

# 71st U.S. Junior Amateur Championship at Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, New Jersey

## Jacob Torres



On June 20th, 2018, I qualified for the 71st U.S. Junior Amateur Championship on Kauai. Mrs. Mary Bea Porter-King explained that this tournament would be the best experience I would ever have at a junior golf tournament. I was ecstatic because the tournament was being held at the Baltusrol Golf Club's Upper and Lower Courses which have had its fair share of history. Upon its creation in 1922 by architect, A. W. Tillinghast, it has held seven U.S. Opens and two PGA Championships. Fortunately, this was Baltusrol's first year hosting the U.S. Junior Amateur Championship and I am grateful that I had the opportunity to participate in such a prestigious tournament.

Immediately upon arriving at the course in New Jersey, the volunteers and tournament staff members welcomed me with open arms and respect. After registering, I was greeted by a tour guide who gave me a tour of the property. On the bottom floor of the clubhouse were the locker rooms. All the players were assigned a locker to use during the tournament. Luckily, mine was next to the winner of the tournament, Michael Thorbjornsen of Wellesley, Massachusetts. Inside the lockers were our tee gifts that included: head covers, a towel, yardage books, a scorecard holder, a jacket, a golf shirt, a backpack, and even a letter by Jack Nicklaus congratulating the players on qualifying, and he wished us good luck. After obtaining my tee gifts, I went to meet my caddie, Toby Lesofski. I was lucky to have Toby as my caddie because he used to work at Baltusrol Golf Club as the caddie master.

During both practice rounds I played with Trent Phillips and Jacob Bridgeman who were ranked eighth and twenty third in the nation. Throughout the round I observed how they played and prepared for the tournament. However, my caddie knew the course like the back of his hand. He made me practice from different scenarios to make sure I was comfortable with each hole no matter where I hit the ball.

On the first day of the tournament I fired a two over on the front nine, but went three over in my next three holes to shoot a total of five over, 76 on the Upper Course. On the second day, I knew I had to make a move up the leaderboard, but I could not get anything going that day. On the last hole I stuck my four iron to seven feet and made an eagle to shoot a two over, 72. This score put me in a playoff the next day for three spots with seven other people. Unfortunately, I three putted the second playoff hole to be eliminated from contention. Even though I missed the cut, and my driving during the week was subpar, it was a wonderful experience that I will remember for the rest of my life.

Throughout the tournament we were treated like professionals. For example we had our own locker, own driving range stall, and unlimited free food and ice cream. Now, I know what I need to work on and what it takes to compete with the best in the nation.