

Smith wins friendly rivalry in State Match Play final

By Dave Nelson

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COLORADO SPRINGS — Tim Smith knew it was going to be too close for comfort.

How could it be anything else when you're playing some guy who is a teammate and one of your closest personal friends?

Tim Smith and Doug Bakke watched the same movie on television Saturday night.

They slept under the same roof and ate the same food.

Sunday, they played the same golf course side by side, just as they have on many other occasions during the past year.

But this time, it was different. This time, they were friendly rivals. This time, there was a lot more at stake than a \$2 nassau.

"I knew it was going to be close," Smith admitted after scoring a 1-up victory to claim the State Match Play golf championship Sunday at The Country Club of Colorado.

The 21-year-old University of Colorado junior held a commanding 5-up lead after 17 holes and then saw the margin vanish in a grueling 36-hole duel that wasn't decided until Bakke missed a 20-foot birdie putt on the final hole.

"I DIDN'T KNOW if Doug would play well this afternoon," Smith observed. "But when he came out and made some birdies, I knew it would be close."

Smith held a 4-up lead after the morning round but Bakke won the first, fifth and seventh holes in the afternoon and it was a tight, tense struggle the rest of the way.

"I thought it would go down to the wire," Bakke agreed. "From watching Tim, I knew he was playing well and I knew I was playing well."

Bakke finally squared the match after dropping birdie putts of 25 feet on the 11th hole and seven feet on the 12th hole.

"Tim is a good player," Bakke said. "I knew he wasn't going to make a lot of mistakes. But I felt I had a good chance to win the match after the 12th hole. I just didn't get it done."

Smith regained the lead when he holed a nine-foot birdie putt on the 14th hole.

The match was level again when Smith three-

putted the 15th hole for a bogey. But Smith took a lead he never lost when Bakke drove his tee shot through the fairway on the 16th hole and then pitched his approach down a steep bank and into the deep weeds and made bogey.

"I KNEW I'D have to pull off a small miracle from where I was and I almost did it," Bakke observed.

From a deeply embedded lie and unable to see the flagstick, Bakke pitched ball up the steep bank to within 15 feet of the pin and almost holed his putt for par.

Smith two-putted the 16th for his par and they halved the final two holes as the pressure mounted.

Both bogeyed the par-3 17th when they missed the green, and both parred the final hole, with Bakke's birdie putt sliding an inch or two to the left of the pin.

"I'm ecstatic," Smith smiled. "This is the first big tournament I've ever won and it will get me invited to some good national tournaments in the future."

Smith played as the No. 2 man on the CU golf team last year, while Bakke played as the Buffs' third, fourth or fifth man during most of his freshman season in Boulder.

"I missed three or four greens this morning and I couldn't make a putt.

"But I had a good lunch and Mark (CU golf coach Mark Simpson) came out and watched my putting stroke for about 30 minutes. We worked it out and I felt like I stroked it better than I have all year this afternoon."

SMITH, PLAYING his home Country Club of Colorado course, said he had no particular strategy.

"I just hit a lot of greens," Smith said. "A few putts fell and a few didn't."

Bakke spent Saturday night at Smith's home just off one of the fairways fronting the golf course. They watched a movie together on television and Smith's mother did the cooking.

"I was more relaxed playing against Doug than I might have been otherwise," Smith admitted. "Tonight, we're having the Bakke family over for dinner and we're going to have a little post-game party. All of us are pretty close."

Almost too close for comfort! In this case, it was too close for comfort.