Crabtree shoots 67, claims state public links

By GARY BAINES
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LONGMONT — Despite never having seen the course prior to the tournament, Mark Crabtree put on a tireless clinic to win the State Public Links Championship Sunday at Twin Peaks Golf Course.

The former University of Colorado golfer hit 7 of a possible 14 greens in regulation and pulled away Sunday with a 3-under-par 67 to win the event by four shots. His 36-hole total was 11 under par.

"I feel like I can go to any course and hit the ball on the green," said Crabtree. "If I hit the ball on the green, I'm playing better than I ever have before for sure.

The victory was Crabtree's first in a Colorado Golf Association event, as well as his first state public links championship.

Crabtree shot a back nine match play total of 71 and 78 during his college days at CU.

For Crabtree, his performance in the final two rounds earned him one of three available spots for the U.S. Public Links tournament, which will be held July 16-22 in Portland, Oregon. On Monday and Tuesday, when the event doubled as the national qualifier, Crabtree shot 74-77-151 to advance to his first U.S. Public Links tournament.

In the final round, Crabtree was hot onto the green and his chip shot from 20 yards away fell short of the hole. Crabtree bogeyed the final hole for a 70 to win by four strokes over the runner-up, McRae Glaseal in a playoff.

Crabtree, who was the defending champion, qualified for the U.S. Public Links Championship by winning the Midwest Regional qualifier in Champaign, Illinois.

"I'm starting to play a little better," he said. "I really struggled with my irons the first two days. This course seems like it's easy, but on a lot of the holes, you can't go for the pin."

While Glaseal finished strongly, no one was a better tactician for the entire week than Crabtree. The Fort Collins High School teacher made those birdies and no bogeys in Sunday's final round and had a comfortable lead most of the day.

Only when Shane Berthelof Lakewood birdied Nos. 14, 15 and 16 was Crabtree's lead cut to two, but Berthelof fell back into a second-place tie in the state event with bogeys on the last two holes.

Bertchelof finished with a 36-hole total of 133 along with McRae and Denver's Ron Konikala. Crabtree gave himself an early cushion Sunday with birdie putts of 7 ft and 10 ft on holes 2 and 8. The 30-year-old then all but assured himself of victory with a tap-in birdie on the par-3 16th.

"I felt I could shoot 69 or 67, but it depended on how I putted," Crabtree said. "(It) is not a bad score.

The win was Crabtree's most important since he got his amateur status back in 1988 after placing in the pro ranks from 1986-88.

"I've grown and matured as a player," he said. "This was a halfway decent player and that all the work I put into the game is paying off.

In fact, it's paying off so well that Crabtree and McRae Glaseal should qualify as McGraw and Glaseal in a potential dilemma. If any of them advance to the late rounds in next month's state match play play, they'll have to either forgo or drop the prizes rounds for the national tournament. Then if they make it beyond the first round of match play in the publics, they'll have to decide whether they want to continue in the local and quickly fly home for the Colorado Open, which starts Thursday.

State Public Links


Crabtree's victory in the C.G.A. event was his second of the year.

Crabtree said he will consider playing in the U.S. Public Links Championship, which he won in 1986.

He also said he plans to play in the U.S. Amateurs, which he won in 1986.