

Ottoville Wins 2021 PCL Tournament by One Stroke, Huffman is Medalist

Leipsic's Brandt is Player of the Year

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont – Wednesday, September 29, 2021

BLUFFTON: In golf, a stroke here or there could mean the difference between winning and losing. At the Bluffton Golf Course Monday afternoon, every stroke mattered as several teams battled for the Putnam County League tournament championship.

In the end it was one stroke that made the difference as Ottoville defeated Kalida 328 to 329 to win the 2021 PCL tournament championship. Pandora-Gilboa finished third at 334 followed by Columbus Grove in fourth at 357, Leipsic was fifth at 361, Miller City was sixth at 365 and Fort Jennings had a 395.

With Ottoville's win in the tournament the Big Green and Wildcats shared the season championship after Kalida went undefeated in the regular season. The overall title is based on a team's regular season standing and tournament finish.

Individually, Pandora-Gilboa's Eli Huffman was the tournament medalist with a 70. Leipsic's Mason Brandt was the PCL Player of the Year based on points earned during the season. Ottoville's head coach, Keith Utendorf, was named the PCL Coach of the Year.

At the 2020 PCL tournament, the Big Green were edged out by Kalida for the title based on each team's fifth player score. As the 2021 scores were being posted, the title was up for grabs again until the final scores were posted. Coach Utendorf was happy for his team after all the hard work they had put in this season to make a run at the title.

"Last year we had a very similar opportunity in the tournament championship," Utendorf said. "I'm really happy for our seniors and the players that came back. It's been tight between us and Kalida all year, our scores have almost been mirrored images of each other. We're just happy as heck to get a share competing against a quality team, quality program, quality coaches and players."

Utendorf added that to be able to shoot a 328 on a very windy day was a testament to how well his team played in the conditions. "With the wind and how things were going, for both of us to shoot in the 320's was pretty interesting to be honest," Utendorf said. "The players battled through some stuff to get enough of a score to be put up and be competitive. One shot was good enough. We talked about that last year and we talked about that going into this year. Last year we were close to state and missed by a stroke. We lost the PCL in a tie-breaker. We

knew one mattered and for the first time in a while we had the one stroke."

Carter Schnipke, a senior, led the Big Green with a 74 Monday followed by sophomore Keaton Schnipke with an 81. Senior Dru Hilvers had an 85 and sophomore Michael Turnwald finished with an 88 to round out the Ottoville scoring.

Senior Ryan Klausung led Kalida Monday with a 77, while teammates Justin Siebeneck, Connor Nartker and Ethan Warnecke all had an 84.

The shared overall PCL championship is the tenth straight year the Wildcats have either won or shared the league championship.

Pandora-Gilboa's senior Eli Huffman was the tournament medalist shooting a two under par round of 70. Huffman shot a 39 on the front nine before shooting a 31 on the back nine as he had five birdies to shoot five under par to close out his round.

Mason Brandt was named the PCL Player of the Year after shooting a 76 (39-37) Monday, which was the third best score of the day. Brandt birdied two of the last three holes, including 18, to help his score. The award for Brandt was a culmination of four years of hard work as he really didn't start playing the game full time until he was a freshman his father and coach, Kevin Brant, said.

"We had our golf meeting prior to his freshman year and he came into the room and I asked him, 'What are you doing here?' He said he was going out for golf," coach Brandt said. "I told him he was going to have to work his tail off. He hadn't played much prior to his freshman year, but he really took off after that, got the love, the itch and had a good freshman year. He kept improving and last year, with everything being shut down for COVID we were at the golf course a lot. He played a lot last year and really improved a lot. This was an impressive award for a kid that hasn't put all the time into the game as some of these other players have."

Brandt averaged 37 strokes per nine-hole round in PCL matches this season, but he's had to put in some extra practice time the last couple of weeks as he was struggling with putting. Brandt said that aspect of his game was better Monday.

"I've been struggling lately, especially with putting and I finally got it figured out. It was much more relaxing this round, knowing I had it in the bag, Mason Brandt said. "I was trying to get comfortable. It was good today to feel

comfortable and be confident with my putts. A 39 on the front was decent, I just wanted stay below 40. Then shooting two under the last three holes was huge. It was good to finish strong."

Team Standing

(1) Ottoville (328) Carter Schnipke, 74. Keaton Schnipke, 81. Dru Hilvers, 85. Michael Turnwald, 88. Grant Leis, 98. Jace Langhals, 92.

(2) Kalida (329) Ryan Klausung, 77. Connor Nartker, 84. Justin Siebeneck, 84. Ethan Warnecke, 84. Brandt Brinkman, 86. Kayla Nartker, 89.

(3) Pandora-Gilboa (334) Eli Huffman, 70. Owen Huffman, 87. Sam Norton, 88. Grant Farthing, 89. Sam Norton, 88. Aiden Harris, 93.

(4) Columbus Grove (357) Nick Wolverton, 83. Trey Sautter, 88. Taylor Schroeder, 92. Isaac Ricker, 94. Noah Macke, 97. Bo Birnesser, 110.

(5) Leipsic (361) Mason Brandt, 76. Luke Spoons, 93. Nick Schroeder, 91. Josh Lewis, 101. Adam Lammers, 106. Josh Lewis, 101.

(6) Miller City (365) Andrew Weis, 87. Thomas Weis, 91. Will Otto, 93. Caleb Niese, 94. Dillon Peck, 98. Jesse Lammers, 103.

(7) Fort Jennings (395) Nick Trentman, 89. Gavin Schimmoeller, 93. Adam Hoersten, 104. Braden Knippen, 109. Joseph Klear, 122.

Player of the Year – Mason Brandt, Leipsic
Coach of the Year – Keith Utendorf, Ottoville

PCL First Team

Mason Brant, Leipsic. Eli Huffman, Pandora-Gilboa. Carter Schnipke, Ottoville. Keaton Schnipke, Ottoville. Ryan Klausung, Kalida. Connor Nartker, Kalida.

PCL Second Team

Justin Siebeneck, Kalida. Dru Hilvers, Ottoville. Nick Wolverton, Columbus Grove. Michael Turnwald, Ottoville. Grant Farthing, Pandora-Gilboa. Kala Nartker, Kalida.

Scholar Athletes

Brandt Brinkman, Ryan Klausung and Justin Siebeneck from Kalida. Mason Brandt from Leipsic. Chad Schnipke and Carter Schnipke from Ottoville. Eli Huffman, Grant Farthing and Hailey Dysert from Pandora-Gilboa.