JOE: Winner is youngest ever at 18

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morning round) and when Keffner won the first hole (in the afternoon), I thought to myself: 'You really blew it.' My confidence wasn't very good at that point."

It also turned out to be the turning point for the youngster from Cherry Hills. Keffner promptly won eight of the next nine holes, including a run of five straight from the second through the sixth, and breezed to a rockching-chair victory over his 40-year-old opponent from Lakewood Country Club.

"I was tired physically and mentally," Keffner admitted. "I couldn't put any pressure on him at all the last 18 holes. I was just too tired."

"This is the last tournament I'm going to play in where you have to play 36 holes (in one day). A marathon is too long for me. To play six straight days (including the qualifying rounds) and then try to play 36 holes is too much for me. I can't do that."

"My game is tuned to playing 18 holes. Add in qualifying, all day I'm gone out of the hole. I can't get my batteries charged up again. I didn't hit one good shot on the range (the practice tee) in between rounds. He (Keffner) played awfully well. But it is a different ball game if I can put some pressure on him.""

Keffner, who had won 11 of his previous 12 matches in this tournament — including an extra-hole, sudden-death defeat to Ron Moore in the finals of the 1981 tournament — applied plenty of pressure in the morning round.

After going 2-down on the front nine, he won the 10th, 13th, 15th and 17th holes to seize the lead.

But Keffner played brilliantly starting on the second hole of the afternoon round and was 6-under for the last 11 holes of the match.

He dropped a 10-foot birdie putt on the second hole, unloaded a mammoth drive of 370 yards, setting up another birdie on the par-5 third, drained a 23-foot birdie putt on the fourth, won the fifth with a par, and reached the par-4 sixth in two and two-putted for still another birdie.

He birdied the eighth from 20 feet, birdied the par-5 18th and then closed out the match with a birdie putt of 49 feet on the 12th hole.

"I enjoyed winning it that way," Keffner smiled. "That was an exciting way to finish. I was tired but sometimes when I get tired, I swing a little smoother. I think I've improved a lot mentally. I used to see how hard I could hit it. Now, I think I do a lot more thinking as far as positioning my shots."

Keffner has been on a tear for the past month. He won the Junior Match Play title at Applewood, shared medalist honors in qualifying for the Colorado Open with a 69 and won five straight matches — two of them extra hole duels — here this week.

"I've really been on a run," Keffner said. "I don't know that it was completely unexpected. I think I'm capable of doing it. But things have really gone my way the past month. I had some tough matches this week. But I just took it one hole at a time."

Meanwhile, Keffner ran up the white flag of surrender.

"I'm going to take my two-second-place finishes and retire from this tournament," Keffner concluded. "But I would trade the two seconds for one first. I was 1-up after 18 holes today. I'm going to leave it at that. That's the way I'm going to remember it."

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