

Earle assaults Bay Hill course

By Scott Kauffman
of The Sentinel Staff

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Key Biscayne golfer George Earle called it a little personal payback.

Others called it simply sensational.

Earle, 24, dropped a first-round bomb on his fellow competitors Thursday at the 81st Florida State Amateur Championship, firing a bogey-free, 5-under-par 67 at the Bay Hill Club.

"I'm not going to complain," said Earle, who shot 82-78 at the U.S. Open Sectional qualifier at Bay Hill on June 8. "If I stay bogey free all weekend, that'll be ridiculous on a course like this."

Earle has a two-stroke lead on Winter Park's David Boesel, who shot 69 after qualifying for the tournament with even-par 72 at Timacuan in Lake Mary on a borrowed set of clubs and street shoes.

Boesel had to rent his equipment at Timacuan because he locked his car keys and equipment in the trunk of his car. On Thursday, Boesel's regular set of clubs worked just fine.

"It's nice to get off to a good start," said Boesel, a 48-year-old stockbroker.

Earle played the course to near perfection.

He birdied two par 4s and two par 5s, and topped off his round with a birdie on the par-3 17th, knocking in a 25-footer.

Earle nearly birdied three other holes, including the par-4 18th when he burned the edge of the cup from 10 feet.

It was quite a turnaround from Earle's previous experiences at Bay Hill. During his rounds at the U.S. Open Sectional, he made double and quadruple bogey on Nos. 10 and 11. At Wednesday's practice round, he made triple and double.

"It was a little payback," Earle said. "I didn't expect to shoot 67, but I expected to do much better (than last time)."

"It was a personal thing that I could play here."

Another local golfer within striking distance is former Dr. Phillips High standout Matt Borchert. Borchert, who is under the tutelage of Bay Hill's Dick Tiddy, shot even-par 72.

"I thought it was a pretty good score until I came in here," he said, referring to Earle's round of 67.

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State Am field gets tough course

Bay Hill Club received 750 entries for the four-day tournament, which opens today.

By Scott Kauffman

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

The Bay Hill Club will be a busy place beginning today.

The local golf course is the site of this year's Florida State Amateur Championship, the 81st installment of the prestigious golf tournament.

The magnitude of the four-day tournament and Bay Hill's reputation attracted 750 entries, the second-most ever.

In 1991, the state amateur had 900 entries at Black Diamond Ranch in Lecanto.

This year's field will be as tough as ever. Among this year's participants:

■ Defending champ Mark Leetzow, who is trying to become the eighth person in the history of the tournament to repeat.

■ Florida State golfer Steve Bradley, the 1996 state winner.

■ Tampa's Doug LaCrosse, the 1992 champion.

Some of the top local competitors are Longwood's Brian Opal, Winter Park's David Boesel and Jim Byington, Orlando's Patrick Maloney, Ocoee's Bill Howell, Bay Hill member Del Wood and Apopka's Steve Riviere.

Opal was the top qualifier of the bunch, shooting 2-under 69 at the recent qualifier at Timacuan Golf and Country Club.

He was the only golfer to break 70 among the 104-player field.

He is up to the challenge.

"This is probably one of the best courses in Florida. It has a PGA Tour stop. . . everybody wants to play there," said Opal, who tied for 12th at the recent City of Orlando Amateur Championship. "They do have a very good field this year. Being from Orlando, I'd personally like to win it in front of friends and family."

"Even par is always a good score out there. My friend said it'll be like a U.S. Open test for a lot of amateurs."

Boesel, who shot 72 with a borrowed set of clubs and street shoes, has had success at the state amateur in years past.

He was tied for third at Bear

The facts

■ **WHAT:** 81st Florida State Amateur Championship.

■ **WHEN:** Thursday through Sunday.

■ **WHO:** 750 of Florida's top golfers.

■ **WHERE:** Bay Hill Club.

Lakes in West Palm Beach in 1990 and tied for seventh at Black Diamond in '91.

In all, 10 of the top 13 finishers from last year's tournament are back.

Of the three not returning, two turned professional: Pleasant Hughes and former West Orange High standout Ryan Dillon.

