



HAMPSHIRE SALVER 2022

BROOKS HOPES HAMPSHIRE SALVER RANKING POINTS WILL BOOST BID TO PLAY IN US MID-AM AT ERIN HILLS

FORMER England junior international Jack Brooks took the Hampshire Salver for the best aggregate in the big two amateur strokeplay events in Hampshire at the weekend.

Thirty-one-year-old Brooks, who returned to the amateur ranks after an unsuccessful spell as a pro in his 20s, finished third in the Selborne Salver, at Blackmoor GC on Saturday, before a fourth place in the Hampshire Hog, at North Hants, on Sunday.

Brooks grew up in the same England Boys teams as Tommy Fleetwood, Eddie Pepperell and Tom Lewis in 2009/10 seasons.

And after claiming the top prize in the Hampshire Salver, which carries valuable World Amateur Ranking Points, admits to being much happier playing at the top level as an amateur rather than as a pro struggling to make his way.

His victory sees him join the likes of Justin Rose, Ross Fisher and Andy Sullivan – who have all gone on to play in the Ryder Cup, as winners of the Hampshire Salver.

Sullivan, a three-time winner on the European Tour, is the only player to have claimed that trophy twice, winning back to back in 2010 and 2011.

Brooks has his eyes on a trip to the Masters after targeting a place in September's US Mid-Amateur Championship at Erin Hills in Wisconsin – which hosted the 2017 US Open.

Jack said: "I need to be in the top 40 of the Over 25s in the World Amateur Golf Rankings to get an automatic invite, and I was 40th before this week.

“The win will get me some valuable points that will hopefully keep me there until the cut-off date,” added Jack, who gets financial support allowed within the amateur rules from England Golf and his Cheshire club, to enable him to play full-time.

“I would love to go and win the US Mid-Am (over 25s) because it carries an invite to play the Masters in 2023, which is obviously the big dream for nearly every golfer,” he said with a big smile after becoming the 41st different winner in the Hampshire Salver’s 44-year history.

And beyond that Brooks knows that he has the rare chance to play in two Walker Cups after the R&A and USGA announced that the biennial clash between Great Britain and Ireland will move to even years from 2026 to avoid clashing with Eisenhower Trophy, which is moving to odd years to avoid clashing with the Olympics.

As a result the 49th Walker Cup will be played in 2023 at St Andrews, the Home of Golf, and then be contested at Pebble Beach’s Cypress Point in September 2025.

GB&I will then host the 51st Walker Cup at a venue yet to be decided, in 2026, by which time Brooks will be 36. America’s selection rules guarantee two players over the age of 25, while GB&I’s selection committee decides who plays.

In recent years, the best amateurs have tended to turn pro after playing in September’s Walker Cup, heading to the European Tour Qualifying School, later that month.

Brooks admitted having the chance to play in more than one had great appeal with the switch to even years.

“Yeah, the chance to play in a couple of Walker Cups quite quickly is definitely something I would love to do,” said Jack.

Luke Hodgetts was understandably still trying to take in the magnitude of his victory at Blackmoor 24 hours earlier.

Having become the first Hampshire winner of the Selborne since Mark Burgess back in 2009, he had a very good chance of becoming the first winner of the weekend trophy since Stoneham’s Ryan Henley in 2005.

But the Hampshire Colt was six shots behind first round leader Freddie McArthur, who could not maintain his hot pace.

The Leicestershire player from Ullesthorpe Court, finished fourth at Blackmoor, three shots behind Hodgetts after Rowlands Castle's Colin Roope came home in a one-over par 70 – having been a shot behind the lunchtime leader Brooks – thanks to a 68 to take second from the latter on countback.

Hodgetts shot a 73 in his second round in the Hog, to take 23rd place on five over.

That left him on four-over for the Hampshire Salver, but it was MacArthur who was the big loser, as his second round 72 at North Hants, saw him drop two places on the leaderboard after a sparkling 66 in the morning left him two clear.

MacArthur got to six-under after birdies at the first and third, but dropped four shots, including three on his back nine.

His two-under total in the Hog, left him agonisingly one shot short of Brooks' total.

Gloucestershire's Joe Harvey, who finished third at North Hants, was four shots back in third in the Hampshire Salver, while Hodgetts was fourth, five behind Brooks.

BLACKMOOR'S Mark Burgess – who became the first-ever winner from the host club in the 2009 Selborne Salver, was denied a Hampshire Salver double by Kent's Matt Haines' victory in the Hog at North Hants 24 hours later.

With a weakened field in this year's events, Burgess was looking to become just the second player to win the Selborne title for the second time in its 47-year history.

But he opened with a 78 and could only better that by four after lunch to card 14-over par, but he bounced back well with 15th place at North Hants, after shooting three-over thanks to rounds of 71 and 72.

He lost out on the leading Hampshire player honour to Stoneham's Ryan Moody, who finished strongly with a one-under par 69 after an opening 74.