

NUMBER EIGHT BY GEORGE!

George Zahringer III is this year's MGA Player of the Year, taking the title a record eighth time

by Robin McMillan

In the first round of this year's U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship at the Detroit Golf Club, George Zahringer III beat Paul Weinhold of Eugene, Oregon on the 19th hole. In the second round, Zahringer lost to Jim Kania of Philadelphia by 2 and 1. It was a tough loss for Zahringer. He played the first 15 holes in two under par, while Kania put together 11 one-putt greens.

But in MGA circles, Zahringer's loss didn't matter, for winning his first-round match gave Zahringer the points he needed to become the MGA's 1992 Player of the Year in one of the closest races ever. Zahringer now has won the title a record eight times.

Although Zahringer started the year strongly, by winning both the New York City Amateur at La Tourette Golf Club in Staten Island, NY, and the Westchester Amateur at The Stanwich Club in Greenwich, CT, the early pace was set by Mike Muehr of Roxiticus Golf Club in Mendham, NJ. The junior from Duke University won both the Ike and the Met Amateur. Zahringer, meanwhile, failed to qualify for the Met Amateur then missed the Met Open (because of a prior commitment at the Republican National Convention!).

But Zahringer began his surge for Player-of-the-Year honors in the U.S. Amateur Championship at Muirfield Village Golf Club, Jack Nicklaus' splendid layout outside Columbus, Ohio. He was third low qualifier and went on to reach the quarter-finals, the farthest he'd ever advanced in the Amateur. That final-eight finish earned him 275 Player-of-the-Year points, the largest sin-

gle catch of the year (next best was Mike Meehan of Glen Cove Golf Club in Glen Cove, NY, who won 220 points for reaching the quarter-finals of the British Amateur), and could earn Zahringer consideration for next year's U.S. Walker Cup team.

The surprising aspect to Zahringer's year was that he prevailed despite getting off to a late start. Work commitments prevented him from entering the Richardson, Travis or Havemeyer tournaments and, says Zahringer, "That did make me a little rusty and put me at a bit of a disadvantage, especially in the New York City Amateur as it draws such a strong field. But I suppose I won thanks to a little bit of luck and a little bit of experience."

Zahringer won the Westchester Amateur in part because he had a lot of experience—he's a member at Stanwich. In fact, his 11 and 10 victory over Todd Pike of The Apawamis Club in Rye, NY, is the most resounding win in the tournament record books.

Zahringer might have added the Ike to his cache had it not been for his first round of 75 that left him six strokes off the lead. But he closed with 67-68 to register the low score for the final 36 holes and a second-place finish behind Muehr. "There was just too much ground to make up," he said. "It was that simple." (An interesting sidenote to the Ike: In 1985, Zahringer, like Muehr,



The Player of the Year at work during the Ike.

won two majors, in his case the Met Open and Amateur. But, like Muehr, he was not crowned Player of the Year; Mark Trauner, who performed well in USGA events, was.)

Also performing well during the year were Jerry Courville, Jr., who reached the quarter-finals of the U.S. Mid-Amateur; Paul Antenucci, who won the New Jersey Amateur; Mal Galletta III, who won the Long Island Amateur; Jeff Thomas, who won the MGA Public Links Championship and lost in the final of the Met Amateur; R.J. Nakashian, winner of the Boff, and early-season points leader Rick Southwick, who won both the Richardson and The Havemeyer.

For the final point standings, see "Scoreboard" on page 61. ■