m. starting time for the second round and was disqualified. Scodro was on the grounds and later said he believed he was scheduled to play at 8:30.

Emerich and Jonathon Schram were paired with Scodro. Emerich recalled Schram seeing Scodro get out of his car about 15 minutes prior to their starting time and head over to the practice range.

"It's really so upsetting," Emerich said. "I almost wanted to wait, but that's the rule. That's really unfortunate."

— Jim Owczarski

*Ravi Patel finished 24th in defense of his State Amateur title.*



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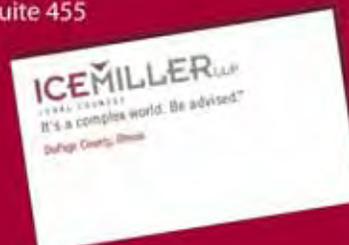
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third round, to really stay in it and buckle down.”

Barlow was steady in his final round, balancing four birdies against three bogeys. At one point during the round, Barlow held a comfortable six-stroke lead. After a bogey at the 10th dropped him to 6 under, he strung together six consecutive pars.

On the other side of the golf course and playing one group ahead, Arouca was on fire, pulling to within three shots during a round in which he would collect eight birdies against two bogeys.

Barlow, who finished tied for fourth in last year’s rain-shortened State Amateur, noticed the charge and responded.

He knocked a 6-iron stiff on the 179-yard 17th hole, leaving himself 4 feet for birdie. He made it, giving him a three-shot lead on his way to the



*Tim Lynch was at par or better in every round and finished tied for third.*

tee box on the home hole. He found the fairway and green in regulation, then two-putted for par and the victory.

“I was like, ‘Man, I just can’t coast

in. I have to make something happen,’ ” Barlow said. “It definitely did (make 18 easier). I had trouble with the last hole the first two days, I hit it in the water both times.”



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With the win, Barlow became the first University of Illinois player to claim the title since D.A. Points won it eight years ago.

"It's great to bring it back to southern Illinois," he said. "We've got great players down there. We really don't show it up here in our one shot with the big guys, but the SIGA (Southern Illinois Golf Association) is very competitive."



*State titles are nothing new to Barlow; he won an IHSA Class A individual championship in 2003.*

Arouca, who turned professional immediately after the tournament, rebounded from a first-round 80 to finish solo second. He made a monstrous move in the second round when he shot a 67, which allowed him to jump from 90th place to 17th. He opened his last day with a 1-under 71, and his final-round 6-under 66 was the low round of the tournament.

"I knew if I did my part, then it was possible," said Arouca, who is scheduled to make his professional debut at the Nebraska Open in Omaha

in September. "I birdied No. 5, my 14th hole, and at that point I was three shots back and I felt that if I could get two more and get to 5 under, Zach would have to play 17 and then 18 with water all over the place. I thought if I got to 5 (under par) I might have a good chance of catching him."

Arouca plans to move to Orlando in the fall to try to the mini-tour circuit with some friends.

"We're going to try to make it on the mini-tours and work our way up to the PGA Tour hopefully one day," he said.

Arouca, who made it to the second round of match play at last year's U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship at Cantigny, was the only player to record two rounds in the 60s.

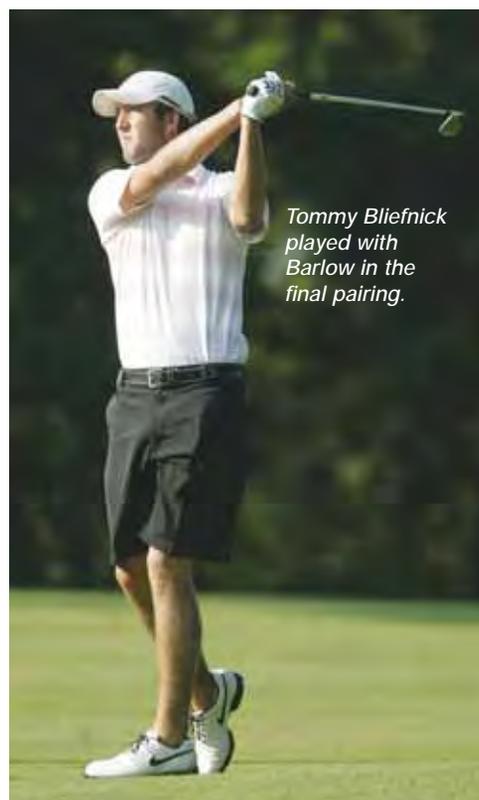
"I knew if I got the ball around the hole, I'm making putts. I'm really rolling the ball well," he said. "That's what kind of got me going. I started hitting my iron shots really well and really close and started making the putts."

Tim Lynch of Lake Forest tied for third with Slovitt at 3 under, but he was never able to get closer than five shots to Barlow.

Lynch didn't look at a leaderboard until the 13th hole of his final round, but still managed to record his best finish in the event in six tries.

"My only commitment was just to have fun and enjoy both rounds of golf," said the 24-year-old recent graduate of Santa Clara University in California. "We just wanted to have fun and let the results take care of themselves." 🍏

*Jim Owczarski is a sports writer for the Beacon News in Aurora.*



*Tommy Bliefnick played with Barlow in the final pairing.*

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