

## **SEC RIVALS TIE FOR MEDALIST HONORS AT 120TH WOMEN'S WESTERN AMATEUR**

**FRANKFORT, III.** (Wednesday, July 22) – A trio of collegiate players from the SEC battled for medalist honors over the final nine holes in the 120th Women's Western Amateur at Prestwick Country Club in Frankfort, Illinois, on Wednesday.

When the last putt dropped, Caroline Curtis, a sophomore at Alabama, and Blair Stockett, a Mississippi State senior, emerged in a victorious tie for the Margaret Lenz medalist trophy. Both posted 36-hole totals of 4-under 140 to claim the top two seeds in Thursday's opening round of match play.

Makenzie Niblett, a Texas A&M freshman and the third SEC representative in the medalist hunt, was tied for the lead at 4-under with three holes to go. Playing in the final group of the day, Niblett went bogey, birdie, bogey on her closing holes to end one stroke out of the lead with a solo third-place finish.

After starting the day two strokes back of the leaders with an opening-round 71, Curtis, 18, of Richmond, Virginia, fired a three-under par 69 Wednesday.

"I just wanted to put another good round together after yesterday," she said. "So, I knew that I had to do something like yesterday to be able to get into the 32, and that's all that mattered. I just wanted to make sure I made it into match play."

Curtis credited her putting with pushing her to the top of the leaderboard. "I was giving myself good opportunities and then making them, too," she said. "These greens are pretty tricky, so to be able to be putting really well has felt really good."

On being a co-medalist, Curtis said, "It's super great and such an honor. There are a lot of great players on the field so to be able to put two great rounds together and to be able to come out on the top feels great. But, everything resets tomorrow, and it is all about match play."

Stockett, 21, of Jackson, Mississippi, played her final four holes in one-under to pull into the tie with Curtis. One of the leaders at 3-under heading into the second round, Stockett said she focused on staying aggressive.

"I was just trying to get as many birdies as I could," she said. "I was really thinking girls were going to shoot lower than they did today, so I was trying to stay aggressive and play offense."

Looking ahead to Thursday's match play, Stockett said she welcomes the uncertainty of the challenge. "You never know what can happen in match play," she noted. "It can usually come down to the last few holes. The pressure is different."

Tied for fourth at 2-under 142 were Erica Shepherd, 19, of Greenwood, Indiana, a Duke sophomore, and Sophie Burks, 21, of Tallassee, Alabama, a senior at Middle Tennessee State.

Five players finished at 6-over 150 to make a playoff for the final two match play spots. Surviving the playoff were Noor Ahmed, 21, of Sacramento, California, a senior at Nebraska, and Micaela Farah, 21, of Lima, Peru, a Purdue senior.

With the cut to the low 32, the first two rounds of match play are set for Thursday. The match play quarterfinals and semifinals will be played on Friday, with the 18-hole championship match to be held Saturday morning.

The list of past Women's Western Amateur champions reads like a "Who's Who" in women's golf, including current LPGA stars Ariya Jutanugarn, Stacy Lewis, Brittany Lang and Cristie Kerr.

This is Prestwick's first WWGA tournament since the 1972 Junior Championship – won by a 15-year-old Nancy Lopez. She went on to become one of the best players in the history of professional golf and was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1987.

For more tournament information, including Thursday's opening round match play pairings and complete stroke play scores, visit [womenswesternamateur.com](http://womenswesternamateur.com).