"Some competitors have said this is one of the toughest fields," said Chris Lowery, an official with the Florida State Golf Association. "Being played at Bay Hill is always a nice draw. . . This is one of the strongest in the nation, just because of the depth. It's a year-round sport here."

This marks the sixth time Bay Hill has hosted the state amateur, and the first time since 1993, when Chris Couch won the event by 14 strokes.

Couch ended up winning the event the next year, too, becoming the last person to win back-to-back titles.

"Bay Hill is a place traditionally where the winner runs away with it," Lowery pointed out.

The list of state amateur winners at Bay Hill is an impressive one, including PGA Tour players Gary Koch in 1972 and Lee Rinker in '82.

In 1965, the first time Bay Hill hosted the tournament, future tour player Bob Murphy Jr. was the winner.

The course record is 9-under 63, established by Al Johns of Punta Gorda in opening-round action of the 1977 tournament. Johns ended up finishing second at 294 (63-80-72-79).

The all-time state amateur record is 274, set by Rick Pearson at Feather Sound Country Club in 1980. Pearson shot 66-68-70-70.

The stroke-play tournament was open to amateur golfers with a United States Golf Association handicap of 11.4 or better.

The starting field of 105 will be cut to the low 70 scores, plus ties, after the second round.

2 Amateur golfers are used to drill

□ George Earle II and David Diel pair so often that they should feel right at home as they try to catch Mark Boldin.

By Rex Hoggard

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

Today's final round of the Florida State Amateur Championship is shaping up like many Sunday links outings for George Earle II and David Diel.

In fact, other than the venue — Bay Hill Club instead of Miami's Riviera Country Club — and the 70 other guys vying for the title, the round could be one of many for the two longtime sparring partners.

"Every day, *every day* we play together," said Diel, the only player to break 70 Saturday. "The matches between us are so even, it's not funny."

Diel, 18, moved to two strokes of Sarasota's Mark Boldin after shooting 3-under-par 69. Earle, who led the event through the first two rounds, is one behind Diel.

"If I can't win, I want him to," Earle said. "I totally expect that out of him [Diel]. He hits the ball so well."

Earle, 24, dropped from his

spot atop the field with 78 Saturday after two rounds at or below par.

"I couldn't get any confidence with my putter," Earle said. "I didn't hit the ball badly, and I'm still in there. That's all that counts."

Both will be chasing Boldin, who took the lead at the 81st State Amateur with 70 for a three-round total of 214.

Boldin's bogey-free round included two birdies, including one at No. 6, a par 5 that is considered the toughest hole on the course.

"I can get it there in two, but I don't want to chance it," Boldin said of the hole that wraps nearly halfway around a lake.

"It's a long way around, and I realized that my best bet was to just play it in three and hope for the best."

Boldin's other birdie came at No. 12.

Defending champion Mark Leetzow, from Sarasota, is tied with Diel and Rick Woulfe at 216 after shooting 71.

"Whenever you've won an event, there is a certain amount of confidence that you can do it again," said Leetzow, winner of two of the last three state amateur titles.

Winter Park's David Boesel dropped into a tie for sixth after struggling to 6-over 42 on the front. He shot 77—218.

Earle keeps Amateur lead

By Scott Kauffman
of The Sentinel Staff

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George Earle II attended the University of Michigan and made the golf team, but he never got a chance to play in any matches.

The golfer who couldn't make the cut at Michigan looks pretty good at Bay Hill Club, though.

Earle, the first-round leader in the 81st Florida State Amateur Championship, maintained his lead Friday, shooting even-par 72. Earle, who shot 67 Thursday, was at 5-under-par 139, two shots ahead of Winter Park's David Boesel. Boesel also shot 72.

Earle, 24, a native of Key Biscayne, had an excellent chance to extend his lead when he approached the par-4 18th hole at 2 under for the day. He hit a 290-yard drive down the middle of the fairway, but his approach into a strong wind from 158 yards landed in a water hazard off the front of the green.

After taking a penalty, Earle wound up with double bogey.

"Yesterday (Thursday) was greens in regulation; today was up and down," said Earle, who had birdies on Nos. 2, 14 and 16. "I'm just going to go in like I'm even every day. I have to keep that mentality like I'm chasing the leader."

