

Junior golf champs

Bakke beats old friend with surprising shot

By CLAY LATIMER
News Staff

When Doug Bakke saw a three-hole lead disappear Friday during the finals of the Junior State Match Play Golf Tournament at The Ranch Country Club, the Cherry Creek High School graduate admitted he was a little surprised.

But that feeling was merely a precursor of things to come, because Bakke shocked himself and those around him on the par-4 18th hole when he sank a 50-yard sand-wedge shot for a 1-up victory over former Cherry Creek teammate Doug Wherry.

The eagle not only gave the 18-year-old a long-sought championship and a win over an old, familiar playing partner, but a mild case of the jitters as well.

"I was just trying to get as close to the pin as possible," said an excited Bakke, who last won a major title two years ago when he captured the state high school championship. "He was knocking stuff in on every hole. I had to put it close, so I just punched a little sand wedge. I didn't even see it go in. I heard it hit the pin but I had to ask someone if it went in.

"I just went out of my mind. I couldn't believe it went in. It's unreal."

"It really isn't disappointing," added Wherry, the defending high school state champion who birdied the 14th, 16th and 17th holes to

force the last-moment dramatics. "I still have a good feeling about coming back and getting back into the match. I knew I had to play well to beat Doug. I played well but I just didn't beat him."

Bakke, who plans to attend either UCLA or the University of Colorado next fall, finished with a 67 and was in early control of the match. After Wherry birdied No. 2, Bakke won the fourth, fifth and sixth holes. He birdied the par-5 fifth and parred the eighth hole to go three up at the turn.

Bakke and Wherry, who both play out of Cherry Hills Country Club, then proceeded to par the next four holes before Wherry made his move.

The 16-year-old, who will be a senior at Cherry Creek this fall, sank a 10-foot putt on 14, a 20-footer on 16 and a six-footer on 17 to collect three quick birdies and even the match.

"I went to 18 and I knew I had to birdie," Bakke said.

Instead, he pulled out a sand wedge and sank a shot he won't easily forget.

"It just went straight into the hole," he said.

"I'm really glad about this victory. This victory means more than any other one. I hadn't won since the high school championship when I was a junior. I started doubting myself, but not to a big degree. I just worked harder for this tournament than any other tournament. It proves I'm still a top junior."

