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Andy Tullis / The Bulletin

George Mack Jr., the director of instruction at Black Butte Ranch, won the Pacific Northwest Section Senior PGA Championship at the Home Course in Dupont, Washington, on Sept. 3. The win qualifies him for the National Senior PGA Championship in Seaside, California, next month.

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## Black Butte Ranch's Mack qualifies for nationals

### George Mack Jr. will play in the Senior PGA Professional National Championship in California in October

By **Kevin Duke** / The Bulletin

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The third time was indeed a charm for George Mack Jr.

Earlier this month, Mack, the director of instruction at Black Butte Ranch, won the Pacific Northwest Section PGA Senior Championship by four shots in his third attempt at the title.

The 53-year-old pro outdistanced the field with a stellar 4-under-par 68 in rainy and cold conditions at The Home Course in Dupont, Washington, near Tacoma. He was the only professional under par in the tough conditions, and his two-day total of 4-under 140 won the tourney by four shots.

The win means Mack has had to alter plans for his return to Arizona, where he teaches in the winter. Now he is planning a side trip to Seaside, California, where he will play in the Senior PGA Professional National Championship from Oct. 15-18.

"I made my hotel reservations today," Mack said this week. "I'm very excited to go. It's a nice trip in between my two jobs.

"Monterey and Carmel (both near the tournament site in Seaside) are awesome and it's a great place that time of the year."

Playing through the rain on both days of the Sept. 2-3 sectional championship, Mack drew upon his experience as a junior golfer in wet conditions.

"I would say I was prepared, but I'm not used to it anymore," he recalled. "I grew up in Portland, so I've had lots of rain experience."

Mack said he wore a rain glove, rather than a leather one, hooked his towel under his umbrella, and wore rain gear on the second day when players dealt with a strong squall during the middle of the round.

"You have to be prepared and have the right equipment," Mack said.

He had never played the course in Dupont, but a couple of practice rounds gave him a definite strategy for the tournament track.

"I just kept to a really conservative game plan for my approach shots," he said. "I never aimed at a flag and played 30 feet from the hole.

"I played to specific areas where I knew I could get it up and down. There were spots around the greens where if you missed, it was impossible to do that."

The win came in just his second tournament of the summer. Mack's only other official competition this season came in the Oregon Open at Crosswater, where he had one round under par, made the cut and finished in the top 30.

Still, he was not shocked at his performance in the senior championship, which included the best 50-and-over PGA professionals from the Pacific Northwest.

"I wasn't really surprised," he said. "I played a couple of times the two weeks before, and I have been very comfortable with my putting over the last six months or so. It was very easy to two-putt and have a tap-in most of the time."

His 4-under second round featured six birdies.

Scorers on the course kept him posted as to where he was in relation to the other leaders in the final round.

"I knew I was four ahead on the 13th," he recalled. "I was doing well, considering the weather, so I was just trying to make pars coming in.

"I knew pars would be good scores after I saw the setup during the practice rounds."

Mack hit nine of 14 fairways and hit 15 greens in his second round.

"I hit some fantastic shots and got some great bounces that gave me putts shorter than I expected," Mack recounted. "I got a couple of good breaks there and birdied a couple of the par-5s that were reachable."

His goals for the national championship are the same — to finish in the top 20 in order to advance to the Senior PGA Championship on the Champions Tour next year.

In the meantime, Mack is trying to get in a little more golf than usual to prepare for the tournament and will arrive early in Seaside for a couple of practice rounds on the Bayonet and Black Horse courses.

"I've been playing some here and played three rounds of nine (holes) in the last week," he said. "I'm playing the fall tour (a regional Pro-Am tournament) in a couple of weeks, and that will be a good warm-up."

"I'm also going down about four days early to get the lay of the land."

While Mack was not shocked that he played well in the section tournament, he was happy with beating Black Butte Ranch director of golf Jeff Fought, who also played and finished outside the top 20.

"I'm always surprised when I beat Jeff ... he's good," Mack laughed.

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