

Coming into the 2019 season, I had my goals set on qualifying for this year's US Junior Amateur tournament. I knew that almost if not all of Hawaii's best junior golfers were going to be entered in the qualifier. It wasn't going to be easy at all.

On June 23 at the Wailea Blue golf course, I had accomplished one of my biggest goals for the season: I qualified for the 72nd US Junior Amateur. I was excited and ready to go for the biggest tournament of my junior golf career thus far. I felt so grateful and thankful to be given this opportunity to go and compete at the highest competitive level of junior golf. The coveted Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio was the host, and in the past, this club had its fair share of hosting USGA events to say the least.

Upon arriving in Toledo, I was greeted by a very kind staff from the USGA and hosts from the club welcomed me. I was treated like "royalty". After I officially registered for the tournament, I was taken on a tour around the club by one of the members. I learned that Inverness is the only club in the US to host all USGA events, including PGA Championships, US Amateurs, US Open, and the US Junior. I saw pictures of Jack

Nickalus amongst other famous legends of the game on the wall. After the tour, I went to the locker room where each of the 156 players that were competing had a locker for their own. When I got to my locker, I had a letter from Jack Nickalus that congratulated me on qualifying for this prestigious tournament. For the next three days, I was greeted with letters from Tiger Woods, Jordan Spieth, and Tom Watson all

congratulating me on qualifying for the tournament and offered words of wisdom and advice. Baffled by Jack's letter, I opened my locker and was



Kelly Chinn, a two-time US Junior Amateur participant

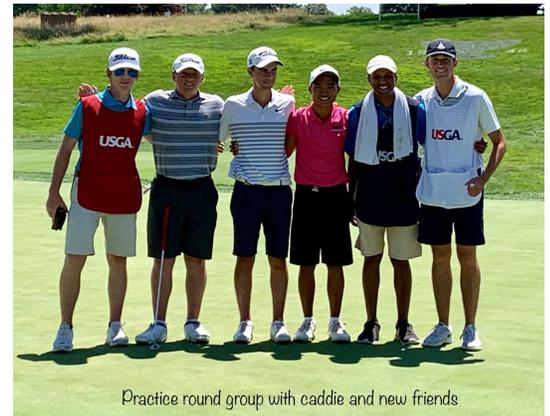


Akshay Bhatia, former #1 amateur in the world



Caden Irwin, my caddie

greeted with my tee gifts that included a scorecard holder, headcover, a towel, and some gifts courtesy of the town of Toledo and the USGA. I then met my caddie, Caden Irwin, who was from Toledo, Ohio and works at the club as a caddy. He knew the course pretty well and was able to help me with everything I needed to know about the course for the tournament. We also got to know each other on a personal basis during the practice rounds and during the tournament. During competition, I had my own stall on the range with nameplates along with complete access to the game room, locker room, dining halls, and more.



Practice round group with caddie and new friends

As for my competition during the tournament, I didn't compete to the best of my ability. It was a tough course. I couldn't get any momentum going. I shot a +10 82 the first day, and followed it up with a +8 80. Though I could've played better, I learned a lot and will never forget the camaraderie and the overall experience that this tournament provided.

Throughout the entire tournament, all juniors were treated with top notch service equivalent to that of any USGA professional tournament. I learned many things while I was there, but the two that stand out the most is knowing what it takes to compete with the best in the nation and things I need to improve upon. This was the most prestigious tournament I've ever played in my golf career. With that, I plan to work hard again this year in hope to qualify again in 2020.