

Bionic McLear Captures First ECI Title



DEVENS, Mass. – Justin McLear earned his first-career ECI title on Sunday, outlasting good friend Matt Barnes by two strokes. McLear became the tournament's fifth overall champion, and the event endured a first-time champion since John Dailey won in 2008.

"I can't be any happier right about now," said McLear from the Red Tail locker room. "I've worked so hard at my game and quite honestly, have improved dramatically since my days on the North Shore."

The Western Massachusetts native started his day at Red Tail Even par through the first four holes, but he had to work for it. After opening with consecutive bogeys, he went on to record two straight birdies on the par-3 third and par-5 fourth en route to a front nine score of 1-over 37.

Meanwhile, longtime friend Matt Barnes tried to keep pace with McLear, firing a 39 on the front, with a birdie on the short par-4 sixth. Barnes thought if he was the low number at the turn in his group, or close to it, that he felt he would have a legitimate shot at winning the ECI. Barnes has arguably been the most consistent player in the ECI field over the years, with five Top-10's in the last seven events.

"I'll tell ya where I thought I had him [McLear]," noted Barnes. "He tripled the 10th hole and I birdied 11 and 13. But my Achilles Heel was that I could not make pars down the stretch. Justin did not allow that triple to rattle him whatsoever."

After McLear's triple bogey-8 on the par-5 tenth, he went on to par his final seven out of eight holes that sealed the victory.

Also in contention were Nick Turczak, Brian Gill and Derek Sharron. The newlywed of eight days and fresh off a move back to the Boston area, Sharron finished with a solid 12-over 84, good for sixth alone, his best finish ever at the ECI.

Turczak and Gill battled each other all day for that low round in the group, but did not record a single birdie between them. Conditions worsened throughout the day, with most of the field out on the golf course during steady showers throughout most of the back nine. Both three-time champions of the ECI, Turczak was a shot better than Gill, good for third alone. Turczak was looking for his fourth crown, and his first since 2007.

The tournament's other three-time champion, John Dailey, withdrew from the event on Saturday due to an illness in the family. Dailey passed along his well wishes to Co-Chairman Marc Zirolli, which was made public before the first starting time.

"Please give everyone my absolute best and to have fun out there," said a melancholy Dailey." I wish I could have been there. This was a very difficult choice, but it was one I had to make. I look forward to seeing everyone again real soon, and will be ready to go for the 2014 ECI."

"Hey, you gotta do what you gotta do," said Jerry Miceli, playing in his third ECI. "The bottom line is, family comes first, and everyone in this tournament is thinking of John during this very hard time. We will miss him out there, but he did the right thing."

Final Leaderboard

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|------|----------------|-----|
| 1. | Justin McLearn | 77 |
| 2. | Matt Barnes | 79 |
| 3. | Nick Turczak | 82 |
| T-4. | Matt Davis | 83 |
| | Brian Gill | 83 |
| 6. | Derek Sharron | 84 |
| 7. | Matt Gajda | 85 |
| 8. | Carl Bean | 92 |
| 9. | Jerry Miceli | 94 |
| 10. | Marc Zirolli | 95 |
| 11. | Josh Clark | 105 |
| 12. | John Dailey | WD |

