

Sergeant looking to top crowded leaderboard for first QC Am Tour win

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Former Moline prep Ryan Sergeant has been knocking on victory's door on the Quad City Amateur Tour golf scene the past couple of years.

The senior-to-be at St. Ambrose University is hoping to walk through that threshold today in the final round of the 36-hole Quad City Amateur at Emeis Golf Course.

But that task — a monumental goal for the 21-year-old — is not going to be easy as a bunched leaderboard will offer plenty of competition late this afternoon.

Among those near the top are the last two QCAM Tour Players of the Year — two-time NAIA All-American Dusty Drenth of SAU (1-under 71) and 2009 and 2007 QC Am champ Ben Peters (1-over 73). In all, 33 players are within four strokes of the lead.

Drenth was part of the lead foursome at 71 that included QCAM Tour winners Tim Flaherty and 2005 QC Am champ Chad McCarty and Black Hawk sophomore-to-be Ryan Schlueter.

Sergeant was among a pair of foursomes at 72 along with former POY and SAU alum Chris Wilkins and fellow former Bees Ben Hanson and Chad Coppinger. Also in there is soon-to-be Bee Connor Gillund and former POY Brian Soucinek.

Adam Seitz, last week's Hawthorn Ridge Am champ, was lurking at 74 with five others.

"You've got yourself quite a shootout coming," said Dave Holmes, who after a 74 isn't sure he can factor into that frantic finish even though he could have had the first-round lead as well.

What befuddled most of the golfers on Saturday was that nobody had that usual breakout round. Some said the course and conditions had it there for the taking, but nobody grabbed and ran.

While ups and down are part of the round, the 2010 event could have very easily taken on a different complexion. Sergeant finished the shotgun-started round on No. 18 with a triple-bogey 8 to finish with an even-par 72 that also included a bogey on the par-5 ninth. Holmes's nightmarish finish went double/par/double on holes 5/6/7 for a 74.

On the flip side, Peters saved his round after a sluggish start had him five over after six holes. A chip-in for eagle on No. 1 keyed his comeback.

Still, Sergeant was kicking himself for kicking away the overnight lead. It started with an errant tee shot right and a couple of hockey slap shots across the fairway from unfortunate lies amongst the trees. Then came a flyer out of the rough into a hazard behind the green that necessitated a penalty drop.

"It was really the perfect ending to an up-and-down round," said Sergeant, who has pinpointed this as a possible major breakthrough for him. "I had seven birdies, four bogeys and a triple. I was all over the map. ... It was really a sour finish to a pretty well-played round of golf."

Instead of lamenting what he lost, Sergeant, who has a pair of third-place QCAM Tour finishes, said the key now is to turn not having to sleep on the lead into a positive.

"I'm not the guy everyone is going to be gunning for," said Sergeant. "What I need to do is play and not act like I'm trying to win."

"Generally speaking, scores go the wrong direction on Sunday when tournaments are won," said 2008 QC Am champ Wilkins. "There are a few guys near the top who have won it before and a lot of guys who haven't. It will be interesting to see who can hang in there and who can't."

And, who can finish strong to win the title.