One other Central Florida golfer is within striking distance. Austin Knowles, a former West Orange High standout and current University of Florida golfer, is tied for fourth with five others at 2-over 144. Knowles used excellent putting to finish with 2-under 70.

One stroke behind the group at 144 is defending champion Mark Leetzow of Sarasota. Leetzow also

had trouble at 18. He was 3 under at the time but shot quadruple bogey, finishing at 73.

"I've played good for 35 holes so far," said Leetzow, who is shooting for his third title in four years. "The course is in great shape. We've still got 36 holes left in the golf tournament."

After beginning with 105 golfers, 72 players made the cut of 159.

Owen posts ideal score

By Scott Kauffman
of The Sentinel Staff

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Going into the 81st Florida State Amateur Championship at Bay Hill Club, Daniel Owen figured par 288 would win the tournament.

"I was talking to the defending champion Thursday morning and said, 'If I can shoot 288, I'll take it,'" Owen said. "If somebody beats me, I'll pat 'em on the back."

On Sunday, the Ocala resident didn't have to pat any backs. Owen shot a final-round 2-under 70 to finish at 288, clinching his first state amateur title by one stroke over third-round leader Mark Boldin.

After tying for sixth last year and placing runner-up in 1996, Owen, 30, was elated to win Florida's oldest continuous sporting event.

"I had a little bit of a mission," said Owen, who sells real estate in Ocala. "I got excited when I found out Bay Hill was the course. The (PGA) Tour is played here, and it's a great golf course. I've played well the last couple years and wanted to make something happen."

That is exactly what he did down the stretch, making two sand saves on the final two holes for par.

Meanwhile, Boldin, who held a 4-stroke advantage going into the final round, finished 3-over 75 and came up short when he had three opportunities to tie Owen on the final three holes. On the par-5 16th, Boldin, a 24-year-old employee of Rolling Green Golf Course in Sarasota, missed a birdie putt from 15 feet when it stopped inches from the cup. On the par-3 17th, he missed another birdie putt inside 7 feet. Then, on the par-4 18th, with Owen watching, Boldin's birdie attempt from 12 feet veered off a couple inches to the right.

"I couldn't make a putt," Boldin said.

Winter Garden's Austin Knowles, a University of Florida golfer, made five birdies, to finish at 2-under 70 for the day and tied for third overall at 291.

DANIEL OWEN CLAIMS THE FLORIDA STATE AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

June 28, 1998

ORLANDO, Fla. - Ocala's Daniel Owen shot a final-round 70 to claim the 81st Florida State Amateur Championship by one stroke. Sarasota's Mark Boldin, who led after the third round, finished in second after shooting a 75 at the Bay Hill Club in Orlando.

Owen started the day in sixth place with four strokes separating him and the leaders. But the tide quickly turned with Owen making a move early in the final round.

"I was 2-under for the day after the sixth hole," the 30-year old real estate salesman said, "and everybody else had bad starts. From that point, I started feeling pretty good about my chances."

Boldin fell apart on the front making the turn at 4-over on the day. His two-shot lead heading into the final round had slowly diminished. Eighteen-year old David Diel of Miami and defending champion Mark Leetzow, who were also in the final grouping of the day, also having trouble on the front, so that opened the door for the rest of the field.

"On Thursday before play, I was talking to Mark Leetzow and told him, 'If I could shoot 288 for the championship, I'd take it,'" Owen said. "If somebody beats me, pat 'em on the back, because I think par is going to win this."

And par is what it took to win. The demanding Bay Hill course caused many golfers to post some high numbers. Winter Garden's Austin Knowles, who recorded a nine on Bay Hill's tough par-4 finishing hole in round three, might have won the championship if it wasn't for that one bad hole.

"If I just make a bogey at 18 yesterday, I win the championship," Knowles said after finishing his final round in which he fired a 2-under 70 to fall short of Owen by just three strokes.

Owen held a two-shot lead at 1-under after making birdie on the 350-yard, par-4 thirteenth, but quickly fell back to even with a bogey on the 180-yard par-3 fourteenth. Owen played consistent golf the rest of his round to finish at even and a group ahead of Boldin.

