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Making his point loud and clear

Coastal Empire
NATHAN DOMINITZ | Monday, January 14, 2008 at 12:30 am | (SEE ENHANCED VERSION)



World-ranked player repeats as Savannah open disc golf champion

There are disc golfers with reserved personalities who quietly go about their business on the course.

And then there is Brian Schweberger.

Whether it's making light of his rare poor shots or encouraging his playing partners through good times and bad, the world-ranked professional from Tarboro, N.C., has a running commentary for all to hear.

"That's just me; I'm very upbeat," said Schweberger, who won the 2002 sportsmanship award on the Professional Disc Golf Association Tour. "That's better than winning any world championship because my peers voted for me."

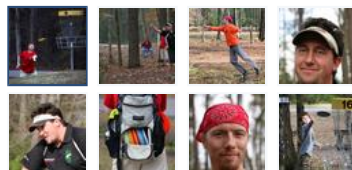
Ranked No. 20 in the world with a 1,021 rating (1,000-plus is elite), he might test that stance some day, but presently he can claim to be Savannah's champion.

Schweberger successfully defended his Pro Open division title Sunday at the fourth annual Savannah Open Disc Golf Tournament at Tom Triplett Park in Pooler.

As occurred at the 2007 Open, he edged Savannah's Aaron Thomas by one stroke, but this time they required two holes of a sudden-death playoff. Schweberger, a native of Syracuse, N.Y., recorded his 54th tournament title in about 10 years of touring, and improved to 10-1 in playoffs.

"I like the pressure," said Schweberger, 34, who openly rooted for Thomas to sink a putt on the final hole of regulation to force more play. "I like the competition."

Matt Peckham of Matthews, N.C., tosses a putt at the sixth hole during the Savannah Open Disc Golf Tournament on Sunday. (Alison Behr/For the Savannah Morning News)



Last year, Schweberger's score of 162 was worth \$375, and Thomas, at 163, took \$175 to his new Savannah home. On Sunday, they had tied at 18-under 170 after three 19-hole rounds and agreed to split the \$790 purse for first- and second-place finishers instead of fighting for the \$475 top prize.

"We were playing for the trophy," said Thomas, 29.

With all other play concluded, they had the biggest gallery of the weekend watching as they started at No. 1. Schweberger's tee shot was solid; Thomas hit a tree. Schweberger's birdie attempt bounded off the basket, and he laughed at the missed chance. He lauded Thomas' stellar recovery for par.

Schweberger took away any doubt on the second playoff hole, firing a tee shot so deep through the congestion of trees that the crowd roared in admiration.

"He's a beast. He really throws it hard," Thomas said.

"It was the first time I got past that middle tree all weekend," Schweberger said. "That put a lot of pressure on him."

When Thomas's tee shot hit a tree and fell well short, his "ouch" was an understatement. After Thomas took his second and third shots to get near the hole, Schweberger nailed a 28-footer for birdie and the tournament victory.

Fight to the finish

Thomas had tried to avoid a playoff, of course, after entering the third round with a one-stroke lead at 14-under

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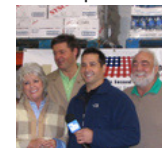
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109 over [Schweberger](#) and [Jonas Card](#) of [Charleston, S.C.](#) The trio was paired with [Josh Childs](#) of [Augusta](#) and [Matt Peckham](#) of [Charlotte, N.C.](#), both at 111.

Playing from the championship tees on a very long par-65 course, no player was able to separate from the pack. Birdies were infrequent compared to the way this group had manhandled the course in round two, played as a par 58 from shorter [tees](#). [Thomas](#) and [Schweberger](#) held form on the first nine holes of round 3, each notching a 30 with two birdies. [Schweberger](#) birdied par-4 No. 10 to tie for the lead, then gave it back with a bogey on the par-3 No. 12. He recovered with a birdie on par-4 No. 14.

[Thomas](#) responded with a pair of two-shot birdies on Nos. 15 and 16. [Schweberger](#) sensed he was running out of time, emoting a "game over" after following the left-handed [Thomas'](#) straight tee shot at No. 16 with his own shot into the woods.

"He was 2-up with the remaining holes," Schweberger said later. "It wasn't looking good. The holes we had to finish on are favorable for a lefty."

[Thomas](#) was two shots ahead of [Schweberger](#) when both made par on No. 17. The tree-laden par-3 No. 18, however, was [Thomas'](#) downfall. His tee shot was too strong and caught a tree, ricocheting so far right that the disc went out of bounds, over the path and into the lake.

[Thomas](#) took a penalty stroke, made a nice recovery to the green and a short putt for a 4. [Thomas](#), meanwhile, gained two strokes with an impressive jump putt from about 36 feet out.

"Hole 18 really got me," [Thomas](#) said. "I had him. All I had to do was play a safe shot. I decided to go for it. It's just a risky shot, not an easy shot for a left-hander." [Thomas](#) said he hoped to learn from this strategic error. "I didn't have any foresight," he said.

He still had the par-3 No. 19, a temporary hole added to accommodate the tournament's 95-player, all-division field.

[Schweberger](#) had the first tee shot, but his powerful overhand throw bounced into the fringe of weeds along the roadside hole's fairway. [Thomas](#) then placed an excellent tee shot to about 20 feet from the hole for an even-better birdie opportunity.

