

GOLF

Kahler takes NEWGA crown

By Pete Dougherty



Pete Dougherty / Special to the Times Union

Susan Kahler won the Northeastern Women's Golf Association championship by two strokes.



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Susan Kahler holds the winner's trophy Wednesday at her home course.

BALLSTON SPA — Mental mistakes are a part of golf. Overcoming them is the challenge.

Susan Kahler, playing on her home course, answered the call Wednesday in the

Northeastern Women's Golf Association's annual championship at Ballston Spa, offsetting a quadruple bogey with four birdies on the back nine to shoot 80 for a two-stroke victory.

Kahler, who won NEWGA championships in 2007 and 2019, started the day two strokes behind first-round leader Rachel Barlette of Shaker Ridge after her opening-round 79, but had gained the lead on the front side.

That's where the biggest problem arose. Kahler and playing partner Kathy Harkins of Ballston Spa, each hit the wrong ball on the par-5 10th. Kahler carded a 9 and Harkins a 7.

"It bothered me a lot," said Kahler, 63, who has been at Ballston Spa for 31 years and won 22 club championships there. "Kathy drove up to the ball. She normally outdrives me, and we both have our balls marked. The balls were sitting so that her mark, which is a big blue X, wasn't visible. When she hit mine, my mark wasn't visible, either, nor was the number."

Each was assessed a two-stroke penalty, per golf rules.

"It was a very tough penalty," Kahler said, "then my next shot, I totally duffed it."

Meanwhile, Pinehaven's Mary Scatena, who began the day four shots behind Kahler and six off the lead, began crawling up the leaderboard. Scatena had two birdies on the front and parred six of the first seven holes on the back side, taking the lead when Kahler triple-bogeyed 12.

“That is one thing these ladies have taught me, because they’ve all played this much longer than I have, that you never give up,” Scatena said. “You never know. You play one shot at a time. I tried that today. I swung a little more freely.”

Kahler was off the right side of the fairway on 12 but thought she should have at least saved double bogey but rushed a short putt and missed.

“That to me was the worst mental mistake I probably ever made,” Kahler said.

The birdie she made on 11, a 10-footer, helped offset that. Kahler then rolled in an 8-footer on 14, a 20-footer on 16 and a 10-footer on 17 to retake the lead.

Playing one group ahead of Kahler’s threesome, Scatena lost momentum on the short par-3 17th, hitting her tee shot over the green and missing a 4-footer for par.

“That putt, I swore it was going to break left,” Scatena said. “Nope. Straight as an arrow. I can’t complain. I hit my pitching wedge flush. I hit it perfectly, just too much club.”

NEWGA for the first time adopted electronic scoring, but Kahler, as is her custom, had no interest in knowing where she stood.

She said she didn’t know she won until she returned to the clubhouse area.

“When you have a quad (quadruple bogey) and a triple, you figure, let’s just play,” she said. “I came back with four birdies on the back. You can’t complain about that. I don’t do that very often.”

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