Boldin seemed find his game in the final nine holes, but couldn't manage to sink a putt. On the sixteenth, he left his birdie putt just inches short, and he missed a makeable 7-footer on the seventeenth. Then, on the tough finishing hole, he slid a tricky 12-footer to the right to give Owen the title.

"I had lots of good chances," Boldin said, "but I just couldn't get any in. All the putts were falling during the first three rounds, but I just couldn't make one today."

Owen, who finished sixth in last year's State Amateur and runner-up in 1996, received a crystal vase and will have his name inscribed on the permanent Clarence Camp Championship Bowl.

HOLDIN LEADS HEADING INTO THE FINAL ROUND OF THE FLORIDA STATE AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

JUNE 27, 1998

ORLANDO, Fla. — Sarasota's Mark Boldin fired a 2-under 70 for a 214 total to lead by two strokes after the third round of the 81st Florida State Amateur Championship at the Bay Hill Club in Orlando. Miami's David Diel, defending champion Mark Leetzow and Ft. Lauderdale's Rick Woulfe are two strokes back at 216.

Boldin, who shot 72 during his first two rounds, made two birdies during his bogey-free third round. With strong putting, the 24-year old has stayed in contention. During his third round, he hit nine fairways and 11 greens. He had three sand saves to go along with his 29 putts.

"I just wanted to make pars," Boldin said.

That statement was reiterated by Sarasota's Leetzow after his 1-under third round. "Even par is a good score on this golf course. The course is so hard, if you miss a shot, you are going to pay for it."

The low round the day came from 18-year old David Diel. Diel's 69 placed him at even for the tournament and two behind Boldin.

"I hit the ball great all day," Diel said. "I putted well - that was the key for me. I finished with 29 putts and that's counting fringes."

Diel, who will be attending Samford University in Alabama in the fall, drained three straight birdies on the fifth, sixth, and seventh holes, with the birdie putt at number seven falling from 35 feet away.

"I changed putters last night," Diel said. "I was hoping that a heavier putter would help me."

Key Biscayne's George Earle II, who had been leading since the first round, faltered in his third round with a 6-over 78 to place him three shots behind Boldin.

"I played horrible today," Earle said. "I didn't get any birdies. I didn't have any confidence in my putter today. It was just lagging. But, I'm still in it though."

Round three begins tomorrow at 7:30 a.m. with the leaders set to begin at 9:14 a.m. An awards ceremony will follow play in which the champion will receive the Clarence Camp Championship Bowl.

EARLE CONTINUES TO LEAD AFTER THE SECOND ROUND OF THE FLORIDA STATE AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

June 26, 1998

ORLANDO, Fla. — Key Biscayne's George Earle II followed his career-low 67 in the first round with an even-par 72 today to hold his two-stroke lead after the second round of the Florida State Amateur Championship at the Bay Hill Club in Orlando. Winter Park's David Boesel stayed two strokes back with a 72 of his own.

Earle, who was the epitome of consistency yesterday, scrambled during his round today. He missed the first five greens, but managed to make par on each one. He birdied the sixth-hole by knocking a 75-yard shot just eight inches away. Earle made his first bogey of the championship on the eighth hole. A 25-foot birdie putt on the fourth hole and an eight-foot birdie putt on the sixteenth hole placed him 7-under for the championship with Bay Hill's tough finishing holes ahead.

"I hit a three-iron on 17, and I blocked it so badly," Earle said. "I was right of the water under some pines. My pitch hit the fringe, released and ended up eight feet from the hole."

Earle saved par, but was not as fortunate on the tough 440-yard, par four eighteenth. After a drive that left him 158 yards to the front of the green, Earle found the "Devil's Bathtub," the water to the right of the kidney-shaped green. Earle ended with a double bogey on the final hole.

Boesel made two birdies and two bogeys on the front, then made par on every hole on the back.

"I scored today, but didn't hit it close on the back side," Boesel said. "My driver is not as good as it has been, but if I get that going, I like my chances."

