DUMPS DEFENDING CHAMPION

Eaton Takes State Senior Title

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Another of the Eaton clan jumped into the golf scene Friday when Robert L., better known as Larry Eaton, nudged State Sen. Les Fowler of Boulder for the state senior stroke-play championship at The Pinery Country Club.

Fowler, a three-time winner of both senior-stroke and match-play tournaments, was the defending champion and lost by one stroke 217-218 to Eaton over the 54-hole test.

They were cart mates all three days. They have known each other since 1948 when Fowler, fresh out of the navy and the University of Colorado golf coach, tried to recruit Larry out of Greeley High School.

Eaton, instead, went to Notre Dame, where he played his varsity golf. Later, in 1964, Eaton was one of Fowler's campaign managers. It was the only election Fowler has lost in his political career.

EATON WON the seniors as a rookie. The Greeley auto agency owner just turned 50 and he made his debut with a 68 Wednesday in one of the worst windstorms of the season. Thursday, in perfect weather, he jumped to a 70, and still held a two-shot lead over Fowler going into Friday's finale.

Neither let a long friendship get in their way. Fowler caught up with birdies on the first two holes. However, at the end of nine, Eaton had a five-shot advantage, turning the front nine in 32 with birdies at the third, fourth, seventh and eighth holes. Fowler was 1-under 35.

Conceding to his inconsistency, Eaton underscored his nine of 32, 33 and 35, and then pointed out his two nines of 40, including his 41 Friday as Fowler rallied and had Eaton by the throat at one point only to let him slip away.

The faulty nose measured eight feet, eight inches, the total distance of three puts Fowler faulted on through holes 14 (two feet), 15 (five feet) and at the 16 where the local solon missed the cup from 20 inches.


"And they gave me a little breathing room," Eaton interjected. "You hit the good wedges and came up empty."

Fowler three-putted for a double bogey at the ninth and that brought about a falling confidence in a putter that has been his best weapon through the years.

Eaton opened the door with his first bogey of the day at the par-3 16th and then double boggied the par-4 12th where he drove next to a pine tree and broke his 3-iron hitting out.

IT WAS the disposable club I had in the bag," he admitted. "I hate that club anyway. But it was a stupid thing to do. I didn't even make it to the green."

Fowler was also in trouble, but salvaged a bogey 5 to cut Eaton's lead to three and then he got it down to two with a birdie on a great wedge chip inside the gimme range on the par-5 18th.

Then Fowler's blade went awry. He missed a chance to save par at the 14th, failed on a birdie bid at the 15th and then let Eaton get back to a four-shot lead when he missed the hole on a near-in at the par-3 16th.

"I moved on both the short puts," Fowler admitted. "It was a long session," he said of the recent legislative gaveling. "I didn't have enough time to practice."

EATON'S FATHER, Rex Eaton, was the state match-play champion in 1938 and perennial men's champion at the Denver Country Club. Kim, Larry's niece, won the women's stroke-play titles in 1978 and 1979. She attends the University of New Mexico on a golf grant-in-aid and will try the women's mini-tour next fall.

"I enjoy it in the seniors," Eaton said Friday. "But I hope I don't have to play Fowler every time. I was just sleep walking yesterday when I shot that 76 and I got careless and made some mental errors today."

He had a four-shot lead on Fowler going into the 17th and 18th holes, but three-putted the par-4 17th and chipped it in a sand bunker on the 18th for a bogey while Fowler came back to birdie, the putt doing a 180-degree turn on the lip of the cup before falling in.

The god of putting returned too late to help Fowler.

FINAL RESULTS


Low Net — Harold Koster, Meadow Hills GC, 75; Vince Engei, Eisenhower GC, 76; Larry Blinn, Meadow Hills GC, 77; Bob Kerlin, Pinehurst CC, 79; Charles Stevens, The Pinery CC, 79; Jim Gwinn, Eisenhower GC, 84; Oscar Weible, Eisenhower GC, 85; Bob Roberts, Las Vegas GC, 87; Wayne Smith, Wellshire GC, 88; 65-64 Ape Group — Cliff Boyd, Fitzsimmons GC, 62; Hal Rhyih, The Pinery CC, 66; Jim Buckner, Overland Park GC, 69; H.B. Holmes, Columbine CC, 69; Myron Hoffman, Fitzsimmons GC, 71; Henry Deutschendorf, Fitzsimmons GC, 74; William Miles, Valley GC, 75.

Low Net — Walter Conk, Inverness GC, 80; Dick Roll, Welshire GC, 81; Frank Scherer, Meadow Hills GC, 82; Charles Towner, Colorado Springs CC, 83; A. H. Owen, Cherry Hills CC, 83; James Forbes, Fitzsimmons GC, 83; Luke Zeller, Polly Jewett GC, 85; 65-64 Ape Group — Ernie Niedermueller, Willis Case GC, 66; Dick Zeinert, The Pinery CC, 67; Jere Hainke, Overland Park GC, 67; Roy Brown, City Park GC, 67; George Alfridge, Fitzsimmons GC, 71; Harold Swede, Fitzsimmons GC, 71; 74-and-Over Ape Group — Jim Kirkley, Colorado Springs CC, 74; Charles Hemmendinger, Overland Park GC, 74; George Alfridge, Fitzsimmons GC, 75; Low Net — William Turnbull, Collinwood GC, 80; Harold Gormley, Park Ridge GC, 80; Ors Schreiner, Perry Park CC, 83.

THE LOOK OF A WINNER

Larry Eaton watches chip shot get close on seventh hole in seniors play.