



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EIGHT CHAMPIONS CROWNED AT 2019 DRIVE, CHIP AND PUTT NATIONAL FINALS

Registration Now Open for Next Qualifying Season at DriveChipandPutt.com

AUGUSTA, Ga. – Eight junior golfers – four boys and four girls – were crowned champions at the sixth annual Drive, Chip and Putt National Finals held Sunday, April 7, at Augusta National Golf Club and broadcast live on Golf Channel.

Conducted in partnership between the Masters Tournament, the PGA of America and the USGA, Drive, Chip and Putt is a free, nationwide youth golf development program open to boys and girls, ages 7-15, in four age categories.

Tens of thousands of participants had the opportunity to qualify for the event, which began with 290 local qualifiers at courses across all 50 states last summer. From there, the top finishers advanced through 57 subregionals to one of 10 regional qualifiers at some of the nation's most acclaimed venues and championship sites. Finally, the 80 winners across the four age divisions earned a trip to Augusta National Golf Club to participate in the Drive, Chip and Putt National Finals on the eve of the 2019 Masters Tournament.

“This is certainly one of the most meaningful endeavors of Augusta National Golf Club, without a doubt,” said Fred Ridley, Chairman of Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters Tournament. “The goal of our three organizations [the Masters Tournament, PGA of America and USGA] is really the same, and that’s hopefully to inspire these young people to create passions so they make golf a lifelong endeavor.”

The four female champions were: Angela Zhang of Bellevue, Wash. (ages 7-9); Sophia Li of Fresh Meadows, N.Y. (ages 10-11); Yana Wilson of Henderson, Nev. (ages 12-13); Nicole Gal of Oakville, Ontario (ages 14-15).

The four male champions were: Conner Ford of Mount Vernon, Ky. (ages 7-9); Sahish Reddy of Duluth, Ga. (ages 10-11); Matthew Vital of Bethlehem, Pa. (ages 12-13); Treed Huang of Katy, Texas. (ages 14-15).

“If you want to be reminded of why we all do what we do, just come here some day and see how cool [Drive, Chip and Putt] is,” said Seth Waugh, CEO of the PGA of America. “It’s just a window to the game, and that’s what we’re all about. We’re all about trying to create opportunities for accessibility, to be welcoming, to be inclusive and bring it all together and hopefully end up here some day on the big course.”

“If you think about the essence of [Drive, Chip and Putt], it has exposed tens of thousands of kids to the game over the years, but it also inspires,” said Mike Davis, CEO of the USGA. “I think that’s in so many ways what an event like this does. It inspires greatness, it inspires young kids to be champions and we couldn’t be more proud.”

Click [here](#) for final results.

Points were awarded in each individual skill category (Drive, Chip and Putt), with the winner receiving 10 points, second 9 points, third 8 points, etc. The player with the most points following all three competitions was declared the overall winner of the age group.

In the drive portion, the better of two drives were used for the score. Each golfer then took two chips with the cumulative distance from the hole totaled to determine the score. Players then moved to Augusta National’s 18th green where they had two putts – from 15 and 30 feet – with the cumulative distance from the hole totaled to determine the score.

Here are individual age-group summaries:

Girls 7-9

With two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson looking on, Angela Zhang calmly started her morning at Augusta National by booming a drive of 189 yards, a division best. Zhang’s powerful swing set the tone for the day, as she went on to record one of the most dominant performances of the National Finals, scoring 29 out of 30 possible points – a new all-time division record – to claim the Girls 7-9 division title.

“At first I was nervous, but after driving and chipping it got better,” said Zhang. “I just tried to swing like I normally would.”

Girls 10-11

Eleven-year-old Sophia Li approached the National Finals with a focused, business-like resolve that paid off with a come-from-behind win in Augusta. Seven points off the lead as she approached the final hurdle, the putting skill discipline, Li made short work of Augusta National’s famed 18th green. The New York native holed her first putt of 30 feet, then proceeded to hole her second putt from 15 feet to win by one point, eliciting some of the loudest roars of the day.

“This is so exciting,” said Li. “I can’t find a word for it really. [Drive, Chip and Putt] is such a big event, and I was shocked to win it. It kind of feels like a responsibility now and like I’m responsible for all the other kids. I have to inspire them to follow their dreams.”

Girls 12-13

When Yana Wilson qualified for the Drive, Chip and Putt National Finals, she told her dad he would have the honor of being her caddie as part of an early birthday gift. Wilson delivered that and more with an even bigger present at Augusta National, winning her age division thanks to a terrific short game performance. After winning the chip discipline in a playoff against Chunya Boonta of Centennial, Colo., Wilson needed to land her final putt within 3’ 4” of the hole for the win. She did exactly that, finishing the day with an overall score of 28 out of 30 possible points and the victory.

“It feels amazing,” said Wilson after the win. “I never thought once in my life that I’d ever be a [Drive, Chip and Putt] champion but I’m super glad I am.”

Girls 14-15

Wearing her lucky yellow nail polish, Nicole Gal represented her native Canada proudly with one of the more thrilling victories of the 2019 Drive, Chip and Putt National Finals. In a tight race with four-time Drive, Chip and Putt National Finalist Megha Ganne of Holmdel, N.J., Gal found herself down five points heading to the 18th green. Thanks to a textbook putting stroke, Gal’s nerves of steel proved to be the difference, hitting both putts within a combined 2’ 4” of the hole for a one-point win. Fellow Canadian, and 2003 Masters champion, Mike Weir presented her the trophy during the awards presentation.

