**2018**

Never making it to the PGA TOUR, Ken Tanigawa’s career experience competing at the Pebble Beach Golf Links was limited to the years in the ’80s and ’90s that he played in the California State Amateur Championship, the longtime home of the event.

But when the PGA TOUR Champions rookie from Los Angeles had a chance to win on the final hole of the PURE Insurance Championship Impacting The First Tee, he pounced on it like he was Mark O’Meara, or Phil Mickelson, who have won TOUR events at Pebble Beach five times.

Tanigawa rolled home a 35-foot eagle putt on the iconic 18th hole at Pebble Beach to turn a one-shot deficit into a one-shot victory, his first as a professional in a sporadic career that saw him play one year on the Web.com Tour and spend a few years on the mini-tour circuit.

“It’s just unreal,” Tanigawa said of his spectacular finish that saw him post a final score of 205, 10-under-par, overtaking two-time tournament winner Kirk Triplett and Marco Dawson, who both were in the clubhouse at 206. “I was just trying to hang in there,” Tanigawa said. “It means a lot. To me this is a magical place.”

Having kept his composure after giving up an early three-shot lead by struggling to a 4-over-par 40 on the front nine Sunday, Tanigawa still trailed by only one shot when he reached the 18th tee. He nailed a clutch, 315-yard drive, then reached the green with his second shot.

It was almost exactly how he played his final hole in Saturday’s second round, reaching the 18th at Poppy Hills Golf course in two. He made the putt Saturday from 30 feet – good for a two-shot lead going into Sunday. And with considerably more pressure, Tanigawa made it again.

Tanigawa said playing with junior partner Linette Jun, from The First Tee of the Silicon Valley, for all three rounds, was good for him. “It helped me relax, really,” he said. “Talking with her deflected some of the competitiveness. I think it’s fun.”

The pro-junior team competition finished 54 holes in a three-way tie at 199, 16-under-par. Tour pro Kevin Sutherland and his nephew Matthew Sutherland of the First Tee of Greater Sacramento (and son of former tour pro David Sutherland) survived a three-way scorecard playoff at 16-under-par 199 to become the first “family team” in tournament history to capture the pro-junior championship. Also finishing at 16-under were Caroline Wales of The First Tee of Coachella Valley with pro Stephen Ames, and Yena Jang also of The First Tee of Greater Sacramento with pro Duffy Waldorf.

John Tracy and Shawn O'Grady combined for a three-day total of 39-under-par 176 to take the 2018 team title by two strokes. After a first-round 62 at Pebble Beach, the duo charged to the front with a round of 15-under-par 56 – the low score of the tournament – Saturday at Poppy Hills and closed the deal with a 58, 14-under, Sunday at Pebble Beach.

The amateur field included a variety of luminaries, including actor Alfonso Ribeiro, musicians Pat Monahan and Kelly James, former 49ers star Harris Barton, Houston Astros owner Jim Crane, and Golf Channel travel guru Matt Ginella.

LEADERS – First Round: -6 David Frost (66 PB), -5 Olin Browne (67 PB), -5 Marco Dawson (67 PB), -5 Hale Irwin (67 PB), -5 Ken Tanigawa (67 PB). Second Round: -10 Ken Tanigawa (133/66 PH), -8 Marco Dawson (135/68 PH), -8 Tom Gillis (135/67 PH), -8 Gary Hallberg (135/67 PB), -7 Olin Browne (136/69 PH), -7 Kirk Triplett (136/68 PH), -7 Duffy Waldorf (136/68 PH).

CUT: The 36-hole cut to the low 50 and ties came at 2-over-par 145, with 51 pros advancing. The limit of 23 pro-junior teams made the cut at -7 (136). Six pro-junior teams among the eight tied at 136 were eliminated through the tiebreaker.

WEATHER: Friday – Early morning clouds, sunny skies in the afternoon, highs in the upper 50s; wind 8-15 mph. Saturday – Mostly sunny, high of 65; wind 8-15 mph. Sunday – Mostly sunny, high of 68; wind 8-15 mph.

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