

Fiala weathers day for match-play title

By Todd Phipers
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LAKESWOOD — Ben Fiala of Durango yesterday became Colorado's reigning junior match-play champion.

Or maybe "raining champion" better describes it.

The 17-year-old Durango High School graduate endured a constant drizzle in near-freezing wind-chill conditions to defeat Jay Osmon of Alamosa 6 and 5 to capture the 1995 CJGA Match Play Championship at Bear Creek Golf Club.

"It was another Jay Osmon-Ben Fiala duel, and I just happened to win this time," said the winner, who added the title to the state stroke-play crown he won two years ago. "It was a little easier than I would have imagined.

"It was kind of weird. Normally when we play, there are a lot of birdies and a lot of putts going in," Fiala said of friendly confrontations with Osmon that date back nearly a decade. "When you play your best friend in the final match, you couldn't ask for anything better."

The key to the cold and soggy finale may actually have come earlier in the day, when Fiala advanced with a 4 and 3 victory over Jason Hause of Littleton and Osmon ousted 13-year-old Leif Olson of Golden 2 up in the semifinals.

Fiala had about 45 minutes to eat, change clothes and regroup, after his morning victory, while Osmon — trying to add this year's trophy

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to the one he won in 1992 — had virtually no time between matches.

"I don't want to use that as an excuse," Osmon said, "but I was real tired. It was just a long afternoon."

It didn't take long for the complexion of the championship match to be established. Osmon lost a ball on his tee shot on No. 1, then bogeyed No. 2 to go 2 down on holes he had birdied almost without exception in the preliminary rounds.

"I needed to get off to a quick start because you never know what Jay is going to do," Fiala said. "He can make five or six birdies in a row."

Osmon gained one back with a birdie at the par-4 fifth hole, where he put his approach shot to about 5 feet, then lost four straight holes to give Fiala a 5-up cushion at the turn.

Fiala said he thought a key to his win was when Osmon "chunked it off the tee on six" to start the slide. "I think he just started to run down after that."

Then, with Osmon reeling but still trying to fight back when they reached No. 9, Fiala drained a 40-foot birdie putt to all but slam the door. He then won the 12th hole with a par, and closed it out with another at the 13th.



Ben Fiala of Durango

CGA

JUNIOR MATCH PLAY CHAMPIONSHIP

At Bear Creek G.C.

Championship flight — Ben Fiala def. Jay Osmon 6 and 5.

Championship consolation — Brandon Thompkins def. Matt McCarty forfeit.

Jack Nicklaus first flight — Brock Lewark def. Grant Froggatte 6 and 5.

Arnold Palmer second flight — Dan Goettge def. Wes Butterfus 4 and 2.

Ben Hogan third flight — John Hulwick def. Jason Franke Forfeit.

Byron Nelson fourth flight — Jim Tracey def. Geoff Newash 1-up on 19.

Bobby Jones fifth flight — Adam Morgan def. Tyrus Poxon 1-up.

Walter Hagen sixth flight — Paul Klee def. Steven Skiff 1-up on 19.