

Gillen wins QC Am helped by some late birdies

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For Ben Gillen, it was more than just a win.

The former two sport all-stater at Monmouth-Roseville High School carded rounds of 72-68 at the Rock Island Arsenal Golf Club and held off Steve Schwabe (70-70) on the first hole of a playoff to win his first career Quad City Amateur tour event.

Before he got to college, the winner's circle was a common destination for Gillen.

As a senior in 2008, Gillen claimed medalist honors at the Olympic Conference meet, as well as the regional and sectional events. He would go on to finish in third place at the 1A state meet, just a couple shots away from winning that as well.

He won a number of smaller tournaments in his very successful four-year career at Monmouth-Roseville. And as a college freshman at St. Ambrose University, Gillen qualified to play in their top five, which was represented by four upperclassmen and himself.

After that, Gillen experienced a lot of adversity he had never dealt with before. A tough start to his sophomore season led to Gillen essentially sitting the bench for the first time in his athletic career. Gillen played in SAU's top five in just three tournaments that year and missed the NAIA National Tournament in 2010.

However, it only motivated Gillen to get back to the level he was used to being at.

"To be honest, I wasn't really used to playing bad like that," he said. "Coming from a small school like Monmouth, I was used to being the number one guy.

"That really put things back into perspective for me. And, it made me work a lot harder than I had in the past couple of years."

It wasn't ever easy for Gillen this weekend, though. Gillen had never seen the golf course before he teed it up in Saturday's opening round.

And Gillen was trailing by three shots on the 13th tee on Sunday before rattling off birdies at 13,14,15, and 17.

That strong push got him into a playoff with Schwabe and Gillen was able to make a par from the left trees on the Arsenal's par-4 No.1 hole, where Schwabe had tree trouble on the right side that led to a bogey.

It was the first tournament Gillen has won since that sectional in October of 2008.

"It's nice to kind of get that monkey off your back," he said. "But, the important thing is to go out and do it again."

"It's important to get confidence," he said, noting he's just a couple of weeks away from his senior year beginning at St. Ambrose. "I have played OK in these tournaments before, but never competed for the top spot. It's nice to prove yourself in what was a pretty heated battle down the stretch there with Schwabe."

The runner-up finish was Schwabe's best of 2011. Former SAU teammates with Gillen, Dusty Drenth and Ryan Sergeant fired rounds of 73-70 to finish in a tie for third with Toby Kurtis who also carded the

same scores each day.

Long wins Arsenal Senior: Mike Long avenged a five-shot deficit to begin the day with a 1-under-par 70 to finish at 148 and hold off Dave Waugh (78-71) to claim the senior's title.

First round leader, Mark Drenth, struggled to a final round 78 and finished in third alone at 151.