

# Santa Barbara News-Press Sports

## Gama gets it done, breaks record in win

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Five birdies in the first seven holes propelled Kevin Marsh to just one shot off the lead.

But front runner Brandon Gama never flinched. He just kept grinding away par after par.

"I stayed with my game and I didn't press anything," Gama said. "I made a lot of pars and in the end my game started falling together like I thought it would."

Marsh made a valiant run but was undone by back-to-back double-bogeys on Nos. 9 and 10. Gama never faltered, leaning on his steady putter early and pouring it on late with three birdies in the final five holes at Santa Barbara Golf Club.

Gama closed with a 3-under 67, winning the 49th annual Santa Barbara City Championship on Monday by four strokes over Michael Flynn to shatter the tournament record. His total of 17-under was three shots better than Sam Randolph, who held the record for 25 years.

"It doesn't feel like anything's going wrong," Gama said. "I'm playing solid. It's just easy."

Gama won a city championship for the first time in his career, breaking through after five second-place finishes. The 2005 Bishop Diego grad, who will be transferring from SBCC to Arizona State next year, was rooted on by a large crowd throughout the round, and he drew a warm ovation as he walked up to the 18th green.

"That was great," Gama said. "I've never experienced anything like that before. Pretty fun little walk. I got the chills."

Gama entered Monday with a five-shot lead over Flynn and John Pate after shooting a first-round 64 and backing it up with a tournament record-tying 62. Marsh, who won the tournament in 2004 and 2005, snuck into the final group at six shots back, but he promptly made his presence known.

After a par on the first, Marsh birdied five of the next six holes and was pin-high in two at the par-5 No. 9.



**Brandon Gama fist-pumps after making a clutch par save on No. 10 at Santa Barbara Golf Club. Gama shot a final-round 67, winning by four and breaking the tournament record by three.**

"I was thinking he's going to make a charge for sure," Gama said.

But instead of making a birdie and pulling even with Gama, Marsh swung right under two straight flop shots with his 64-degree wedge.

"I've hit that shot a million times," Marsh said. "I wasn't nervous over it. I didn't really think anything of it."

Marsh got in trouble with another flop on No. 10, this time air-mailing the green on a delicate shot with a tough lie over a bunker, resulting in his second straight double-bogey.

"Bang, bang. Within 10 minutes it was over," Marsh said.

Marsh still posted a 68, giving him a total of 200, good enough for fourth place, even though the same score won it for him in 2004. But the consecutive double-bogeys took the steam out of his charge this year.

"That had to have made him feel a little more comfortable," Marsh said. "But he played well. I mean, he shot 67."



**John Pate rolls a birdie putt on No. 9. He shot a final-round 70 to finish in fifth place, eight behind Brandon Gama.**



**Michael Flynn hits his approach to No. 9. He shot a 66, tied for the best round of the day.**

Flynn stayed within striking distance if anything funny happened down the stretch, finishing with a 66 and a three-day total of 13-under, just one shot off the old tournament record. But Flynn played steady like Gama instead of making an early run like Marsh.

"He shot even on the front side," Flynn said. "He gave us so much time to be able to catch him. But then on the back nine he won the tournament."

The freshman at Cal State Bakersfield gave himself chances to close the gap, but he didn't have much margin for error on a course where it seemed like every hole was a birdie opportunity.

"I went at every pin, I tried to rip every drive. I tried to make everything," Flynn said. "On the back nine, I really didn't make very much. All day I had putts within 10 feet."

Jim Camione made the biggest move of the day, closing with a 65 after failing to break par in either of the first two rounds. He finished at 4-under, moving up into a tie for ninth after making the cut on the number.

Jeff Wilson tied for the second-best round of the day with a 66 to finish alone in third at 10-under.

Six-time City Championship winner Pate slipped back into fifth after shooting a 70. Santa Barbara senior Andrew Perez got it to 4-under at one point in his round, but shot a 68 to finish tied for sixth with Chris Satterlee.

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