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Bill Loeffler blasts out of a sand trap during the finals of the state match play at the Broadmoor South Golf Course in Colorado Springs.

# Longfellow upsets Loeffler in state match play finale

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COLORADO SPRINGS — On the first four holes of yesterday's State Match Play Championship final, Gary Longfellow sank two birdie putts and a 20-foot chip for a third birdie.

It was an indication of things to come at the Broadmoor South Golf Club.

Playing flawlessly at every important turn, Longfellow held off two rallies by Bill Loeffler for a 4-and-2 victory in the 36-hole finale.

It was Longfellow's first state title of any kind since 1978 and his first state match-play championship since 1974.

The 45-year-old United Airlines pilot knew it would be his day after making eight birdies and just one bogey during the morning round.

"I don't believe I've ever had a better round," he said after shooting 65 during the first 18 holes. "I would rank that round with any."

"I've been on the verge of shooting like that. I was ready if I got it going."

Loeffler, the reigning USGA Mid-Amateur champion and a member of the 1987 Walker Cup team, was favored in the finale.

But the 30-year-old from Cherry Hills Country Club watched in dismay as Longfellow sank an eight-foot birdie putt on No. 2, then two-putted for birdie from 12 feet on No. 3.

On No. 4, a 359-yard, par-4, Longfellow chipped in from the green's edge to go three holes up.



Gary Longfellow watches his drive en route to the state match play victory.

"That got me going," said Longfellow, a member of Lakewood Country Club.

Longfellow dominated Colorado golf in 1974, winning the Colorado Open and state match and medal play championships. He played in the 1979 state match play championship, then stopped entering the event because it conflicted with his job. In recent years, his interest in competitive golf waned.

But this year he doubled his practice time and rediscovered his zeal for a sport that once dominated his time.

When he returned home after

winning a semifinal match Saturday, he hit balls for an hour in a specially designed driving range in his basement.

Longfellow's renewed determination was evident during yesterday's championship match.

After going 5-up after 12 holes, he adopted a more conservative approach.

"I told myself just to make par — and let him make birdie," he said.

Loeffler cut Longfellow's lead to three holes heading into the final 18. Then he won Nos. 4, 5 and 6 to even the match.

But Longfellow won Nos. 7 and 8 with pars as Loeffler missed short and intermediate putts. Heading into the final nine, Longfellow was 2-up.

"That was the big turning point," said Longfellow.

Added Loeffler: "I had sealed my fate. I knew he wouldn't make many bogeys."

Longfellow bogeyed No. 12 after driving into a patch of trees on the right side of the fairway. It was the only time he was way off mark on a drive during the entire tournament.

On the next hole, Longfellow redeemed himself by sinking a 25-foot birdie putt to go 2-up again.

Loeffler barely missed a birdie putt on the next hole and Longfellow was headed to victory.

He won on Nos. 15 and 16 to end the match. "My swing feels really good," he said. "I just wanted to keep swinging loose. When I get in the groove I just try to keep it up. Golf is a streak game."