

ECI Back in Big Way!

DEVENS, Mass. – Since the 10-year anniversary back in 2012, the Endicott College Invitational has had some down years. Players opting for bigger events, players skipping the event to rest, and players discouraged with the purse have all played key roles in the depleted fields in recent years. However, tournament chair Marc Zirolli is proud to announce that this year's field is really an exciting one. Jeff Barnhart makes his illustrious return for the first time since 2011, and Ken Tessier also returns to the championship for the first time in four years. "I think it's time to come back," said Tessier via a teleconference from his office in Georgia last week. "I will admit, after a couple of close calls and coming up short to win, I was deflated, but my game feels ready, and I'm ready to make a run this year."

Barnhart, who has taken a break from the game in recent years, says he feels excited to get back out there. "I can't think of a better place to start than at Red Tail. It's one of my favorite venues," Barnhart said. Chairman Zirolli is excited about their return.

"Tessier and Barnhart coming back is great for the event. Barnhart is a fixture and a local fan favorite. These two add instant star power to the championship," said Zirolli in his annual state of the ECI address last month in Boston. In addition to Barnhart and Tessier returning, so does defending champion Nick Turczak, who beat Matt Davis in a playoff a year ago. Turczak feels ready to defend. "I've been working hard on my game; if I can make a few birdies, I'm going to be in the mix come Saturday afternoon," he said. Davis also returns after coming so close again last year, along with past champions Brian Gill, John Dailey, Justin McLearn and Kenneth Dargon. ECI week kicks off today with the kids' clinic at Beverly Golf and Tennis Club. ECI superstars Alex Lawner and Derek Sharron are expected to be in attendance.

Players to Watch

Nick Turczak:

The defending champion is ready to go back-to-back!

Brian Gill:

Gill always one of the favorites at the ECI. Consistency off the tee and with his iron play makes him a formidable player.

Justin McLearn:

McLearn has had a difficult time rebounding after his breakthrough win in 2013 with rounds of 86 and 83, but feels as though he's got as good of a chance as any heading into 2016.

Matt Davis:

Davis is hungry for his first ECI title after losing in a playoff a year ago.

John Dailey:

Dailey looking to return to the winner's circle after his 2014 victory.

Kenneth Dargon:

The inaugural champion's best round since his win in 2003 is an 82. Dargon feels like if he can put two nines together he can get in the mix this weekend.

Marc Zirolli:

Zirolli is looking to build off a back-nine 41 in 2015. Is this the year Zirolli shocks the world and gets into contention?

Derek Sharron:

Sharron fired a solid round of 85 in 2015. Don't be surprised if he's around the lead come Sunday on the back nine.

Matt Gajda:

Once again, lots of analysts picking Gajda to breakthrough this weekend.

Ken Tessier:

Along with Matt Davis, once of the better players without an ECI victory on his resume. If Tessier can keep the big number out of play, look for him to make a run for the title on Saturday.

Jeff Barnhart:

Fans are excited about Barnhart's return to action. Will he produce?

Pete Woodward:

Like Tiger Woods is for the U.S. Open, Woodward is registered for the ECI, but as of publication time of the Preview, he has not committed. Woodward suffered a devastating wrist injury during the off-season while playing with a flashlight.