

PROMISE FILLED

Cameron Young's run to Player of the Year was anything but a surprise.

BY TIM HARTIN



COVER STORY

It was only a matter of time. After four straight appearances on the MGA Player of the Year Honor Roll, Cameron Young solidified his place as one of the Met Area's elite amateurs this season with a record-setting win at the Ike Championship and a strong showing at the 100th Met Open, earning him the 2015 MGA Jerry Courville Sr. Player of the Year Award.

If the victory seems overdue, keep in mind that while Young has been making headlines for years, he's still only 18. He burst onto the MGA scene in 2011, when he became the youngest winner in Carter Cup history, advanced to the quarterfinals of the Met Amateur, and helped the MGA team to victory in the Carey Cup. At 14 years old he was the youngest participant in the 96th Met Open at his home club of Sleepy Hollow—an event he'd declared he would play in years earlier, when he was in the fifth grade.

In every season since, it has been a steady climb for Young. He won a trio of area events in 2012, added a second MGA title with the Met Junior in 2013, and in 2014 he reached the quarterfinals of the U.S. Amateur and was on the victorious U.S. Junior Ryder Cup team. But Young hit another level of consistency while playing an extensive tournament schedule in 2015. His frequent top finishes resulted in a runaway Player of the Year victory.

"I've never won any award like it. It obviously has a rich history to it, and is something that is really special," Young said before expressing his admiration for recent winners Max Buckley, Mike Miller, and David Pastore, all of whom now compete professionally. "It's been a goal for the last few years."

His race to the award got off to a great early start with a victory at the 60th Ike Championship at Friar's Head. Young entered the final round just one shot back after a pair of 70s, but he saved his

best for last: a bogey-free 5-under 66, highlighted by three straight birdies on holes 14-15-16 to open up a four-shot lead. Winning the event by five strokes, Young put his name in the MGA record books again, becoming the youngest Ike champion by 16 months.

"That had to be one of my best tournament rounds I've ever played," he said. "And especially to do it at a place like Friar's Head and at the Ike was really special. It was one of those days where everything kind of came together. I didn't really miss too many shots the whole day and I made a few putts down the stretch."

The Honor Roll

Final standings for the 2015 MGA Jerry Courville Sr. Player of the Year award

Pos.	Name	Club	Points
1.	Cameron Young	Sleepy Hollow	1133
2.	Ryan Snouffer	Essex County	676
3.	Trevor Randolph	Arcola	665
4.	Brian Komline	Black Oak	640
5.	Darin Goldstein	Noyac	543
6.	Matthew Lowe	Colonial Springs	479
7.	Stewart Hagestad	Golf & Body NYC	475
8.	Max Greysenman	Crestmont	470
9.	Mike Stamberger	Spring Lake	469
10.	Joe Saladino	Huntington	468

That day was special for the entire Young family. His father, Sleepy Hollow Head Professional David, followed with a watchful eye during the final round while his mother Barbara, a former playing professional in her own right, took her accustomed role as Cameron's caddie.

"My parents have taught me everything I know about the game," said Young. "They've influenced everything I do in golf—how I go about playing and how I practice. Having them there has made a big difference and has definitely helped me out through the last few years, playing golf at a high competitive level."

The Ike was the kickoff to a jam-packed golf schedule, which included nine events in nine weeks and concluded with the 100th Met Open. He tied for fifth in both the Westchester and New York State Opens, collecting points for his high finishes plus low amateur honors in each event. After another top-10 in the New York State Amateur, Young's schedule took him to Winston-Salem, N.C., for the AJGA's Wyndham Cup and to Bryant, Texas, for the 40th Junior PGA Championship—events that had no MGA points at stake but exposed him to a broader base of competition.

He made a quick return home for a

second-place finish in the rain-shortened Mittlemark, then hit the road again for the U.S. Amateur at Olympia Fields Country Club just outside Chicago. His high-quality play continued, qualifying for match play and defeating the reigning champion Gunn Yang (who had ended Young's run in 2014) before falling to the world's top-ranked amateur Jon Rahm.

"Having those all come on very different golf courses, it was nice to see that I could bring that performance to a bunch of different places and play against some of the best fields," Young said of the whirlwind slate.

Though that impressive stretch of golf kept Young atop the Player of the Year standings, Ryan Snouffer of Sparta, N.J., wasn't far behind. The Seton Hall golfer was putting together a strong summer of his own—he tied for third in the Ike, placed fifth in the NJSGA Open, won the Brae Burn Invitational, and was runner-up in the Met Am.

The 100th Met Open presented a challenge for Young schedule-wise: competing in the MGA's final major of the season would mean delaying the start of his freshman year at Wake Forest. But the opportunity to add to his point total was tough to pass up. "Knowing that I had a chance to be at the top of the list at the end of the year was definitely an influence on whether or not I played," Young said about his decision

to take part in the historic event on Winged Foot Golf Club's East Course.

Young certainly made the most of his decision. While Snouffer took the lead with the low round of the championship, a 65 on day one, he faded over the next two days, and Young rebounded from an opening 74 with a pair of 70s, logging a tie for fifth and yet another finish as low amateur. The result earned him 262.5 points, the most of any tournament of the summer, to solidify his hold on the award. He finished the year with 1133 points, the third-highest total since 2004, and more than 450 points clear of Snouffer's second-place total.

So what's on the horizon for Young? Already, the Demon Deacon freshman has helped his college squad to three team titles in just four tournaments, and claimed co-medalist honors at the U.S. Collegiate Championship.

"It's a lot of fun," he said of the college game. "The great part about it is just being out here with the team practicing every day. There are 11 of us on the team and any of them can beat me any given day, so it's good to have that constant competition. It's really helpful to push you forward."

In that environment, there's no telling to what heights Young's game can rise. As the second-youngest winner of the MGA's Jerry Courville Sr. Player of the Year title, his ceiling is certainly sky-high. ■



Above: Young at the 2015 U.S. Amateur. Far right: Young with his mother and father, Barbara and David, after his win in the Ike at Friar's Head.