Clearwater's Nike Natale shot a 2-under 70 for a 143 total to move into third on his own. Six golfers, including 1991 champion Doug LaCrosse, are five strokes behind Earle at 144.

Seventy-two players had a score of 159 or better and made the cut.

Round three begins for tomorrow at 7:30 a.m. with the leaders set to begin at 9:14 a.m.

EARLE LEADS AFTER THE FIRST ROUND OF THE FLORIDA STATE AMATEUR

June 25, 1998

ORLANDO, Fla. - Key Biscayne 's George Earle II fired a career-low 67 to lead after the first round of the 81't Florida State Amateur Championship at the Bay Hill Club in Orlando. His 34-33--67 placed him two strokes ahead of Winter Park's David Boesel.

Earle made five birdies during his bogey-free round. After birdies at the par-5 sixth, the par 4 ninth and the par-4 thirteenth, Earle closed with two birdies on the final three holes. After reaching the

517-yard sixteenth hole in two, he lipped a 20-foot eagle putt, but made the birdie. Earle then sank a 25-foot putt for birdie on the tough 190-yard par three seventeenth.

"I shot 82-78 here three weeks ago at the U.S. Open Sectional," the 24-year old Earle said, "This morning I said to myself, 'It's time for a little payback. I have to play well.'"

Boesel, who qualified for the tournament with some rented clubs, managed to shoot 36-33-69 with his own clubs.

"It's nice to get off to a good start," the 48-year old stockbroker said, "The fairways are liberal here, so if you can hit your irons well, you can bring in a good score."

Defending champion Mark Leetzow shot 36-36--72 with two bogeys and two birdies.

"There was no excitement out there today," Leetzow said about his round. "I hit a lot of putts where I wanted to, but nothing went in. I just wanted to shoot a good score. You can't win the tournament today, but you sure can lose it."

Palm City's Andy Spears, Tampa's Brett Hitchcock, and Miami's Jim Kiely shot 2-under 70's in their first round. Former champion's Doug LaCrosse (1992) and Steve Bradley (1996) shot a 1-over 73 and a 6-over 78 respectively.

Round two begins tomorrow at 7:30 a.m. The top 70 plus ties will advance to the weekend.

**81st FLORIDA STATE AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 25-28, 1998
Bay Hill Club**

1 Daniel Owen	Ocala	73	74	71	70	288
2 Mark Boldin	Sarasota	72	72	70	75	239
3 Austin Knowles	Winter Garden	74	70	77	70	291
3 Mark Leetzow	Sarasota	72	73	71	75	291
5 John Corzilius	Nokomis	71	74	73	74	292
6 David Boesel	Winter Park	69	72	77	75	293
6 Rick Woulfe	Fort Lauderdale	72	72	72	77	293
8 Matthew Saglio	Clearwater	70	71	75	72	294
8 Brett Hitchcock	Tampa	70	74	74	75	294
8 David Diel	Miami	73	74	69	78	294
11 Garrett Morrison	Jacksonville	82	71	72	70	295
11 Andy Spears	Palm City	70	77	74	74	295

11 Doug Lacrosse	Tampa	73	71	76	75	295
11 Mike Natale	Clearwater	73	70	76	76	295
11 George Earle	Key Biscayne	67	72	78	78	295
16 Brian Opal	Longwood	78	75	75	70	298
16 Akio Sadakata	Tampa	76	73	70	74	298
18 Scott Smith	Ponte Vedra Beach	73	78	74	74	299
18 Timothy Vola	North Palm Beach	77	75	74	73	299
18 Sal Spallone	Vero Beach	74	75	73	76	299
21 Don Whittemore	Temple Terrace	74	76	75	75	300
22 Wyatt Meyer	Tampa	75	75	77	73	301
22 Kelly Gosse	Hernando	75	72	81	73	301
22 David Anthony	Jacksonville	75	75	77	74	301
22 Kevin Mock	Tampa	74	10	50	77	301
22 Kevin Dyer	Clearwater	77	73	74	77	301
22 Steve Bradley	Gainesville	78	73	72	78	301
28 James Taylor	Plant City	77	77	74	74	302
28 Matt Borchert	Orlando	72	78	73	79	302
28 Jim Kiel	Miami	70	77	76	79	302
28 Camilo Benedetti	Gainesville	74	73	74	81	302
32 Cary Geensburg	Boca Raton	82	73	75	73	303
33 Kevin Zuelch	Key West	73	75	80	77	305
33 Gary Keymont	Orlando	79	76	75	75	305
33 Ken Dawson	Fort Lauderdale	74	73	79	79	305
33 Nathan Bertsch	Gulf Breeze	76	82	72	75	305
33 Peter Hartmann	Fort Myers	79	74	78	74	305
33 Kipp Minter	Orlando	79	77	78	74	305
39 Peter Williams	Orlando	77	80	76	73	306
39 Denny Allen	Pine Ridge	79	78	77	72	306
39 Del Wood	Windermere	79	72	70	85	306
42 Jim Patrone	Boca Eaton	74	84	75	74	307
42 Steven Sim	Fort Lauderdale	80	74	74	79	307
42 Rick Othmer	West Palm Belch	84	74	71	78	307

