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WARD LEADS FLORIDA STATE JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

LAKE BUENA VISTA -- Sarasota's Brian Ward fired a 3-under par 69 to lead the 44th Florida State Junior Championship at Disney's Magnolia and Palm courses on Monday. A large group of players are a stroke back including Andy Hollis, the defending champion.

An upcoming junior at Sarasota's Riverview High School, Ward made three birdies and no bogeys during his 34-35--69 round. After making an 8-foot birdie putt on the 328-yard, par 4 thirteenth, the 16-year old had birdie chances on the next three holes slip away. A 10-footer on 14, a 6-footer on 15 and a 7-footer on 16 all lipped out.

"I hit my short irons really well," Ward said. "I usually miss a lot of greens and then get up-and-down, but today I hit 15 greens."

I just wanted to make par. After the birdies, I started thinking about going low. That's when I started missing the short putts," he added.

Hollis, who won on the same courses last year, shot a 2-under par 70 with 4 birdies and 2 bogeys. The 17-year old from Palm Beach Gardens High School is tied with four other players at 2-under par 70. Nineteen players are just three strokes off Ward's total.

In the 12-14 year old division, Ormond Beach's Major Manning leads with a 2-under par 70. His 6 birdies, 2 bogeys and a double bogey placed him one stroke ahead of Miami's Tommy Suri for the younger division lead.

The final round will start Tuesday morning at 7:30 a.m. An awards ceremony will be held following the completion of play.