

McGraw wins state Publinx championship

By **CLAY LATIMER**
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Twenty years ago, Tom McGraw spent his spare time learning to play golf on a public course near the Adams County Fairgrounds.

Yesterday, at the same recreation complex, he won the Colorado Golf Association Public Links Championship.

Playing with finesse and power at Riverdale Dunes, McGraw finished with a final-day, 1-under 71. That gave the 37-year-old commercial banker a 54-hole, 1-over 217 and an easy win over Jim Brooks (224), Ken Sady (226) and Bill Boyd (226).

The last two rounds of the state championship served as qualifying for the USGA National Public Links Championship, which is set for July 13-18 in Cincinnati. McGraw (142), Guy Mertz (150), Sady (151) and Brett McDaniel (152) earned berths in the national tournament. McDaniel beat Steve Murphy on the second hole of a sudden-death playoff for the final spot.

After pars on Nos. 4 and 5, McGraw sensed he would prevail in both events.

"I played steady, I hit a lot of greens and I didn't get in the bushes," said McGraw, an 11-time member of the Colorado Cup team. "I kept getting more confident.

"Since I grew up playing at Riverdale Knolls, this was sort of like being home. I felt good."

Riverdale Dunes, designed by Pete Dye, is one of the most distinctive courses in the region. It is the only public course Dye has designed west of the Mississippi River, and features bent-grass fairways.

Rolling hills, strategically placed water

hazards and an unforgiving rough permit few sub-par rounds on the 3-year-old course.

But during one critical stretch of the final round, McGraw mastered Riverdale Dunes. On No. 11, a 544-yard par-5 with a narrow undulating fairway that is bordered by water, the Westminster resident used 4-wood to reach the green in two. He two-putted for birdie to go 2-over for the tournament and gain a two-stroke edge on Boyd.

On No. 12, a 180-yard par-3, McGraw hit past the green to the edge of a bunker. His ball was nearly obscured by tangled grass. But McGraw overcame the bad lie and a difficult pin placement to chip to within six feet of the hole. He sank the par putt. Boyd bogeyed the hole and McGraw was on his way.

"It got fast and furious on those two holes," said McGraw. "The key was on Nos. 4 and 5. I made two pars, it was like stealing. But on No. 12, well, I hit that shot as good as I could."

On No. 13, a 476-yard, par-4, McGraw drove into rough bordering the left side of a narrow fairway, but still reached the green from 225 yards out.

McGraw ended up with bogey, but rebounded with a well-placed drive, an excellent sand wedge shot and five-foot putt for a birdie on the par-4 14th.

"The trick was not to give it away," said McGraw. "After I got it going, I was determined to play steady golf."

In recent years, McGraw has had to juggle his career with his passion for golf.

"I've been around a long time. I've been a runner-up, an also-ran, a lot of times in the state amateur and other tournaments. This feels really good."



FRANK KIMMEL/Rocky Mountain News

Tom McGraw saved par on 13th hole at Riverdale Dunes with this chip out of bunker to within three feet of cup.

SCORES

Colo. Public Links

Results from the Colorado Public Links Championship played on the par-72 Riverdale Dunes Golf Course:

Tom McGraw	75-71-71	— 217
Jim Brooks	71-78-75	— 224
Ken Sady	75-78-73	— 226
Bill Boyd	70-73-83	— 226
Guy Mertz	77-75-75	— 227
Steve Murphy	75-76-76	— 227
Mark Spenner	77-77-76	— 230

Ron Kosmatka	75-73-82	— 230
Michael Glaesel	71-77-83	— 231
Allan Hodgson	75-76-81	— 232
Rick Dewill	73-76-83	— 232
Anthony Aguilar	80-76-77	— 233
Preston Anthony	78-78-77	— 233
Thomas Brennan	77-79-78	— 234
Ron Parish	77-79-78	— 234
Mark Crabtree	76-74-84	— 234
Kelly Kline	78-79-78	— 235
Tom Gillette	81-76-78	— 235
Shannon Letcher	76-84-76	— 236

Ray Makloski	78-78-80	— 236
Andrew McFarlane	79-76-81	— 236
Mike Eberhardt	72-82-82	— 237
Lee Hansen	78-76-82	— 237
Mike Eberhardt	72-82-82	— 236

Qualifiers for the USGA National Public Links Championship:

McGraw	71-71	— 142
Mertz	75-75	— 150
Sady	78-73	— 151
McDaniel	77-75	— 152