

GOLF

Speaker Looks Other Way to Win Junior Match Title

By TODD PHIPERS

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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 Arvada's Indian Tree Golf Club, Canada geese wandering around the course, the clouds building over the mountains to the west, his shoes. 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. "He hits 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 45-foot birdie attempt he needed to stay alive as Speaker, true to form, gazed northward over the Jefferson County landscape. "It just eats at you" to watch a ball like that roll toward the cup, he said.

After Wherry's putt slipped past the hole, Speaker turned back to the green and tapped in a one-footer 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 CGA event, "I never got past my second match," he said.

That changed this week. Armed with his

look-elsewhere strategy and the feeling that, as a college student, his ego couldn't handle losing in a tournament of predominantly high school players, Speaker took the title in the next-to-last junior tournament for which he was eligible before he turns 19.

He breezed to a 6-and-5 semifinal win over Jeff Capaldi 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-Cherry Creek teammate Doug Bakke, 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 Bruin graduate Brandt Jobe 5-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 No. 13 and No. 14. Wherry had climbed to within one of the leader with a birdie at 12. But he missed a par opportunity with a short chip and two putts at the par-4 13th, while Speaker scrambled to his bogey to halve the hole after an errant tee shot.

Then Wherry blasted his drive out of bounds on the par-5 14th, where his big hitting could have been an advantage and,

instead of being even, handed Speaker a 2-up advantage. "I knew I had to birdie after that, and I didn't do it," he said.

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

"That's 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 following a year at Texas-El Paso. No matter where his gaze, he'd like one more chance to look for an elusive crown.