

Tommy Gainey wins Prince George's County Open for first Nationwide Tour victory

By Kathy Orton
Washington Post Staff Writer
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It appeared that everything was going to come undone for Tommy Gainey after the ninth hole. Gainey saw his two-stroke lead evaporate after he made double bogey there, dropping him into a four-way tie at 15-under par.

But No. 9 became a mere hiccup to an otherwise spectacular round at the University of Maryland Golf Course that led to Gainey's first win on the Nationwide Tour. The 34-year-old South Carolina native shot a 17-under 267 to win the Prince George's County Open by one stroke on Sunday.

"It's unbelievable," said Gainey, who took home a \$108,000 winner's check. "I don't know any other way to describe it right now."

Frank Lickliter II, the 2001 Kemper Open winner, and Jin Park, the third-round leader, finished tied for second at 268. Paul Claxton, the 2007 winner of this event, was part of a group of three tied for fourth at two shots back.

Gainey didn't look like much of a threat to win the event earlier in the week when he barely made the cut. He was more of an oddity on the course with his unconventional swing and his custom of wearing a glove on each hand.

"I grip [the club] just like I'm gripping a baseball bat," he said. "That's why my game is so much different than all the other top tour players and everybody else. We're playing the same game but I go at it a different way. It's kind of like I'm playing baseball golf."

It was his tendency to "grip it and rip it" that got him into trouble on No. 9. He over-swung his driver, sending his tee shot into the high rough with no chance of getting it into the fairway. After taking a drop, he did what he could to salvage the hole but still wound up with a double bogey.

"My blood pressure was pretty high" after that hole, Gainey said.

Gainey quickly put his bad hole behind him and made birdie on No. 11 to put him back in the lead. He stayed in front until Lickliter's birdie on No. 18 left them tied atop the leader board. Gainey needed at least a birdie on the final hole, a par-5, to avoid a playoff, and with 264 yards to the pin, Gainey nestled the ball on the back of the green about 35 feet to the right of the cup.

As soon as the ball dropped into the hole, Gainey pumped his fist. His win vaulted him from No. 18 to No. 2 on the Nationwide Tour money list.

Former Maryland golfers George Bradford and Bobby MacWhinnie finished tied for 46th and tied for 60th, respectively.

Gainey is one of 78 golfers who will be at Woodmont Country Club on Monday morning for the U.S. Open sectional qualifier. He has a 7:40 a.m. tee time.