“Just to come here representing Canada was already really fun, so now that I won it’s even better,” said Gal. “There’s so many people at home cheering me on and supporting me so I know that they’re so excited.”

Boys 7-9

Nicknamed “Smoke” by a family friend for his famed distance off the tee, third-grader Conner Ford powered his way to a win during his first time at Augusta National. The Kentucky native won two out of the three skill disciplines en route to the overall title, claiming the drive discipline with a 204-yard drive and the putt discipline with a smooth putting stroke. Mike Thomas, father of 2017 PGA Championship winner Justin Thomas, is a swing coach for Ford.

When asked about celebration plans, Ford said, “I guess we’re going to go to a restaurant, take my family and eat.”

Boys 10-11

Making his second consecutive appearance at the Drive, Chip and Putt National Finals, Georgia native Sahish Reddy came prepared and ready to capitalize on his experience from a year ago. After a second-place finish in the drive discipline, a solid score in the chip discipline kept him in contention. On Augusta National’s 18th green, Reddy calmly holed a 30-foot putt to carry him to a one-point victory.

When asked about his favorite moment, Reddy said, “Probably making the first 30-foot putt. I am always going to remember that. I worked hard to come here and just putting on that green is such an accomplishment, so I feel great.”

Boys 12-13

As Matthew Vital made his way to the Drive, Chip and Putt awards ceremony, proud father Gus – a Haitian immigrant who introduced his son to golf in hopes the values of the game would make an impact on his life – watched a dream realized. After a strong performance in the drive discipline and a hole-out chip that resulted in a chip discipline win, Vital headed to the 18th green tied for first place with Ryder Cowan of Edmond, Okla. With a perfect read and putting stroke, Vital drained the 30-foot putt, followed by hitting the 15-foot putt 3’ 3” from the hole to secure the win.

“I think my chipping was most key because I chipped one in,” said Vital. “Once I chipped in, I was tied for first and then all I had to do was putt.”

Boys 14-15

A four-time Drive, Chip and Putt National Finalist and 2014 Drive, Chip and Putt National Champion (Boys 7-9 division), Treed Huang completed yet another storied finish on the grounds of Augusta National, winning his second overall title. Huang impressed in all three skill disciplines, most notably in the chip competition, where he hit both chip shots a cumulative distance of 2’ 3” from the hole – a new all-time division record – to put himself in first place. Huang knocked it to 11” for enough points in the putting skill to become only the second player to win repeat Drive, Chip and Putt titles.

“I think I definitely had more experience on the course,” said Huang. “I knew what to do for a couple of shots, and I think I played pretty well and I got the win.”

The seventh Drive, Chip and Putt begins this May with more than 300 free local qualifiers across the country. Registration is now open on drivechipandputt.com.

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About Drive, Chip and Putt

A joint initiative founded in 2013 by the Masters Tournament, USGA and the PGA of America, Drive, Chip and Putt is a free, nationwide junior golf development competition aimed at growing the game by focusing on the three fundamental skills employed in golf. By tapping the creative and competitive spirit of girls and boys ages 7-15, Drive, Chip and Putt provides aspiring junior golfers an opportunity to play with their peers in qualifiers around the country. Participants who advance through local, subregional and regional qualifying in each age/gender category earn a place in the National Finals, which is conducted at Augusta National Golf Club the Sunday before the Masters Tournament and broadcast live by Golf Channel. For more information, please visit: www.DriveChipandPutt.com.

About the Masters Tournament

The Masters Tournament Foundation, inspired by the enduring philosophies of Masters Tournament founders Bobby Jones and Clifford Roberts, is committed to promoting golf's domestic and international development through financial investment and active participation in initiatives aimed at preserving the traditions of the game and sharing its many virtues.

The Masters Tournament – since its very beginning – strives to provide added exposure to the game of golf and inspire interest in the sport worldwide. For more information about the Masters, visit masters.com.

About the USGA

The USGA celebrates, serves and advances the game of golf. Founded in 1894, we conduct many of golf's premier professional and amateur championships, including the U.S. Open and U.S. Women's Open. With The R&A, we govern the sport via a global set of playing, equipment and amateur status rules. Our operating jurisdiction for these governance functions is the United States, its territories and Mexico. The USGA Handicap System is utilized in more than 40 countries and our Course Rating System covers 95 percent of the world's golf courses, enabling all golfers to play on an equitable basis. The USGA campus in Liberty Corner, New Jersey, is home to the Association's Research and Test Center, where science and innovation are fueling a healthy and sustainable game for the future. The campus is also home to the USGA Golf Museum, where we honor the game by curating the world's most comprehensive archive of golf artifacts. To learn more, visit usga.org.

About the PGA of America

The PGA of America is one of the world's largest sports organizations, composed of PGA Professionals who daily work to grow interest and participation in the game of golf. For more information about the PGA of America, visit PGA.org, follow [@PGA](https://twitter.com/PGA) on Twitter and find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pgapga).

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