42 Steve Earsley	Wellington	73	80	78	76	307
42 Sean O'Malia	Clearwater	81	76	78	72	307
47 Patrick Maloney	Orlando	76	80	79	73	308
47 David Thielen	Ft. Meyers	74	77	77	80	308
49 Victor Lohman	Ormond Reach	72	75	81	81	309
49 Robert Jacks	Fort Myers	78	78	73	80	309
49 Harley Henning	West Palm Reach	76	75	80	78	309
52 David Niles	Tarpon Springs	81	70	79	80	310
52 Christian Smith	Jacksonville	74	73	80	83	310
52 Rob Madigan	Orlando	77	80	73	80	310
55 Dustin Atkatz	Tampa	79	79	73	80	311
56 Jim Stone	Bradenton	77	82	76	77	312
57 Chris Watson	Orange Park	78	76	84	75	313
57 Paul Piccolo	Palm City	80	79	78	76	313
59 Rob Glisson	Tampa	74	83	79	78	314
59 Rick Spears	Palm City	76	79	82	77	314
61 Jeff Lindquist	Orlando	76	78	75	86	315
61 Jim Byington	Winter Park	78	80	77	80	315
61 Jeff Cochran	Orlando	79	76	81	79	315
61 Jamie Krone	Boca Raton	76	81	80	78	315
65 Mike Wallen	Apopka	78	79	83	77	317
66 John Broderick	Palm Beach Gardens	75	80	83	83	321
67 Jesse Eisenman	West Palm Beach	74	81	84	84	323
67 Maris Kirschbaum	Sunrise	81	77	84	81	323
69 Jeff Sunday	Orlando	80	79	83	82	324

-----MISSED CUT-----

Blair Jarrard	Bunnell	76	84	160
Chuck Gould	Vero Beach	81	79	160
Neil Waite	Lakeland	81	80	161
Brian Ayers	Valrico	83	78	161
Lee Bennett	Sarasota	86	75	161

Chris Covert	Clearwater	78	83	161
Jack Jackson	Winter Park	79	82	161
Brad Schwartz	New Smyrna Beach	79	83	162
Jan Havmoeller	Miami	78	84	162
Peter Jones	Clearwater	83	79	162
Andrew Whited	Niceville	84	79	163
Brent Mook-Sang	Valrico	80	83	163
Dan Holland	St. Petersburg	82	81	163
Rusty Napier	Valrico	82	82	164
Mike Place	Seminole	84	80	164
Melvin Boner	West Palm Beach	84	81	165
James Kemp	Pensacola	85	81	166
Kerry Schwencke	Boca Raton	83	84	167
Don Dillon	Plantation	84	83	167
Chris Hatfield	West Palm Beach	82	86	168
Dan Winters	Windermere	88	82	170
Gary Wright	Lake Mary	83	87	170
Matt Eastman	West Palm Beach	88	83	171
William Howell	Ocoee	82	90	172
Brendan Heslin	West Palm Beach	89	83	172
William Wotus	Sanford	93	81	174
Clark Gnann	Boca Raton	86	91	177