

The sun was barely up over Mather when Dave Means and Luke Hagfors set out Sunday morning, joined by fellow CCGC member Scott Leonard and his son Silas. Dave played the Raptor/Navigator combo tees and received six strokes from Luke, who played the Raptor tees.

Conditions were pleasant for most of the morning, with the heat only beginning to make itself known on the back nine. The course was in decent shape overall, though the greens were shaggy enough that every putt required a little extra conviction.

Dave wasted no time getting acquainted with one of Mather's fairway bunkers on No. 1, finding the sand down the right side and needing two shots to finally escape its grasp. This would not be his final visit to the beach. Luke found the fairway and green and calmly two-putted for par to take an early 1-up lead.

On No. 2, Dave worked his way down the left side while Luke hit a close approach with his third and converted the birdie opportunity. Suddenly it was 2 up through two, although anyone who has played Dave knows better than to expect him to disappear quietly.

Sure enough, the comeback started immediately.

Luke missed the green left at the par-3 third and failed to get up and down. Dave peppered the green with his tee shot and comfortably two-putted for par to get one back.

The match settled into a familiar rhythm from there. Luke rebuilt the lead to 2 up through six, Dave kept grinding, and by the time the group walked off the 10th green Luke's advantage was back down to just 1.

Then came what looked like it might be the moment Luke would spend the rest of the day regretting.

At the par-3 11th, Luke stuffed his tee shot to roughly three feet, only to miss the birdie putt. Dave, after an excellent tee shot of his own, converted his par and escaped the hole without losing any ground.

A gift. Possibly a costly one.

But Luke responded on the par-5 12th, where his second shot somehow finished on the back of the green. He made par from there while Dave was unable to do the same, pushing the lead back to 2 up.

No. 13 brought another trip to the sand, this time for Luke, whose tee shot found the left greenside bunker. He escaped and managed to pour in a medium-length putt for par. Dave's own par attempt stopped agonizingly on the front doorstep, and suddenly the match had reached dangerous territory: Luke 3 up with four to play.

Dave was not finished.

At the 15th, his missed par attempt still resulted in a net par thanks to the handicap stroke, pushing Luke's 4 and keeping the match alive at 3 up with three to play.

On the par-5 16th, Luke finally cracked the door open. Dave took advantage, cutting the deficit to 2 down and forcing the match to the 17th.

That was as far as it would go.

Luke closed things out on No. 17 for a 2&1 victory after a match that remained competitive nearly the entire morning and, as usual with Dave, never felt completely secure until the handshake.

As always, Dave was tremendous company and an extremely tough opponent. It was also great having Scott and Silas along for the morning. Based on what we saw, we can probably go ahead and pencil Silas in as CCGC Club Champion sometime around 2046.

Until then, he got a front-row seat to a good old-fashioned Sunday morning match at Mather.