

Golden oldie swings into seniors title

By Todd Phipers
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BRIGHTON — It took five days, one qualifying round and six matches for John Golden to win the 1995 Colorado Senior Match Play Championship.

But it was 15 minutes before the tournament began that he credited for capturing his third state seniors title yesterday at Riverdale Dunes Golf Course.

Although he picked up two seniors wins in the state earlier this year, the 53-year-old Golden wasn't happy with his swing, so he arranged a session last Sunday with Dennis Murray, the pro at Bear Creek Golf Club.

"He said, 'Do this, do this.' I did it, and I said, 'That's it. That's all I need.' He knows my game," the champion said of his swing guru.

In 15 minutes, Murray suggested two slight adjustments, and Golden had his game back in the groove that led to yesterday's 1-up victory over Larry Eaton of Greeley Country Club, who was trying to become the tournament's first five-time winner.

The match wasn't decided until the par-4 final hole. Eaton's errant tee shot into foot-high grass forced him to take an unplayable lie that led to a bogey, while Golden salvaged par despite finding more playable rough with his drive.

"It's great," Golden said of adding this year's trophy to those he won as the match- and stroke-play champion two years ago. "It's tougher, I think, to win the second time . . . Especially playing Larry Eaton."

The 64-year-old Eaton admitted that the possibility of passing Bert Welz and Ed Nosewicz with a fifth senior match-play title was on his mind.

"That's important to me, and I played well this week," he said. "Today, I'm not complaining too much. I shot about my handicap."

"I was in a good groove yesterday (when he breezed past two opponents, 6 and 5, then 5 and 4) but I just couldn't maintain it. I hit the driver bad today, and when you get it out of play here, you pay some penalty for it."

Golden, who knocked off qualifying medalist Grant Maples in one preliminary match and 1994 runnerup John Kaiser in his semifinal, trailed four times and twice was 2 down.

But a near hole-in-one at No. 12 sparked a rally in which he won three straight holes to take the lead briefly, then fell back into the tie that lasted until No. 18.

"He had just knocked in a birdie at 11, I'm 2 down, and when he gets on a roll, he's tough," Golden said of the longtime Greeley great. "When he misses a green, that doesn't matter; that just means he's got par."

"When I got the leaner there on 12, that kind of turned it," he added of a 170-yard, 7-iron shot that wound up just inches from the cup.

Golden pulled even with another birdie at No. 13, and took his first lead with a par at No. 14. But Eaton squared the match at the par-4 15th, where the champion double-bogeyed out of the water.

The finalists then matched pars at Nos. 16 and 17 to set up the climactic finish.

"Driving it up there in the weeds on the last hole is just like kicking it away," Eaton said. "It looked like he gave me a break hitting it in (the rough), too, but obviously he had a better lie."

Golden stuck his 9-iron approach onto the green, putted to gimme range and received a congratulatory handshake from his opponent.



Bob Shaw Photo

John Golden with CGA Senior Match Play trophy.