[Schweberger](#) went first. With his feet sunk in about four feet below ground level, he angled in an uphill shot that crashed through the chains and into the basket for birdie.

[Thomas](#) came through with a clutch birdie, forcing the playoff.

"Aaron's a good player," Schweberger said. "He's up and coming. I think he's got a great chance to improve his game to get to the next level.

"It's tough for a local to win at his home course," Schweberger added. "You know every idiosyncrasy. You expect to play well."

The tables will be turned somewhat next weekend, when [Thomas](#) visits [Schweberger's](#) home state for the [Raleigh \(N.C.\)](#) Winter Jam tournament.

Other top performances

[Jonathan Pierce](#), 21, of [Alpharetta](#), placed third with a total of 174 in his first Savannah Open.

The Pro Women's winner, [Sarah Stanhope](#), was a [PDGA](#) tour rookie of the year nominee in 2007. Ranked ninth in the world with a 924 rating, [Stanhope](#) shot a 201 and collected \$105, which could help pay for a replacement for her wet, muddied shoes.

"It was great fun," said [Stanhope](#), 26, of [Easley, S.C.](#) "This is a really good course. The courses around my area aren't this long."

The Pro Masters (40 and older) winner, [Patrick Pitts](#) of [Germantown, Md.](#), showed what a player of his rating (1,004) can do. He shot 170, the same score as [Schweberger](#) and [Thomas](#). [Pitts](#) earned \$320 for his efforts.

Two Savannah men collected aces on Saturday. [Mike Hillard](#), 52, recorded his fourth career hole-in-one on No. 3, 175-foot par-3. Rich Fannin, 40, who had aced that hole about two years ago, got his tournament hole-in-one on No. 17.

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## Savannah Open Disc Golf Tournament

### Final results

3 rounds of 19 holes, par 188 at Tom Triplett Park in Pooler

#### Open Pro division

1. Brian Schweberger (winner in two-hole playoff), Aaron Thomas 170 (\$395 each); 3. Jonathan Pierce 174 (\$240), 4. Jonas Card, Josh Childs, Matt Peckham, Sjur Soleng, Dana Vicich, 176 (\$132); 9. Jacky Logan 179 (\$80); 10. Jeff Byrk 180 (\$75); 11. Tradd Rodenberg 182 (\$65); 12. Corey Wisenburt 183; 13. Shawn Lenkiewicz 186; 14. Baxter Frost, David Wheeler 187, 16. Trey Johnson 190; 17. Zeb Cambell 194; 18. Jonathan Reppenhausen, Aaron Cunningham, 196; 20. Rob McElreath 197; 21. Jason Allind 200; 22. Andrew Duke 203; 23. Phonepasong Arunleut 210; 24. Tom Kim DNF.

#### Pro Masters

1. Patrick Pitts 170 (\$320); 2. Michael Kernan 185 (\$225); 3. Chris Lenkiewicz 186 (\$150); 4. J.T. Rosenthal, Brian Hoeniger 187 (\$102.50); 6. Greg Campbell (\$65), Morgan Yearty 191; 8. Kirk Yoo 192; 9. Alan Beaver 193; 10. Barry Hancock, Bob Satter, Keith Johnson, 194; 13. Toni Moussakhani 205; 14. Coleman Thompson 210.

#### Pro Women

1. Sarah Stanhope 201 (\$105), 2. Karen Jaskolka 245 (\$35).

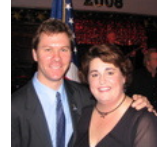
#### Advanced Women

1. Rachel Conley 239; 2. Julie Neugebauer 164; 3. Lauren Land 267.

#### Advanced

1. Leigh Smith 180; 2. Rich Burnette 192; 3. B.J. Hancock 194; 4. Casey Wisenburt, Rick Stepp 195; 6. Eric Jones 197; 7. Marc Beringson 199; 8. Jason Bradshaw 200; 9. Joe Checorski 201; 10. Ricky Manus 204; 11. Pete McPherson 205; 12. Jay Phillips, Stuart Krall 206; 14. Ben Ward 207; 15. Jeff Gomez 209; 16. Michael Shugart 213; 17. Dan Checorski, Joe Jordan 215; 19. Stephen Brown 216; 20. Andrew Acuff 218; 21. Andy Young 222; 22. Matthew Steric 229; 23. Tommy Blackstock 230.

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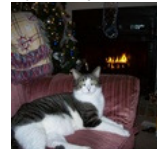


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Advanced Masters

1. Matt Flynn 202; 2. Chris Jaskolka 205; 3. George Shaw 209.

Advanced Grand Masters

1. Mike Hillard 207; 2. Paul Neugebauer 225.

Intermediate

1. Joe Narchione, Connor Thompson 171; 3. Jim Cole 175; 4. Levi Daniel 176; 4. Trevor Kruse 181; 5. Justin Wolfe, Kevin Reilly 184; 7. Lee Minehart 186; 8. Rich Fannin 187, 9. Danny Newton, Brian Jolly 190; 11. Johnny Williams 195; 12. Craig Wrenn 197; 13. Ernest Vera 198; 14. Thomas Goble 201; 15. Brian Shipley 203; 16. Gordon Marshall III 215; 17. William Haga 232.

Junior Under-16

1. Zackary Hancock 197; 2. Tucker Williams 222; 3. Jeffrey Roth 265.

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