GOLF

Speaker Looks Other Way to Win Junior Match Title

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Doug Wherry watched Ron Speaker win the Colorado Golf Association Junior Match Play Championship Thursday.

Speaker watched cottonwoods whip in the wind at Arrowhead Indian Tree Golf Club, Canada goose wandering around the course, the clouds building over the mountains to the west. He watched anything but Doug Wherry.

"My strategy all day was not to look at his shots," Speaker said after defeating Wherry 2- and 1 in the championship flight final. "I hit it too far to watch it. I didn't want to drool."

It paid off with the championship at the 17th hole. Wherry missed the 48-foot birdie attempt needed to force a playoff. Speaker, true to form, greeted northward over the Jefferson County landscape. "It just eats at you," to watch a ball that roll toward the cup, he said.

After Wherry's putt slipped past the hole, Speaker turned back to the green and tapped his one-fooder for the deciding par. "I've never played well in match play," said the new champion, a Greeley product who just finished his freshman year on a University of Colorado golf scholarship. "In four previous years in the CCA event," he said, "I never got past my second match." That changed this week. Armed with his

look-elsewhere strategy and the feeling that, as a college student, his ego couldn't handle losing to a tournament of predominately high school players, Speaker took the time in the next-to-last junior tournament for which he was eligible before he turned 18.

He breezed to a 6-and-5 semifinal win over Jeff Caplin of Fort Collins Thursday morning, then squared off with Wherry, playing in his second title match in two years, in the afternoon.

Last year, Wherry was victimized by ex-Champion Lee Trevino before Doug Biddle, who made an 80-yard wedge shot on the 18th hole at The Ranch Country Club for a 1-up victory.

This time, he defeated fellow Brinn graduate Brandt Joby 3-and-4 in the other morning semifinal. But it was Speaker's steady overall game which more than compensated for Wherry's thundering tee shots in the championship.

The deciding holes may have been Nos. 13 and 14. Wherry had climbed to within one of the leader with a birdie at 12. But he missed a pair opportunity with a short putt and two puts at the 14th. Speaker scrambled to his bogey to have the hole after an errant tee shot.

Then Wherry blasted his drive out of bounds on the par-4 14th, where his big hitting could have been an advantage, instead of being even-handed Speaker a 2-up advantage. "I knew I had to hit better after that, and I didn't do it," he said.

Speaker's strategy caused a problem on that hole, when he said, "Nee," after his opponent's drive, awareness that it missed the course. But he apologized, and Wherry endorsed the no-peek plan after the match.

"You're smart, to just play the golf course and not worry about what the other guy's doing," the runner-up said.

Wherry may try it himself in 1984, if the registration dates allow him another shot at the junior tournament at two weekends after Texas-Ral Poro. No matter where his gage, he'd like one more chance to look for an elusive crown.